



# Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India

Volume Two  
1923 - 1925

*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 the second volume of the series.

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## Preface

The early period of the history of the Communist Party of India falls naturally into three parts. The first part up to the end of 1922 is the background and was covered in the first volume, the second part, up to the end of the year 1925, covered in this volume is the *foundation* and the third part up to the year 1929—the year of Meerut Conspiracy Case arrests—is the *early period of mass activities*. This last will be the subject of the third volume now in preparation.

The documents in this volume tell the story of how the individual communist groups that had emerged in Bombay, Madras, Bengal and in the north united together into the Communist Party of India at the First Communist Conference at Kanpur.

The initiative to hold this first and foundation conference was taken by the official communist groups then functioning in different parts of the country and not by Satyabhakta, as held by some. S. A. Dange, though in jail at that time, played an important part in this. In his booklet, *When Communists Differ* (Bombay, 1970), he records as follows:

“Following the Kanpur Conspiracy Case in 1924 and our conviction... we instructed those who gathered round us in the case to hold a conference of communists and establish a properly constituted party and a central committee inside the country. A conference was therefore held in 1925 at the time of the Kanpur session of the Indian National Congress. Hence nowadays we date the foundation of the Indian party from that conference year.”

The historians of the CPM, particularly the late Muzaffar Ahmad, disagreed with this though the united party in the meeting of its central secretariat held on 19 August 1959 had decided that the date of the Kanpur conference (26 December 1925) should be adopted as the foundation of the party.

Though the Kanpur conference was allowed to be held legally, the Indian communists knew that the party would not be allowed by imperialism to function and carry on mass activities. The Peshawar and Kanpur conspiracy cases had demonstrated that. The idea was, therefore, mooted that an open party, say a workers' and peasants' party, be formed and to take up through it the work of organising militant trade unions and peasant masses for their urgent demands.

The documents in this volume show how a beginning in this direction was made by the formation of the Labour Kisan Party of Hindustan by Singaravelu of Madras in 1923. The party was, however, stillborn because of the Kanpur Conspiracy Case arrests. A fresh attempt was made in November 1925 in Calcutta when the Labour-Swaraj Party of the Indian National Congress was formed by Qutbuddin Ahmad, the Poet Qazi Nazrul Islam and Hemantakumar Sarkar. The Bengali weekly *Lagan*, the organ of this party, which began publication in December 1925 was edited by Qazi Nazrul Islam himself.

The Labour-Swaraj Party was the precursor of the workers' and peasants' parties. These emerged later in Bengal, Bombay, Punjab and UP and initiated the period of the Communist Party's early mass activities in 1926-29.

The editor is deeply conscious of the shortcomings of the work and particularly of the delay in its production. He expresses his heartfelt gratitude to all those friends and comrades both in India and in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries who have helped him in getting at the documents and otherwise helped him in every way in his work.

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## I. Review of the Gaya Session and the Split in the Congress

### INTRODUCTION

In this section, we are bringing together some of Roy's articles published in the early months of 1923. In general they review the Gaya session of the Congress and explain the meaning of the virtual split that took place at that session.

*It is, in the fitness of things that, the very first of these articles should be in the form of an "Open letter to C. R. Das"—who presided over the session, and staged a revolt by demanding a change in the current policy of boycotting the newly reformed legislatures and the forthcoming general election for them. C. R. Das and his group proposed that permission be given to congressmen to contest the election, and to carry the fight against the British government into the legislatures by capturing positions in them. The Gaya session rejected by a majority the proposal for a change and then C. R. Das and his group formed the Congress-Khilafat Swaraj Party.*

The contemporary discussion represented C. R. Das and his party as "cooperators" or "pro-changers", while the "no-changers" were represented as the more militant ones, sticking to the fighting line. Actually, since the Bardoli suspension of the civil disobedience by Gandhiji as a reaction to the Chauri-Chaura uprising and particularly after his arrest on 10 March 1922, the

movement was on the wane. The Gaya session of the National Congress, though it reiterated the earlier decisions on the boycott of educational institutions and law courts as well as of the reformed legislatures, only called for completing "preparations for offering civil disobedience by strengthening and expanding the national organisation and to take immediate steps for the collection of at least Rs 25 lakh for the Tilak Swaraj Fund and the enrolment of at least 50,000 volunteers satisfying the conditions of the Ahmedabad pledge", etc. C. R. Das and his party, while agreeing with all this, wanted a new front to be opened by fighting the forthcoming general election and carrying the battle to the central and provincial legislatures.<sup>1</sup> Further he was taking a stand more to the left than the "no-changers". He talked of swaraj for the masses, for the 98 per cent and supported the organisation of workers and peasants and formulated a programme of economic demands for the Swaraj Party.

Roy in his "Open Letter" takes into account this approach of C. R. Das and sums up the "net result at Gaya" thus: "...in the din of the clash between upper- and middle-class interests, the revolutionary voice of the workers and peasants raised through the declassed Chittaranjan was drowned. Unfortunately the fight did not take place on the issue of bourgeois politics versus mass politics but of upper-middle-class politics as against lower-middle-class confusion as well as rowdiness."

At the same time Roy points out that C. R. Das's group is in the minority in the Swaraj Party as against the "responsive co-operators" of Maharashtra. C. R. Das, Roy adds, will have either to surrender his position in favour of that of the Maharashtra rationalists or form a third party in the National Congress—"the party which will reflect clearly the uncompromisingly revolution-

1. In their manifesto the swarajists stated "that they were entering the councils in order to ensure that the new constitutional machinery should not be exploited for antinational purposes" and to raise from the floor of the assembly the demand for "the right of the Indian people to control their own destiny. In the event of the demand being refused, the party pledged itself to a policy of 'uniform, continuous and consistent obstruction with a view to make the government through the assembly and councils impossible.'" It was a policy of wrecking "the machinery of the constitution from within" instead of through the boycott of the councils (*India in 1923-24*, p. 205).

ary elements of our society, and which will infuse vigour into national struggle by means of revolutionary mass action."

The "Open Letter" dated 3 February 1923 was published in the *Vanguard*, Vol 2, No 1 of 15 February 1923 and was reprinted in *One Year of Noncooperation*.<sup>2</sup>

The same issue gives an interesting detail about the "Independence Resolution" which was moved by the leftwing at Gaya as was done at the previous Ahmedabad session:

"...in the subjects committee, no less than 49 out of 100 members present voted in favour of it. In Ahmedabad, Maulana Hasrat Mohani's resolution got only 25 per cent vote in the subjects committee. In the plenary session at least one-third of the delegates voted for the resolution."

In the same issue, the editorial entitled "Ourselves" covers the same ground but goes a little deeper into the socioeconomic and class analysis of the present state of the noncooperation movement. Taking note of the "new orientation towards the 'masses'" it states:

"The Gaya resolution will go hardly farther than its predecessor adopted at Nagpur, but the fact remains that the unwillingness of

2. In the records of the Kanpur Conspiracy Case there is the photocopy of the original version of this letter written by M. N. Roy to C. R. Das. This is typed on the letterhead of the *Vanguard* and is dated 6 January 1923. It is signed by M. N. Roy. This was the original short version actually sent to C. R. Das, which was intercepted by the British-Indian police and its photocopy made while the original was sent on to the addressee. This photocopy was produced in the Kanpur Case as exhibit 19(1). This was later expanded to be published as an open letter. This will be clear from the following extract which we reproduce from the Kanpur exhibit.

"At last the crisis is over. The Congress has succumbed. No attempts are to be made to resuscitate it. There are but two ways ahead, reversion to constitutional democracy of the liberals or adoption of more revolutionary methods. Had the fight taken place at Gaya on this issue, which is the fundamental issue involved in the movement, we will be much better off today. If the social forces destined to lead the latter way are not mobilised, moderatism in the garb of the wordy extremism of the Mahratta Party will conquer the political field. This will mean a great setback to the struggle. Should this be permitted?"

The reader will see that the same passage occurs in the "Open Letter" in an expanded form. (See also Volume One, pp 565-66.)

the propertied upper classes and the inability of the intellectual middle classes to fight resolutely the battles of national freedom have been exposed. Therefore the organisation of a party of the workers and peasants has become an indispensable necessity. The Communist Party of India is called upon by history to play this role."

This defines the role of the proposed workers' and peasants' party *vis-a-vis* the national-liberation movement. The relation between the Communist Party and the newly-proposed workers' and peasants' party which is not clearly stated here is developed in the subsequent documents. The editorial in its concluding paragraphs is making an appeal for the organisation of the Communist Party of India.

The editorial is obviously referring to the programme for the National Congress distributed at Gaya illegally under the signatures of M. N. Roy and Abani Mukherji when it goes on to say :

"We will fight as part of the National Congress; by fearless criticism, vigorous agitation and constant propaganda we will endeavour to push the middle-class nationalists forward in the struggle; we will cooperate with every social element that is objectively antagonistic to the imperialist domination; and we will stand shoulder to shoulder with every political party so long as it comes on the struggle against foreign domination. Our watchword is 'No Compromise'."

This is a correct approach reflecting the slogan of the united anti-imperialist front put forward in the theses of the Fourth Congress of the Comintern (November 1922).<sup>3</sup>

The last article of this section is in the form of a political letter and forms part of the booklet *Political Letters*, written and published by M. N. Roy from the "Vanguard Bookshop, Zurich, 1924"—a fictitious establishment. In the introduction to this booklet, M. N. Roy states that these letters were written "on various occasions during the last year and a half". The letter reproduced here, entitled "On the Social Basis of a Revolutionary Party" is dated 8 March 1923.

In this the author refers to the programme put forward at the

3. See Volume One, pp 554-56

Gaya session of the National Congress. In this connection he says :

“The rise of the Independent Nationalist Party in Bengal (Swaraj Party of C. R. Das?) is a sign of the times. Have you noticed that the programme of this new party of the liberal bourgeoisie includes the ‘abolition of landlordism’ and many of those ‘welfare’ clauses which seem to have terrified you in our programme? It is not a communist programme that we have drafted. It is a simple, democratic document, adapted to our ‘special circumstance’.”

Here is defined the correct approach of the working-class party to the national-liberation movement. The letters as the author further points out in the introduction “were addressed to those nationalists who never had much in common with the leadership of the Congress or the neoconstitutionalist Swaraj Party”. They sought to elucidate questions of “revolutionary social philosophy” of Marxism in a simple language.

## I. OPEN LETTER TO C. R. DAS

The 37th annual session of the National Congress at Gaya marked the close of an historic period in our struggle for liberation. The social tendencies that constituted the innate weakness of our movement during the last two years still reign supreme in the Congress. The consequences are easily to be anticipated. Noncooperation as a political force is dead, that is, that orthodox brand of noncooperation which makes religion out of politics and has turned the traditional organ of national struggle (the Congress) into a prayer-hall and conclave of theologians. This brand of noncooperation is dead, notwithstanding the fact that the die-hards of this school won the day at Gaya. It sounds paradoxical; but it is true none the less.

Although Gaya failed to be as dramatic as Surat, the result has hardly been otherwise. The reactionary elements have gained an apparent ascendancy, not by dint of their own merits, but because the opposition failed to marshal its forces in the proper way, and took its stand on an insecure ground. This is, however, a transition period.

After 1907, the impotency of the moderates became palpable and the stalwarts of the old Congress fell willing victims to the "rallying" order of Morley. Of course, it is evident that no such glorious fate awaits the orthodox noncooperators of the "no-change" party. They may shout at the top of their voices that they do not want such glory; but the truth is that the government wants their cooperation much less than they want government's favour. So the bankruptcy of die-hard Gandhism will be exposed in a different way, if it is still to be exposed. If in the near future there does not appear in the political field a new party with a clearly formulated programme inspired, not by sloppy sentimentalism, but by a revolutionary social outlook and firm grasp of the situation, the Congress under the leadership of the "victorious" no-change party will sink into oblivion and imbecility no less despicable than that overtaking the moderates

shortly after the split at Surat. And if such a party does take the field, as is historically inevitable, the apparent triumph of religious quietism in our political movement will be very shortlived and the Congress will be ere long rescued from its rut.

A great crisis has been pressing upon our movement ever since the eve of the Ahmedabad Congress. It would have come to a head probably at Ahmedabad, had not the attention of the country been diverted by the policy of relentless repression, which clapped all the forward-looking leaders, including the president-elect of the Congress, into jail. At last the crisis is over. The Congress has succumbed. The crisis lasted too long and therefore the depression and disintegration have been too great. But the very process of disintegration has at the same time clarified the situation, giving impetus to the energies which will eventually dissipate the depression. New attempts have already been made to resuscitate the Congress. But most of the elements making these attempts are still groping in the dark.

#### TWO WAYS AHEAD

There are but two ways ahead: reversion to the constitutional democracy of the liberals, or adoption of more revolutionary methods. To choose one of the two ways has been the fundamental issue that gave birth to the controversy that rent the Congress during the last half a year; and it was precisely this problem that had to be solved at Gaya. The victory of the die-hard, quietists signifies that the problem still remains unsolved, at least in part. The intellectually bankrupt lower middle class is, on the one hand, debarred from the heavens of constitutional democracy, owing to its economic disability, and on the other hand its reactionary social and religious prejudices give it a counterrevolutionary ideology. It is this social element that still holds the balance of power in the Congress ranks. The eventual overthrow of this pernicious influence is conditional upon a clear grouping in elements in the pro-change party, which today embraces two centripetal forces, one heading towards constitutional democracy in the garb of rationalism, the other inclined towards a revolutionary outlook, but this inclination is still largely sentimental. This confusion in the pro-change camp gave a temporary

victory to the tendencies objectively dead, but which nevertheless can still appeal to the imagination of purely sentimental revolutionaries.

There are two tendencies demanding a change of the Congress programme. There is nothing in common between them except that both demand a change. But the character of the change sought for by one is diametrically opposite to that demanded by the other. This was not made clear at Gaya; hence the defeat of the leftwing led by Chittaranjan Das, which failed to attract under its banner the sentimental revolutionaries in the ranks of the "no-change" party. These elements looked upon the leftwing with suspicion, because the latter failed to stand out separately from the "pro-change" party of the right—the Mahratta radicals who advocated "responsive cooperation". So, it is clear that the orthodox "no-changers" secured not a victory, but a walkover. This state of affairs will not last. The left must part company with the right, and in proportion as it asserts its revolutionary potentiality upon the situation, the centre will collapse. If the social forces destined to lead our movement in the new historical period are not soon mobilised, moderatism in the grab of wordy extremism of the Mahratta radicals will reconquer the political field. This will mean a great setback to the movement. Should this be permitted?

#### THE THREE SOCIAL ELEMENTS WITHIN THE CONGRESS

There are three distinct social elements operating in the national movement as represented by the Congress, namely, the upper middle class including the intellectuals, the lower middle class (small traders, petty intellectuals etc.) and the masses of workers and peasants. The first stands very close to the cooperating liberals. In fact most of them blundered into the noncooperation movement, and have always lent a rather half-hearted adhesion to it. Their quarrel consists in that the Reforms Act did not make sufficient provision for the interests of their class. Hence their opposition to the reforms. Today they oppose the noncooperation programme, not because it is not revolutionary enough to meet the situation, but because it is not "rational". But there is no such curious thing as a rational revolution, and swaraj can be won only through a revolution. An extension of

the reforms, or, at the most something on the model of the Irish Free State or Egyptian independence will satisfy the ambition of this section of our people. They are firm believers in the theories of democracy, social contract, free competition, parliamentarism and all the rest of the paraphernalia of capitalism, which is breaking down under the pressure of its own contradictions all over the world.

The lower middle class, apparently led by the petty intellectuals, but in reality dominated by a reactionary religious and theological ideal, is in an unenviable position. Economically it is totally ruined. It has no hope from the present system. No amount of reforms will affect its position. Therefore it talks about a radical change. But a progressive change will not be beneficial for it either, because it will only drag this class down to the level of proletarians. Hence its frantic antipathy towards modern developments. It would like to see the society hark back to those primitive conditions to which it ascribes the glories of the golden age. The bankrupt lower middle class must have a radical change, but its members are against disturbing the social status quo. Their position is very equivocal.

Neither of these two middle-class elements represents the interests of the third social factor, which constitutes such a vital part of the nation and which in the last two years has played such an important role in the movement. This third factor is the masses of workers and peasants. Everybody of late talks about the "masses". But no middle-class party can be expected to fight under the slogan: "Not the Masses for Revolution, but Revolution for the Masses." Middle-class libertarians will never attain such a revolutionary outlook as to look on the working class, not as the pawns in the game, but as the very life of our struggle. Therefore, it is inevitable that the revolutionary energy of the toiling masses, who constitute the vast majority of the nation and without whose conscious action swaraj cannot be won, will be focused through an independent political party. To raise the standard of this party, the future leader of our struggle for national liberation, is the task objectively undertaken by the leftwing of the pro-change party. It is necessary to face the facts, however unpleasant they may be; we cannot make them nonexistent by overlooking them.

THE CRYSTALLISATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES WITHIN  
THE NATIONAL CONGRESS

We must recognise the fact that it is the conflict of class interests that simultaneously strengthens and weakens our movement. This lesson ought to have been learnt by all forward-looking people by this time. In other words, it must have become evident that India is not free from those inexorable laws of history which give rise to great revolutions in particular epochs. The confusion of the last year as well as the present decomposition and process of regrouping of forces within the Congress are brought about by the operation of these laws. Several social elements with discordant interests went into the composition of the noncooperation movement. There were certain things superficially in common; therefore, they could work in apparent harmony for a certain length of time. But the development of the impelling forces is followed by the clarification of the ideology of the movement. The objective of the respective classes becomes clearer; consequently it becomes impossible for them to remain as integral parts of one and the same cohesive political apparatus. It becomes necessary for each of them to formulate its particular aims and aspirations in the shape of a programme. The Congress has never been a compact political organ reflecting an identical social interest. It has become less so in the last years, when the nationalist movement transcended the limits of the so-called "politically-minded" classes. The movement however cannot be carried further without cohesive political parties as the vanguards of the several social classes which are objectively antagonistic to the imperialist exploitation. The Congress will serve only as the rallying ground for these nationalist forces, the most revolutionary of which will eventually assume its leadership and bring the struggle for national liberation to the final victory. The present decomposition of the Congress will be followed by the rise of these political parties.

THE NEED FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PEOPLE'S PARTY

During the last twelve months, that is, ever since the initial enthusiasm began to subside in the movement, the struggle for power has been going on inside the Congress ranks. The three

principal social elements that enter into the composition of the Congress have been struggling to capture the supremacy. This struggle at last culminated in the split at Gaya. But the present schism in the Congress ranks bases itself upon the conflict between the upper-middle-class rationalists and the lower-middle-class revivalists. The third element, that is, the toiling masses, which is destined to decide ultimately the fate of the nation, is still practically left out of the struggle. Nevertheless, the fundamental issue involved in the transition through which the Congress is passing is not the conflict between the upper and lower strata of the middle class. Neither of these two elements is able or willing to rise up to that height of revolutionary outlook which is required to drag the Congress out of the miserable rut into which, it has sunk under the leadership of the lower-middle-class spiritualists, and to save it from the sure reversion to the programme of constitutional democracy, which will follow the triumph of upper-middle-class nationalism. The problem we are called upon to solve was tersely enunciated by Deshbandhu Chittaranjan, when he questioned the ability of the middle classes to make noncooperation effective, and boldly declared that the masses wanted swaraj more than the bourgeoisie. In short, the historic question put to the revolutionary nationalists today is: *Is purely bourgeois politics capable of developing our struggle for liberation?* The experience of the last two years has amply proved that the answer can be safely given in the negative. Hence it follows that the social basis of the movement must be radically changed. In other words, the change in the noncooperation programme must transcend the limits of substituting lower-middle-class confusion by upper-middle-class radicalism. The change should be so formulated as actively to involve into the movement those social forces that are bound to be uncompromisingly revolutionary; namely, the workers and peasants—those who have nothing to lose, but a world to gain. The future belongs to this element. The time has come for the organisation of these objectively revolutionary elements in a political party of its own, which will be the great people's party of India. The organisation of this party, the future leader of the struggle for national independence, is the task of those who stand for a change, but for a forward-looking change in the Congress programme.

THE PROPRIETED CLASSES ARE THE BASIS  
OF THE PRESENT ORDER

You have undertaken this historic mission of liberating our movement from the fetters of middle-class reaction, compromise, hesitation and timidity, in order to transplant it onto the healthy soil of revolutionary mass action. But you fail to accomplish this mission if the objective forces asserting themselves on the social background of our movement are not taken into proper and proportionate consideration. There is room for only three parties in the Congress. Two are already in the field. You have to be either the third, that is, the political expression of the working masses, or nothing. Your reluctance to recognise the existence of class conflict and to admit the inevitability of class struggle betray the haziness of your social outlook. It behooves a party of those social elements that benefit by class domination to denounce class struggle as dangerous to society, and piously to preach class collaboration, but those inspired by the revolutionary ideal of socioeconomic liberation for all cannot subscribe to this ruling-class philosophy without betraying their ideal. Has not Deshbandhu Das himself declared against substituting the foreign bureaucracy by its native prototype? If he will look a bit deeper into things he will discover who stands behind the bureaucratic governments. *It is the propertied classes, owning all the means of production and distribution and consequently exploiting the expropriated majority.* Therefore by declaring war upon the present governmental system, Mr Das admits the necessity of destroying the authority of the class that stands behind it; as otherwise the character of the modern bourgeois state cannot be changed, and Mr Das's sociopolitical ideal will never come out of the realm of utopia. We are not manufacturing the spectre of class war. It is raging in the civilised society based on private property. We communists stand for the abolition of classes and consequently of class struggle; but *classes cannot disappear unless private property is abolished.* And can any reasonable person believe that the class benefiting by the system of private property will ever consent to its abolition without struggle, however sanguinary it may be? No amount of humanitarian sermons will induce its members to forgo the smallest part of the profits and privileges

that accrue from ownership. Hence, to organise the expropriated and exploited workers and peasants, but not on the principles of class interests and class struggle, is to deceive them; to preach to the victims of class tyranny virtuous doctrines of the "ideal of human unity", "class collaboration for the common benefit of the community" etc. etc. only perpetuates class domination.

We dwell somewhat at length on the question of classes and class struggle, not that we give precedence to the civil war over the national war, but because your party entertains a very subjective and prejudiced attitude on the matter. This constitutes a serious weakness for the young party, which thus fails to strike an anchor in the depths of the society. If you propose to lead a certain class of our society in the national war, you cannot do so without defining clearly how the interests of the particular class will be advanced by the successful prosecution of the national war. The noncooperation movement so far failed to do so; hence its failure to secure permanently the active support of the masses. Your party should not commit the same mistake if it is to carry the struggle further on.

#### THE ISSUE OF COUNCIL ENTRY IS A SECONDARY ONE

Now, lamentable aversion to class conflict led the pioneers of your party somewhat astray. Lack of realistic vision prevented you from grasping the true significance of the breach in the Congress ranks. Consequently, you greatly prejudiced your otherwise strong position by an equivocal attitude towards the radicals of the extreme right. It is deplorable that you forced the issue at Gaya on the secondary question of council entry. You surely do not believe that the future of our movement depends on whether we contest the coming elections or not! Your attitude towards the question of council entry has its tactical value, but this tactical value also becomes problematical, if there does not exist a revolutionary party which will send its members to the polls with a concerted programme, and will back their actions in the councils by means of mass action outside. Then, the tactics of "wrecking the councils" presupposes the chances of returning a majority, which are not very bright. So long as there does not exist a well-organised party, it is premature for revolutionaries to make the

question of council entry the point of issue. None but the party with a revolutionary outlook and a large following among the masses can carry on successfully the tactics of "wrecking and obstruction". Otherwise the consequence is likely to be reprehensible, namely, the "responsive cooperation" of the Mahratta party, which is hardly distinguishable from the liberals. The difference between "responsive cooperators" and the liberals is as fictitious as that between the tories and liberals in the British parliament concerning colonial affairs. But do we need the luxury of such party politics when the playground is but an empty show?

Your leaders failed to dissociate themselves from the "pro-change" elements of the rightwing because they did not recognise the significance of the diversity of social interests behind the two wings of the "pro-change" party. Had your programme not revolved on the pivot of council entry, its other clauses would have attracted all the available revolutionary elements within and without the Congress, and the Congress today would have stood clear of the stifling atmosphere of lower-middle-class reaction and inanity. Given a clear understanding of the crosscurrents of the social forces actuating our movement, you are the vanguard of the revolutionary mass party, which is the crying need of the day, and which alone will save the Congress from the disgraceful fate of sinking into the neoliberalism of the Mahratta politicians on the one hand, and on the other, from the equally disgraceful fate of surrendering itself to the imbecile leadership of ultra-Gandhism which unconsciously plays the role of the handmaid of social reaction.

You should have made your position at Gaya unequivocal. You should have repudiated openly any possible relation based upon identity of interests with those advocates of "change" who in the name of rationalism and practical politics would turn the Congress into a respectable party of the upper middle class in tussle with the big bourgeoisie. Then the reactionary religious nationalists would not have had the chance of rallying a large section of the sentimentally revolutionary element by artfully harping on the tune of "the masses". But the shallowness of their affection for the masses was exposed by their failure to respond to the revolutionary note struck by Mr Das in his statement: "We do not want a bourgeois republic." And they become the

standard-bearers of rank reaction when, through the mouth of Rajagopalacharya, on the authority of the Mahatma, they denounce "any scheme to make political use of the workers". What a preposterous theory! But everyone pretending to advocate the cause of the masses, while blinking at the ugly feature of class interests, eventually lands in this reprehensible position.

#### THE TRUE NATURE OF THE SPLIT AT GAYA

The net result at Gaya, however, was that in the din of the clash between upper- and middle-class interests, the revolutionary voice of the workers and peasants raised through the declassed Chittaranjan was drowned. Unfortunately the fight did not take place on the issue of *bourgeois politics* versus *mass politics* but of upper-middle-class politics as against lower-middle-class confusion as well as rowdyism. Apparently the latter has won, but it is the contrary as a matter of fact. The upper-middle-class rationalists of the Mahratta school will pursue their own line of action, in spite of the Congress decision, and the latter will be left without any intellectual leadership on the one hand, and bereft of revolutionary dynamics on the other. Meanwhile, no clear avenue has been cut for the only truly revolutionary forces to assert themselves upon the movement. If the next twelve months are allowed to pass by without seeing the growth of a leftwing party with a clear consciousness of its own social nature, we can be sure that in its next annual session, the Congress will be hardly distinguishable from the Liberal League or the Home Rule show of Mrs Besant.

The voice that spoke through Deshbandhu Chittaranjan and his associates is presumably embodied in the Congress-Khilafat Swaraj Party, which has been inaugurated by issuing the manifesto, signed by a number of the leaders of the "pro-change" faction. But in reality the Deshbandhu with his revolutionary following again finds himself in the minority, because the majority of the new party, which appears to be formed under his leadership, subscribes much less to the sociopolitical views of Mr Das than do the die-hards of the "no-change" cult, who remain in the control of the Congress machinery. The result of such a combination can and will be—either that Mr Das will soon have to

abandon his original position in favour of the "responsive co-operation" of the Maharashtra rationalists, or that he will have to part company with them in order to organise the third party inside the National Congress, the party which will reflect clearly the uncompromisingly revolutionary elements of our society, and which will infuse vigour into the national struggle by means of revolutionary mass action.

#### THE NECESSITY FOR A SECOND SPLIT

This unequivocal position will be cleared by a second split in the Congress camp. To force this inevitable separation of the revolutionary forces from the embrace of the rightwing, which will bring the Congress back practically under the influence of liberalism, is the task before you. Only by breaking away from the rightwing, which in the name of rationalism has repudiated the tactics of militant noncooperation, your party will stand out as the vanguard of the national army, the leader of the national struggle, and in this role will liberate the Congress from the control of the religious die-hards, by attracting to its ranks all the sincere elements left in the folds of the "no-change" party.

3 February 1923

(*One Year of Noncooperation*, by  
M. N. Roy & Evelyn Roy, Chapter xii)

## 2. INDEPENDENCE RESOLUTION

(FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT)

CALCUTTA: 6 January. The noncooperation papers purposely gave a false report of the result of the resolution moved at the Gaya congress calling for change in the Congress creed. It is said that the Independence Resolution elicited much less response this year than last. It is not true. The machinery running the Congress tried its best to shelve the resolution, but could not help its being moved because of the fact that in the subjects committee, no less than 49 out of 100 members present voted in favour of it. In Ahmedabad, Maulana Hasrat Mohani's

resolution got only 25 per cent vote in the subjects committee. In the plenary session at least one-third of the delegates voted for the resolution.

(*Vanguard*, Vol 2, No 1,  
15 February 1923)

### 3. OURSELVES

In India today we hear everybody talk about the "masses". There is not a political group which does not claim to stand for the welfare of the common people. To talk approvingly of organising labour and uplifting the peasantry has become a fashion in political circles. The Congress has gone so far as to admit the necessity of giving serious attention to the trade-union movement and there is even a proposal to subsidise it out of the Congress fund. The Gaya congress has appointed a committee to work out a scheme for this work. Ever since the noncooperation movement, based only on the sacrifice and patriotism of the middle classes, became threadbare, our leaders suddenly remembered the existence of those more than eighty per cent of our people whose needs, interests, power and potentialities did not enter into the calculation of those who planned to paralyse the government by national noncooperation. A resolution was adopted at Nagpur, vaguely referring to the working class; that resolution, however, not only remained a dead letter, but in practice the Congress has always acted against the interests of the toiling masses. On every occasion that it had to choose between the propertied upper classes and the expropriated toilers, the Congress defended the cause of the former, notwithstanding the fact that the patriotism of the upper classes has always been half-hearted and that it was on account of the spontaneous action of the rebellious masses that the noncooperation movement ever attained any degree of success. We have repeatedly pointed out, and can just as well do so once more, that the Congress started rapidly on the decline when it fatally denounced the countrywide mass

action during the visit of the Prince of Wales, and after having camouflaged its real intentions by idle threats of civil disobedience at Ahmedabad, came out openly at Bardoli as the avowed champion of vested interests and landlordism. It was the spontaneous mass upheaval that brought the noncooperation movement to the pinnacle of its glory towards the end of 1921, and it was its terror of the rising tide of revolution, its reluctance to countenance such a turn in the campaign, and its decision to denounce the rebellious masses in order to secure the promised financial support of the merchants, manufacturers and landlords—that deprived the noncooperation movement of its involuntary revolutionary character and have at last brought it down to the abyss of confusion, disintegration and demoralisation.

When one looks at the present tendency to talk of the "masses", to swear by the "masses", to invoke the sacred interests of the "masses" in order to justify one or the other political principle, and even to idealise the "masses" by discovering "spiritual awakening" in the grim battles these poor devils are fighting against enormous odds—when one looks at this sudden love for the "masses" with the light of the last two years' experience, one cannot be but sceptical. There is a motive behind it all. History has taught our leaders some wholesome lessons. They have found out to their discomfiture that the property-owning and intellectual elite is after all not the salt of the earth. It is gradually dawning upon them that the overwhelming majority of the nation, not belonging to the "politically-minded classes", can be left out of consideration only to the detriment of the movement. Hence the sudden enthusiasm for the "masses". From the government on the one hand, to the extreme nationalists on the other, every political group engaged in the struggle for either maintaining or conquering power is desirous of posing as the defender of the majority. The British imperialists say that they cannot leave India, because in that case there will be no power to protect the interests of the masses against the depredations of the greedy landlords and moneylenders. The liberals claim to save the masses from the disruptive propaganda of the noncooperators by means of such democratic institutions as the aman sabhas, Social Service League, Non-Brahmin Party, Civil Guards, Citizens' Welfare League etc. The orthodox noncooperators propose to regenerate the masses

by such magical feats as the crying down of industrialism, the revival of the charkha, the abolition of the drink habit and the removal of untouchability by ethical persuasion. The political extremists would defend the interests of the wage-earner by means of parliamentary action and the collaboration of capital and labour, while the romantic nationalists plan to liberate the masses by reviving the panchayats, which they curiously look upon as the most advanced democratic institution ever created on the face of the earth. But only one motive inspires all these elements with their affection for the masses. Every one of them desires to enlist the tacit support of the "dumb millions", so that the articulate few comprising their own respective ranks can lay down the law in the name of that fictitious term, the "majority". If both the principal factions in the Congress are talking of the "masses" and admitting the necessity of organising labour, it is because they have found out that the national struggle cannot be carried any farther ahead exclusively with the efforts, however powerful and disinterested, of the middle classes. They have also found out the injuriousness of calling upon the masses to sacrifice for the nation without doing anything to further their economic interests. This mistake gave the government and the loyal liberals a point of attack. When the Congress remained utterly indifferent to the economic struggle, into which the workers and peasants were forced by the pressure of circumstances, the government and the liberals resorted to various stratagems with the object of appearing as the champion of the everyday interests of the toiling masses. Had not the objective conditions been so entirely favourable to a spontaneous social upheaval, the designs of the government in league with the "law-and-order"-loving moderates and the reactionary landlords would have succeeded in pacifying the country by means of some reformist labour and land legislation. But, unfortunately, this can no longer be done. The economic position of the Indian wage-earner and poor cultivator is undermined to such an extent, that no patchwork can even superficially allay their miseries. Therefore, in spite of the wilful negligence of the nationalists on one hand, and the artful designs of the government together with the loyalists on the other, the discontent among the workers and peasants will inevitably grow. This discontent is the objective factor making for a national

revolution. The development of the national struggle depends upon the intensification of this factor.

We do not overlook the other objective factors that also contribute to the national struggle. These are: (1) the vigorous growth of a native capitalist class, which constitutes a standing menace to the imperialist monopoly over the economic and consequently the political life of the country; (2) the economic and political disabilities imposed upon the progressive intelligentsia, whose development as a class cannot take place within the framework of a foreign bureaucracy, and which, therefore, demands a national state; and (3) the pauperisation of the lower middle class, which must choose between degeneration or revolution. All these factors of national revolution have their respective value and have been playing their respective role in our history. The history of our national movement has however proved that owing to a peculiar combination of forces the first, which is most revolutionary of all, is bound to compromise with the imperialist domination; therefore, the other two, which are greatly dependent upon the first, are automatically deprived of much of their revolutionary significance. The noncooperation movement was the best that, under the given circumstances, could be expected of these two factors in our national struggle.

The new orientation towards the "masses", with whatever motive and under whatever guise it may be, proves that the social basis of the national movement must be extended; that it cannot succeed as a middle-class movement. The fourth social factor, the most revolutionary of all, the one that is bound to be uncompromising and unrelenting in the struggle, because it has nothing to lose, but a world to gain, must be brought to bear upon the situation. The Communist Party of India through its organs has during the last year pointed out this historical necessity, and urged upon the Congress to widen its political vision. But many illusions had to be dissipated, many a bitter experience had to be lived through before this bitter dose could be swallowed. Today the country is ringing with the cry "to the masses". Some of the leaders go so far as to declare that the middle classes are not capable of carrying the noncooperation movement to its logical conclusion. All this is very encouraging; but the leopard does not change its spots. With all its desire to

enlist the support of the masses, and with all its virtuous schemes of uplifting the downtrodden, the Congress as a body will remain a bourgeois political organ. It will never be able to lead the workers and peasants in the revolutionary struggle for national freedom. The Gaya resolution will go hardly any further than its predecessor adopted at Nagpur, but the fact remains that the unwillingness of the propertied upper classes and the inability of the intellectual middle classes to fight resolutely the battles of national freedom have been exposed. Therefore the organisation of a party of the workers and peasants has become an indispensable necessity. *The Communist Party of India* is called upon by history to play this role.

The middle-class leaders have acknowledged their defeat; if not in words, they have done it in deed. Except the incorrigible reactionaries, all admit, in one way or another, that further development of the national struggle demands conscious action of the toiling masses. They are all in the market bidding for the support of the "masses". None of them, however, is going to get it, because their instinctive class affiliation prevents them from having a revolutionary social outlook. The very fact that even the most outspoken protagonists of mass action, as against petty-bourgeois confusion still shudder at the thought of class interests and class conflict, proves the incapability of any bourgeois party to assume the leadership of such revolutionary mass action as will drag the national struggle out of the present rut. No mass movement can be developed on the reactionary principle of class collaboration. The workers and peasants can be led consciously into a revolutionary fight only with such tactics as will intensify the discontent bred in their ranks by economic exploitation. The theory of class collaboration under the pretext of national interests will always lead us back to the fatal days of Bombay, Malegaon, Chauri Chaura, Guntur and Bardoli. The preservation of national interests always means the safety of vested interests. And any rebellion of the toiling masses cannot be made without threatening the safety of the vested interests. The British government has won the loyalty of the upper classes by guaranteeing security of property; since the Congress has proved itself equally anxious for property rights, it cannot lead a revolutionary movement any more than the government. Hence the talk about the



## 4. ON THE SOCIAL BASIS OF A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

Dear comrade,

Noncooperation as a political movement received its funeral ceremony in Gaya. From all reports, the Congress has met precisely the same fate that we have been predicting during the last twelve months. Marxism is a wonderful philosophy, is it not? It has made of history such an exact science. I wonder how long it will take before this modern revolutionary method of thinking is introduced into our movement. The forces of national revolution are today scattered in confusion. We propose to rally them in a new party. It is not that we have to manufacture a following. We need simply hoist a flag which will appeal to the imagination of those objectively revolutionary forces, that were never understood by our religious noncooperators, nor by the rational extremists of the pro-change party. So objectively speaking, we hold that our party has a following. As Marxians, we declare: "Had there not existed the social element to form such a party, there could be no idea of forming it." You need not feel discouraged because you do not represent such a motley crew as the noncooperation Congress. You and those who think like you, are the real representatives of the Indian people, and alone have the right to speak in their behalf.

We are agreed on the necessity of forming a new party. What is the first step to be taken in this direction? The adoption of a programme of this party. We have already published the outline of a programme, with certain important clauses of which you do not agree. You take exception to the "abolition of landlordism", and to "agitation" against bourgeoisie. Your reasons are just those that forced Gandhi to call for the shameful retreat at Bardoli. He was faced with the problem of choosing between the financial aid of the landlords and capitalists on one hand, and the revolutionary energy of the masses on the other. The Bombay merchants and millowners would not pay their promised contributions to the Tilak Swaraj Fund if the Congress supported the strikes and demonstrations of the workers. The reactionary lower middle class was so closely tied to the apron-strings of the feudal lords of Oudh, that it would rather see the great non-

cooperation movement degenerate into a prayer association and spinning guild than to brook the revolutionary agrarian upheaval threatening the security of landlordism. Hence, the shameful betrayal by the Congress of the great mass movement that culminated in the semi-insurrectionary outbreaks in Bombay and the United Provinces. This revolutionary action of the masses was denounced as "hooliganism", and banned in the name of "non-violence". But what was the social reason behind this theory of nonviolence? Was it not the anxiety for the vested interests of the native upper class and the apprehension of losing the problematical support of the rich? By stoutly denouncing the revolt of the exploited peasantry, and reaffirming the sacred rights of the feudal lords, the Congress killed a great mass movement but can you say that by these reprehensible tactics, the landlords of Oudh have been made any more patriotic, or better said, less loyal and reactionary? The recent controversy over the UP District Board Bill should have taught us a lesson.

As for the financial support of the capitalists, the way in which attempts were made to manipulate the entire Swaraj Fund for *profiteering in khaddar* proves the real character of patriotism of the merchants and manufacturers. No, my dear comrade, it is a mistake to give the interests of the upper classes the first place in the struggle for national liberation. If we sacrifice the dynamic forces of mass action in favour of the financial support of the landlords and capitalists, we shall have to record innumerable Bardolis. It speaks very badly for our revolutionary outlook if we have not yet learned to recognise which social element is the backbone of our movement.

I do not say that we should fail to enlist the services of all possible revolutionary elements in the struggle. We must not lose our sense of proportion. The social character of the nationalist movement is bourgeois—therefore the middle classes will play an important part in it. But owing to the abnormal development of our history (the fact of the British conquest), the Indian bourgeoisie does not today possess the same revolutionary significance as did its prototype in Europe in the middle of the last century. Therefore, the Indian revolution will not be successful purely as a bourgeois revolution. Our bourgeoisie is too underdeveloped, too weak, too timid, to lead a revolutionary

struggle. They must be aided by some other social factor, more revolutionary. Therefore, the programme of our movement cannot be confined within the limits of bourgeois interests and aspirations.

Then look at the question from a historical point of view. What will the national independence of India mean? The victory of the Indian bourgeoisie! As Marxians, we cannot but laugh at the revivalist theory that India is a special creation of god. The triumph of the bourgeoisie means the disruption of feudalism, because the latter is detrimental to the capitalist mode of production. Therefore, objectively speaking, the programme of national independence sounds the death-knell to landlordism. Why should we not have the courage to explain this programme in such simple language as will be within the understanding of the poor peasantry, and make the national struggle a vital issue to them? Are we less revolutionary than the heroes of the Liberal League? Even they are clarifying their economic outlook and only look at the tussle going on within the council of the UP. If the ministerial liberals will not break away from their feudal leading strings, they will ere long forfeit their title to lead the big bourgeoisie. The rise of the Independent Nationalist Party in Bengal is a sign of the times. Have you noticed that the programme of this new political party of the liberal bourgeoisie includes the "abolition of landlordism", and many of those "welfare" clauses which seem to have terrified you in our programme? It is not a communist programme that we have drafted. It is a simple, democratic document, adapted to our "special circumstance". We must dismiss the hope of securing the help of the landed aristocracy. The bourgeoisie must be with the national movement. They cannot leave it, nor can they fight alone. They must have our support. So we must enter the struggle consciously, and not as a mere appendage of the bourgeoisie. More on this question later.

8 March 1923.

(Political Letters by M. N. Roy)

## 2. Peshawar Conspiracy Cases

### INTRODUCTION

In the general introduction to Volume One an account of the hijrat movement has already been given, particularly of the 200 muhajirs who in the autumn of 1920 crossed over into Soviet Russia. Our main source of information about the sufferings and the adventures of these muhajirs, who inspired by the patriotic atmosphere of the khilafat and first noncooperation movements in the early twenties embarked on the hazardous journey on foot to the land of the revolution, are the memoirs of two of the participants. These are, firstly, Shaukat Usmani's *Peshawar to Moscow* published in 1927 and his later autobiography now being serially published in the Bengali weekly *Kompas* and secondly, the account of Rafiq Ahmad first published by Muzaffar Ahmad in his *The Communist Party of India and Its Formation Abroad* (English ed. April 1962) and later in Rafiq Ahmad's more detailed account in his "Unforgettable Journey" (unpublished MS)<sup>1</sup>

We recount some of the salient facts of these accounts given earlier for ready reference. Two hundred muhajirs marched from Jabal-ul-Siraj in North Afghanistan to Termez on the Afghan-

1. Detailed quotations from this are available in S. M. Mehdi's *The Story behind Moscow-Tashkent Conspiracy Cases*, New Delhi, 1967.

Soviet border and crossed the Amu Darya to enter Soviet Russia. They marched in two batches, one was led by Mohammad Akbar (Khan Qureshi) of Haripur and the other by Akbar Jan. These muhajirs were inspired by the khilafatist-pan-Islamic idea and they crossed over into Soviet Russia with the intention of going to Turkey (Anatolia) to join the Turks in their struggle against the British and thus get military training for our own independence struggle in India. A large group of these fell into the hands of Turkoman rebels, and both Rafiq Ahmad and Shaukat Usmani have described this exciting experience in identical accounts. They were rescued by the Red Army in September 1920.

After the Bukharan revolution, almost all muhajirs were gathered in Bukhara where M. N. Roy met them. Roy sought to persuade them to come with him to Tashkent where they could recuperate as well as study to equip themselves for participation in the struggle for independence after their return. The majority declined the offer and wanted to return to India immediately, while a minority insisted on pushing on to Turkey. Those who wanted to proceed to Turkey were helped to do so; but they had to turn back as the Turkish authorities refused them visas. Those who wanted to return to India were sent back. Thus the majority of the muhajirs from the two batches were already back in Kabul by the spring of 1921.

The first batch reached Peshawar on 3 June 1921. Here they were interrogated by Mr Ewart—the officer-in-charge of the government of India's intelligence bureau. It is from the statements of these early returnees that the government learnt about the group which had accompanied Roy to Tashkent. This group consisted of some 40 or more muhajirs, 26 of whom have been identified as having joined the political and military schools at Tashkent, Indusky Kurs, from October 1920 to April 1921. They were later sent to Moscow where the training was continued in the Communist University for the Toilers of the East.

Acting on the clue which they got from the statements of the early muhajir returnees, the British-Indian police kept a watch for the return of those who had gone to Tashkent and Moscow, and began arresting them from the middle of 1922. That is how the "communist conspiracy" cases at Peshawar were started in which some 12-13 received barbarous jail sentences.

In the general introduction to Volume One is given the list of 22 muhajirs who according to our information were in Tashkent and Moscow schools. We have given biographical sketches of those who joined the CPI formed in Tashkent, either there itself or later in Moscow. Here we are producing documents and materials regarding the "communist conspiracy" cases at Peshawar (1922-24). The tabular statement about the cases is prepared on the basis of the texts of the judgments in these cases available in the National Archives of India.<sup>2</sup> "The Hijrat Movement" is an extract from the session court judgment of the very first Peshawar Conspiracy Case which was pronounced on 31 May 1922. "Patriotism" and on "Manufacturing Evidence" are contemporary articles written by M. N. Roy and published in 1923 in one of the illegal papers or in the *Inprecor*.

The extract "The Hijrat Movement" gives a brief account of the experiences and adventures of the couple of hundred muhajirs who crossed over into Soviet Russia in the autumn of 1920, majority of whom returned to India by the middle of 1921. The importance of this extract is that it gives dates and enables us to place in proper chronological order the experiences and events related by Shaukat Usmani and Rafiq Ahmad in their memoirs. Thus is exactly what we have done in recounting the salient features of these events in the introduction to the previous volume. Being part of the judgment in the case *Crown vs Mohammad Akbar and Two Others* the extract lays emphasis on the activities of the chief accused in the case.

This is the first ever "communist conspiracy" case which the British government launched against those of the muhajirs who not only crossed over from Afghanistan into Soviet Russia in their search for military training and help for India's independence movement but went ahead to become acquainted with communist ideology and politics by joining the school in Tashkent and the Communist University in Moscow. The judgment in this first case, in which Mohammad Akbar was charged together with his father Hafizullah Khan and his servant Bahadur who was also a muhajir, was pronounced on 31 May 1922. As will be seen from the tabular statement, Mohammad Akbar was sen-

2. Home-Pol. F 103, 1923, Part I.

tenced to three years' rigorous imprisonment under section 121-A of Indian Penal Code. Bahadur was sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment under the same section while Hafizullah Khan was acquitted and released. How was this "crime" against Mohammad Akbar and Bahadur proved? The session judge J. H. R. Fraser put it briefly thus: "He (Mohammad Akbar) was held to have been a member of a conspiracy which was working against the British government at Tashkent, Kabul and Chamar-kand."

No overt act in furtherance of a conspiracy to overthrow the government was proved against Mohammad Akbar or Bahadur. But there is no necessity to prove anything of that sort to get a conviction under section 121-A. It is enough to prove that a "conspiracy" of that nature existed and that the accused was a member of it. The same point was made later in the judgments in Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy Case (1924) and in the Meerut Conspiracy Case (1929-33). What was the conspiracy at Tashkent, Kabul and Chamar-kand in 1920-21 and how were Mohammad Akbar and Bahadur its members?

A few quotations from the judgment will show how it answered the above questions. They will also show what crude slanders and ignorant lies were dished out to get a conviction against Mohammad Akbar and his companion. Mohammad Akbar was a fine patriotic youth to whom high tributes for his qualities of leadership have been paid both by Shaukat Usmani and Rafiq Ahmad in their memoirs.

Here is a quotation from the "learned" judge:

"The attitude of the bolsheviks towards all settled governments is a matter of common knowledge. So also their hostility and desire to overthrow the governments of all civilised powers as at present constituted. This general knowledge is a matter of which judicial notice can be taken."

It is needless to comment on this deliberate stupidity solemnly put forward as a profundity in a judgment written in 1922. The judge obviously drew his "learning" on the subject from the official text-book: Candler's *Bolshevism—The Dream and the Fact* (1920) to which we have referred in the previous volume. The judgment continues thus:

"In addition to this, there is on the present record certain information proving that Tashkent was used as a definite centre for propaganda against the British government of India. It was there that was settled a party of Indians consisting of such persons as Abdul Rab, Roy, Mukherji, and others, who formed what they called the 'provisional government of India'. In furtherance of their purpose they had established schools to train Indians in military subjects. After completing their course, these Indians were supposed to return home and act as foci for the dissemination of sedition and of active assistance in case of a bolshevik invasion of India. The bolsheviks and the members of the provisional government brought pressure, where necessary, on the Indians to join their schools. The educated Indians were the more sought after as being the more useful tools. We are told that on one occasion Roy assembled the Indians at the India House and in a formal address told them of the intention of the bolsheviks to invade India (Ghazi, WP 3). The bolsheviks and their Indian friends were in communication with anti-British party in Kabul and in the surrounding countries (Said Amir Badhsha, WP 12)."

Again a mischievous presentation of wellknown facts, barring some glaring inaccuracies. For instance there was no "provisional government of India" in Tashkent at any time. There was one in Kabul from 1916 to 1922 whose members came over to Soviet Russia in 1919 and in 1920. Towards the end of 1922 Amir Amanullah expelled the Indian revolutionaries from Afghanistan and the "provisional government" ceased to exist. As for the bogey of "a bolshevik invasion of India", it was a propaganda stunt by the British authorities in the early twenties which was rejected by contemporary public opinion, as proved by the wellknown statements of Gandhiji and other nationalist leaders. The British-Indian authorities themselves did not believe in it as we see from Candler's book on bolshevism.<sup>3</sup> As to the reference to Roy addressing the Indians at the India House allegedly on the subject, we have already given in the abovementioned introduction the details of the plan to form an Indian liberation army, basing ourselves on what Roy has written in his *Memoirs*.

As for the conspiracy at Kabul, the judgment, quoting a wit-

<sup>3</sup> See quotation in Volume One, pp. 74-75.

ness holds that the provisional government of India was in existence in Kabul in May 1921, and Maulavi Obeidullah was connected with it as Mahendra Pratap was away at that time. "Meetings were held occasionally by M. Obeidullah at which anti-British propaganda were discussed. Iqbal Shaidai was a member of this party. It may be taken therefore as proved that the anti-British party in Kabul was still in existence in 1920."

At Chamarkand, which is in the independent tribal area between India and Afghanistan, was a centre of the "Hindustan fanatics" who had migrated there in the period of the first world war. In the Gujranwala case of that period evidence was brought forward to show that bombs were imported into Chamarkand to be sent on to India for use against British officers. The judgment maintains that the revolutionary centre was in existence in Chamarkand in May 1921 when Mohammad Akbar visited it on his return to India and remained there for two months.

Mohammad Akbar's membership of these three "conspiracies" is easily "proved" in the judgment. He was in the Tashkent school for at least two months at the end of 1920, according to the oral evidence of witnesses. In Kabul on his way back he was in close touch with Obeidullah, who was looking after the returning muhajirs. Thence he came to Chamarkand and from there contacted his father to find out whether he could safely return to India. His father Hafizullah Khan, according to the judgment was at one time an informant of the CID and was deputed especially to obtain news about the "Hindustani fanatics" of Samara and Chamarkand. On hearing from his son, he used his contacts with the CID officials to find out if his son could safely return home. He also asked for permission to go to Kabul to meet his son. The police authorities instead of giving him a straight reply watched his movements in order to trap Mohammad Akbar. They got the opportunity when he returned to Lahore secretly and was staying with his father and Bahadur in a hotel. They were arrested on 25 September 1921, detained in jail under regulation III of 1818 till May 1922 when the First Peshawar Conspiracy Case was started.

Bahadur's "part in the conspiracy is very minor" according to the judgment. He was not a muhajir. He was a cook with a party

of guides "having special reconnaissance work in Kashgar". Later in 1919 he went with the same party to Persia. The judgment giving these facts says that he "deserted from the party in January 1920 and was discovered to have gone over to the bolsheviks". These "reconnaissance parties" were probably officially-sponsored ventures of the British for conducting spying activities, to find out the possible routes the Indian revolutionaries may use to Soviet Russia both from the Sinkiang-Kashmir border and from the Persian border. The fact that Bahadur deserted this party, "went over to the bolsheviks" in 1920 and later attached himself to Mohammad Akbar whom he met in Afghanistan on his return in 1921, is a proof of his patriotic fervour. Bahadur with his knowledge of mountain routes in the frontier areas was very useful to Mohammad Akbar in his journeys in the tribal area. That is why the judge sentenced him for one year's R.

Mohammad Akbar again figures in the Second Peshawar Conspiracy Case, viz Crown vs Mohammad Akbar, Mohammad Hassan of Baluchistan and Ghulam Mehbub of Peshawar, the session court judgment in which was pronounced on 27 April 1923. He is now charged with smuggling out letters from jail. In July 1922, a few months after he was convicted, the two persons who were coaccused in the next case were arrested and found in possession of letters purporting to emanate from Mohammad Akbar in jail. The original letters were copied and the copies were being taken to the revolutionary centre in Chamarkand. In the first case evidence was brought forward that Mohammad Akbar had brought a simple gelatine copying machine (duplicator) from Kabul to Chamarkand. Now he is writing in these letters to his colleagues in Chamarkand, "what services he could render, that goods should be sent as soon as possible, and that he should be kept up to date in the success of the movement". This means he was planning to set up an underground printing centre in the independent tribal area, when the work was interrupted by his arrest. Undaunted, he is prodding his colleagues in Chamarkand to carry out the plan, to bring out leaflets for distribution in the NWF Province, to keep him informed of the progress of the work. The British-Indian police never got hold of the copying machine nor could they raid the centre in the independent tribal area without complications. All this was not necessary. The letters were enough

to launch another "conspiracy case" and pronounce another sentence on Mohammad Akbar and his colleagues. The same judge passes the new sentence :

"He describes himself, in fact, as an active member of the conspiracy for which Mohammad Akbar had already received sentence. They render him liable to a second sentence."

He is sentenced to "seven years' rigorous imprisonment including 3 months' solitary confinement". A note is added at the end of the judgment : "Mohammad Akbar's sentence will commence on the expiry of the sentence now being undergone." His coaccused were awarded "five years' rigorous imprisonment each, including 3 months' solitary confinement".

The Third Peshawar Conspiracy Case, *Crown vs Akbar Shah and Seven Others*, otherwise known as the Moscow-Tashkent Conspiracy Case, began before the inquiring magistrate of Peshawar on 7 March 1923. By the middle of 1922 government of India's intelligence department got the information that some 16 of the 26 muhajirs who were in the Tashkent school had gone to Moscow to receive training at the Communist University for the Toilers of the East. The confidential home department political files of the government of 1922-23, now available in the National Archives, contain an article on this university as well as a list of the 22 muhajirs trained in Tashkent and Moscow.<sup>4</sup> We also know that the British intelligence had reconnoitred the possible entry routes of Indian revolutionaries, crossing to and from Soviet Russia, both on the Pamir-Chitral border and on the Persian border. It is not surprising therefore that most of the "accused" in this case, who chose the Pamir-Chitral route, were apprehended as soon as they reached the mountain outpost in Chitral. Rafiq Ahmad, who together with Ferozuddin, Abdul Majid and Habib Ahmad was among those who took the Pamir route, records his experiences as his batch reached Chitral in November 1922.

"In the evening we entered the outskirts of Chitral... In the night we reached an inn in the centre of the city... we passed the night in the inn. Before dawn the city inspector entered the inn and instructed us to remain there and not to go anywhere else." Rafiq Ahmad describes further how they were produced in

4. See Volume One, pp. 239, 243-45 and 248-49.

the morning before the private secretary of the ruler of Chitral, who gave them money and a dress each and ordered them to be produced in the court of the British political agent. They were allowed to stay in the city "but a policeman was posted to watch us. It was not difficult to conclude that we were under arrest."<sup>5</sup>

Rafiq Ahmad's statement is confirmed in the session court judgment in the case. This states that "this party of four" were produced before the ruler of Chitral and later before the Indian political agent on 11 November 1922. Three more muhajirs arrived in Chitral a week later and they were also produced before the Indian political agent on 23 November 1922. These three were Sultan Mohammad, Abdul Qadar and Fida Ali, of whom the last later on turned an approver in the case. "Both these batches were sent in custody to Peshawar where they were formally arrested in the middle of December." This accounts for six out of the eight accused in the present case. Of the remaining two, Akbar Shah returned via Afghanistan and the independent tribal area and appeared voluntarily before the assistant commissioner of Nowshera. He was kept under surveillance under security provisions of the law and formally arrested in March 1923.<sup>6</sup> Gauhar Rahman also returned by the same route and made inquiries through his father whether the authorities would allow him to return safely. When he was informed that they demanded his unconditional surrender or be expelled from the Khyber Agency, he surrendered and was arrested on 1 March 1923. Fida Ali, mentioned earlier, and Ghulam Ahmad, who returned by the Persian route and surrendered at Meshed, turned approvers.

The judgment also confirms what we said in the foregoing that the British-Indian intelligence service foresaw the importance of the Pamir route for the Indian revolutionaries and reconnoitred it earlier. S. M. Ewart, the chief of intelligence bureau in Pesh-

<sup>5</sup> Rafiq Ahmad's "Unforgettable Journey" as quoted in S. M. Mehdi's *Story behind the Moscow-Tashkent Conspiracy Cases*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>6</sup> Later Akbar Shah joined the Forward Bloc and was of great assistance to Subhas Bose in making good his escape from India in January 1940. See also articles of Bhagat Ram Talwar in *Blitz* (9, 16, 23, 30 March and 6 April 1968) on this episode. In 1970 Akbar Shah seems to have published two articles in the Urdu press in Pakistan giving his reminiscences.

war, in his deposition before the committing magistrate inquiring this case stated on 7 March 1923 :

"The bolsheviks have for a very long time been trying to establish communication by this route, but it is only within the last six months that they have succeeded in getting agents through, owing to the collapse of antibolshevik forces in Ferghana, following the death of Enver Pasha.<sup>7</sup> The importance to the bolsheviks of the Pamir route has increased since the autumn of 1922. The Afghan government finally turned out of Afghanistan the Indian revolutionaries who had been for a year or more working in the pay of bolshevik minister at Kabul."<sup>8</sup>

The judgment further says that "certain associates of the present accused" in Tashkent and Moscow "have reached other parts of India secretly and have actively carried out revolutionary work". The two names mentioned are Shaukat Usmani and Masood Ali Shah. Of them the former was then a communist leader who figured in the Kanpur Case and later in the Meerut Conspiracy Case. About Masood Ali Shah, the judgment elsewhere says that his "whereabouts are not known"—but as a confidential home department political document of 1923 reveals, he was acting as a spy or agent of the British intelligence chief Cecil Kaye on his second visit to Persia, Berlin and Moscow in 1922. More of this later.

In this case as in the two former cases the same technique is used to obtain a conviction against the accused. Thus it is proved that there is a conspiracy both at Tashkent and Moscow to overthrow the British government established in India and the accused were its members. But in the present case something more is brought forward. Firstly, it is shown that the accused are fully trained to organise revolutionary work in India's national-liberation movement where the main task at that moment was to overthrow the British rule. Secondly, literature, books, pamphlets and journals which make a socioeconomic analysis of

7. The reference is to the Kirghiz counterrevolutionary bands operating in Ferghana in 1919-21, with whom the British consul-general stationed in Kashgar was in close touch.

8. Indian revolutionaries were helped not only by Soviet Russia but also by the Afghan government in those days till the British pressure forced the latter to expel the revolutionaries.

India under British rule, define the nature of the revolutionary work and outline the programme of the national-liberation movement, produced by the CPI abroad are produced in the case, either as found in their possession or as sent on to them. Thirdly, evidence is produced that the communist group already functioning in India then (1923) is asked to take charge of these cadres and put them to work.

The session judge Fraser says in his judgment that the accused "are not being convicted because they adopted pure communism but because they are emissaries of the communism adopted by the bolsheviks and Roy". Later, the session judge in the Kanpur Conspiracy Case said the same thing in different words. Why are the British colonial rulers taking this discriminating attitude towards "pure communism"? The judge Fraser himself explains it :

"In fact it was the whole object of Roy and bolsheviks, for whom Roy was acting, to train Indians as propagandists to come to India and spread doctrines which would eventually create armed rebellion and thereby result in the overthrow of the British government. Accused themselves have been listening and had been deeply steeped in the doctrines for nearly two years. The teachings cannot have been entirely without results."

Referring to Roy's ideas "as revealed in his printed writings in the *Advance Guard* and numerous pamphlets", the judge says :

"This is no peaceful communism. He preaches revolution by force. The revolution in India is to be accomplished by the armed rising of the masses in a struggle to destroy capitalism."

He refers to Qurban's article in the *Advance Guard* of 1 April 1923, which describes the Communist University for the Toilers of the East in Moscow, as an institute only for revolutionary students of the "eastern nations" and concludes :

"The assessors have no hesitation in finding and I agree with them that there were both in Tashkent school and in the Eastern University at Moscow conspiracies which aim principally at the overthrow of British government established in India."

As the accused themselves admit that they were in both the Tashkent school and at the Moscow University their "guilt" as members of the above conspiracy is proved ! Literature, addressed to one of the accused, Habib Ahmad, and intercepted by the

police between September 1922 and March 1923, was produced in the court. It was as follows : 5 copies of *Vanguard of Indian Independence*, Vol I, No 9; 9 copies of *Advance Guard*; *India's Problem and Its Solution* by M. N. Roy; *India in Transition* by M. N. Roy and Abani Mukherji; "A Programme for the Indian National Congress" (manifesto distributed at Gaya); copies of *Vanguard*, Vol II, No 1; "Open Letter to Chittaranjan Das"; *What Do We Want?* by M. N. Roy.

The judgment refers to this as "documentary evidence on the file" which goes to show that "there existed at Tashkent and Moscow conspiracies to overthrow the British government in India".

Apart from this "general literature" the judgment quotes from a letter sent by M. N. Roy to S. A. Dange. That letter is dated 25 December 1922 from Berlin sent to a cover address in Bombay with instructions "to deliver personally to Dange—editor of the *Socialist of Bombay*". The judgment further adds :

"The whole contents are interesting. One portion appears to relate to the present accused or at any rate to a person whose experience in Russia must have been very similar to that of the accused. The passage runs :

"A number of boys who had received their training in Moscow have been sent to India. They are all members of our party (CP of India). Originally they were not very suitable material being khilafat pilgrims on their way to Angora but we got hold of them and could make some of them come over. Their intellectual calibre however is not to the mark nor are they proletarians. But they are good boys and have received a fairly good Marxian training. They will develop in practice. Four of them are already in India and seven more are on the way. One of them, Shaukat Usmani, writes me about you and says that he is trying to get in touch with you. He is a good earnest chap, but rather erratic in his ways. He needs a strong control. I have instructed him to work under your directions and get all our boys in touch with you. We must centralise our activities. Please get hold of these boys and their work (?). You can reach them through Sayyid Imamuddin Razvi, 3rd year BA class student, Hindu University, Benaras, or Usmani. Their first duty is to

build up a paying circulation of our central organ. I hope you will give them detailed instructions how to do it in the northern provinces. One of them can be posted in the harbour of Bombay to organise illegal transportation of literature through the Indian sailors.' ”

This extract mentions that four of those trained in Moscow had already returned and seven were on the way. Considering that Roy is writing in December 1922, the seven were probably the two batches of 4 and 3 respectively who came by the Pamir route and were arrested for this case as we have seen. The four mentioned as having returned already must be *Shaukat Usmani*; *Masood Ali Shah*, *Akbar Shah* and *Gauhar Rahman*. The latter two who arrived earlier by the Afghan and Persian routes respectively were also arrested and charged in this case. Only *Shaukat Usmani* got in touch with Dange. As for the others the police took charge of them before Dange could ! All of them but one were found guilty under section 121-A and sentenced. *Feroz-uddin*, *Abdul Majid*, *Habib Ahmad*, *Sultan Mohammad* and *Rafiq Ahmad* were given one year's rigorous imprisonment each, while *Akbar Shah* and *Gauhar Rahman* got two years' ri each and *Abdul Qadar* was acquitted and released.

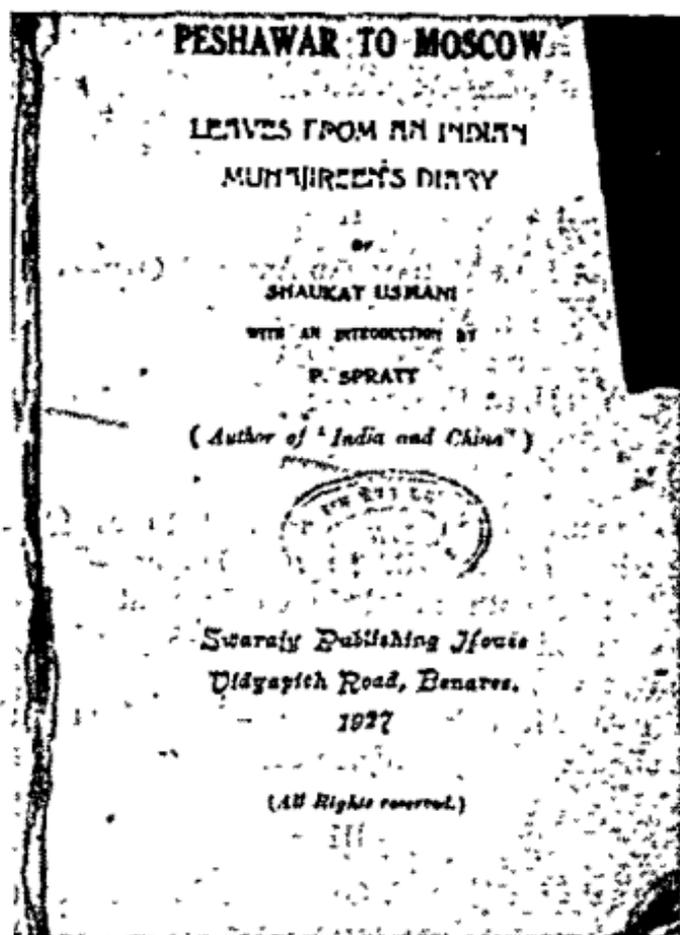
The next Peshawar Conspiracy Case is *Crown vs Mohammad Shafiq*, who surrendered to the police on 10 December 1923. The session court judgment in this case was pronounced on 4 April 1924. He was sentenced to three years' ri under section 121-A for being an "active member" of the "conspiracy" at Tashkent and Moscow already proved ! We have already given a detailed sketch of his life and career in the early twenties, in connection with the formation of CPI in Tashkent of which he was elected the secretary, and in connection with the paper he edited earlier from Tashkent, viz *Zamindar* in Urdu and Persian. Most of these details are quoted from the judgment which gives parts of the statement he made on surrendering. No overt act was proved against *Mohammad Shafiq* as none was proved against the other accused convicted in the other Peshawar conspiracy cases, except that they went to Soviet Russia and got revolutionary training in the schools in Tashkent and Moscow. The judge *G. Gonner* summing up the case against *Shafiq* says : "

"... unlike other Indians at the time with the accused, the

latter was an active agent of the revolutionary party, and unlike his companions who left the country, the accused elected to remain behind and continued his revolutionary work... Before his surrender he visited India as a bolshevik agent... He was sent by Roy on a mission to India."

However the judge held that "it has not been proved that accused had entered India as a bolshevik agent before his surrender".

There was one more important Peshawar Conspiracy Case—in 1927—in which Fazl Ilahi Qurban was tried and sentenced to 3 years' RI exactly on the same charges—that he was in the training schools of Tashkent and Moscow.



Cover page of Shaikat Usmani's book on the adventure of muhajirs.

## 1. DETAILS OF PESHAWAR CONSPIRACY CASES

### I

#### CROWN VS AKBAR QURESHI & OTHERS OF TASHIKENT CONSPIRACY CASE

*Session Judge* : J. H. R. Fraser

*Judgment* : 31 May 1922

*Sentences* :

1. Akbar Qureshi—3 years' ri.
2. Hafizullah Khan—Acquitted.
3. Bahadur—1 year's ri.

### II

#### CROWN VS MOHAMMAD AKBAR & OTHERS

*Inquiry Magistrate* : J. Almond

*Committal to Session* : 7 March 1923

*Session Judge* : J. H. R. Fraser

*Judgment* : 27 April 1923

*Sentences* :

1. Mohammad Akbar (also referred to as Qureshi and Khan) s/o Hafizullah Khan (Haripur)—7 years' ri including 3 months in solitary confinement
2. Mohammad Hassan (Baluchistan)—5 years' ri including 3 months in solitary confinement
3. Ghulam Mehbub (Peshawar)—5 years' ri including 3 months in solitary confinement

### III

#### CROWN VS AKBAR SHAH & OTHERS OF MOSCOW-TASHIKENT CONSPIRACY CASE

*Inquiry Magistrate* : J. Almond

*Committal to Session* : 4 April 1923

Session Judge : J. H. R. Fraser

Judgment : 18 May 1923

Sentences :

1. Akbar Shah (Mian Khel) s/o Bazgul (Badrashi)—2 years' RI.
2. Ferozuddin (Sheikh) s/o Murad Baksh (Sheikhupura)—1 year's RI.
3. Abdul Majid (Mir) s/o Faiz Baksh (Lahore)—1 year's RI.
4. Habib Ahmad (Sayyid) s/o Mushtaq Ahmad (Shahjehanpur)—1 year's RI.
5. Rafiq Ahmad (Sayyid) s/o Nur Ahmad (Bhopal)—1 year's RI.
6. Sultan (Tarin) s/o Abdul Jabbar (Rihana, Hazara district)—1 year's RI.
7. Abdul Qadar (Barkzai) s/o Mohammad Hassan (Peshawar)—Acquitted.
8. Gauhar Rahman (Tarin) s/o Aziz Khan (Darwesh, Hazara district)—2 years' RI.

Approvers :

1. Ghulam Ahmad
2. Fida Ali

#### IV

#### CROWN VS MOHAMMAD SHAFIQ

Session Judge : G. Gonner

Judgment : 4 April 1924

Sentence :

1. Mohammad Shafiq—3 years' RI.

#### V

#### CROWN VS FAZL ILAHI QURBAN OF MOSCOW CONSPIRACY CASE 1927

Sentence :

1. Fazl Ilahi Qurban—5 years' RI (later reduced to 3 years)

## 2. THE 'HIJRAT' MOVEMENT

The present case is the sequel of, though in no way directly connected with, the "hijrat" movement. In the spring of 1920, being dissatisfied with British policy over the khilafat question certain religious leaders proclaimed that British India was no longer a fit place of residence for a pious Mohammedan. Emigration from British India was suggested. This suggestion found special favour in the North-West Frontier Province where religious feelings run high. In consequence thousands of the zamindars of the province hastily sold up their lands and migrated with their families, goods and chattels to the neighbouring Mohammedan country of Afghanistan. For several weeks the roads of the Peshawar district resembled the rear of a retreating army. The local authorities did not discourage the movement. It collapsed through the action of the Amir of Afghanistan whose country was in danger of being swamped by crowds of immigrants who expected to be fed and hoped to find a means of livelihood. In consequence of the Amir's action the great majority of the "muhajarin", as they were called, returned to their homes. The authorities of the Frontier Province set up a special agency to repatriate them and recover for them the lands and property which they had sold.

A very small minority, however, either through religious or other reasons did not at once return to British India. These people were sent by the Afghan authorities to Jabal-ul-Saraj, a small place about 30 miles to the north of Kabul. There they waited for some time in the hope of obtaining land for colonisation. Finally, several of them were sent off and obtained land around Khanabad on the northern boundary of Afghanistan. Others halted at Jabal-ul-Saraj and tired of inaction determined to set out to join the Turks fighting in Anatolia. It is with the movements of two parties of these "muhajarin" that we are concerned. Probably towards the end of July 1920 the first party, consisting of some 80 men, left Jabal-ul-Saraj. The second party followed them some weeks later. A glance at map No 1, attached to this record, will show the extent of country which these men covered during their wanderings. The adventures which they underwent and the hardships which they suffered would

form the subject of an interesting romance. Only the briefest outline, however, is relevant to the present proceedings.

The first party was led by Mohammad Akbar, accused, who was chosen as leader because of his educational qualifications and his acquaintance with English and Persian. The actual journey of this caravan is admitted except in the matter of a few dates. Passing through Mazar Sharif the caravan reached Patar Kesar on the Oxus, the border of Afghanistan and Russian Turkistan. Patar Kesar was in the hands of the Russian bolsheviks, who received the party with every semblance of joy and provided them with free food and lodging. It was here that the first caravan was joined by the second caravan which was under the leadership of one Akbar Jan. Soon after the arrival of the latter, Mohammad Akbar's party set off in two country boats towards Kirki. Just before they reached this place they were captured by the Turkoman residents of the country who were engaged in guerilla warfare against the bolsheviks. They were detained for about a fortnight by their captors and were then released on the approach of some Russian troops. They made their way to Kirki where they and the bolsheviks were besieged by the Turkomans. After about a month a steamer arrived from Charjoi and Mohammad Akbar's party went in it to Charjoi. By this time Mohammad Akbar was no longer the definite leader of the caravan. Apparently at Patar Kesar dissensions had arisen, because Mohammad Akbar and another youth, Abdul Qayum, son of Abdul Hakim Khan, deputy superintendent of police, Lahore, were suspected of being British spies. The muhajarin thought that, if this fact became known, not only Mohammad Akbar and Abdul Qayum but also the whole caravan would get into trouble with the bolsheviks.

At Charjoi the counsels of the party were divided. Some wished to continue the journey by rail to Anatolia; others determined to abandon the migration and return to their homes. In any case emissaries arrived from the Indian party which had been established some time previously at Tashkent and invited the muhajarin to join them there. The bolsheviks evidently also used pressure in the same direction. It was suggested that the party must proceed to Tashkent in order to obtain passports for Anatolia. Accordingly about half the party started off by rail towards Tashkent, some actually reaching Tashkent and other getting no fur-

ther than Bukhara which by that time was also in the hands of the bolsheviks. Half the party refused to go towards Tashkent and after a few days were sent off by rail to Baku.

Mohammad Akbar, accused, was one of the people who went to Tashkent. Tashkent was in the hands of the bolsheviks and they had settled there, at the end of 1919, a party of Indians who styled themselves the "provisional government of India". These were led by one Abdul Rab who was succeeded later by a Bengali called Roy. They had established schools for the training of Indians in propaganda designed to undermine the British government of India. Mohammad Akbar and his friends reached Tashkent probably some time in October 1920. The Indians were first received in what was known as the "India House" which was under the management of Roy. They were fed there free for some three weeks and were then informed that they would have to work for their living. Whether this threat was a mere pretext or whether it was a genuine illusion of bolshevik principles is a matter of doubt. At any rate, some 26 men joined the bolshevik school. This consisted of a large room used both as a dormitory and for lectures and situated a mile or more away from the India House. It was divided into two parts. In one part worked what was known as the infantry class; in the other the more advanced section in the aviation class. In addition to the ordinary military subjects the latter class were trained in three extra subjects—motors, aviation and photography (see evidence of Faqir Mohamed, WP 21). Mohammad Akbar, accused, was one of the people who joined the aviation class.

Others, again, of the Indians who were residing in the India House refused to join the school. They were apparently by this time thoroughly disgusted with the bolshevik doctrines the meaning of which had now become well known to them. Those, therefore, who refused to join the school supported themselves as best they could for a short time, and then managed to slip back to Bukhara and other places whence eventually they returned to Kabul. The length of time that Mohammad Akbar remained at Tashkent is a matter at issue in the present case. At any rate, he apparently arrived back in Kabul on 13 May 1921.

It has been mentioned that several of the Indians refused to go beyond Bukhara. Those who stayed there had to work for

their living and we have heard the evidence of two of them, one of whom worked as a motor-driver and the other was employed in the local militia for several months. They, too, got back to Kabul in the early spring of 1921.

It will be remembered that about half of Mohammad Akbar's party had refused to go north of Charjoi. They were sent off to Baku. In spite of the efforts of the Turkish consul at Baku, they were unable to proceed further, as the Georgian consul at Baku would not give them passports to pass through Georgia. They were therefore returned by the bolsheviks by rail to Tashkent. After a stay there they too obtained passports from Roy and succeeded in getting back to Kabul.

In addition to the parties mentioned above, one set of muhajirin managed to get even further than Baku. To this party belonged Faqir Mohamed (WP 21). After a considerable stay in Tashkent Faqir Mohamed and his friends succeeded in reaching Batum, still with the hope of joining the Turks fighting in Anatolia. They were not destined, however, to get further than Batum, for the Turkish consul there informed them that they were British spies and could go no further.

This party of four men went back to Baku and then determined to make their way back home through Persia. At Enzeli they were unfortunate enough to be involved in the fighting between the bolsheviks and the Persians. They were captured by the Persians, but managed to escape and made their way to Meshed. Thence they returned home via Quetta.

From the above it will be seen that most of those Indians of Mohammad Akbar and Akbar Jan's convoys who wished to return home had congregated again in Kabul by the spring of 1921. They obtained passports from the Afghanistan authorities and the first batch of these returned muhajirin arrived in Peshawar on 3 June 1921. At Peshawar these men were detained for examination by Mr Ewart, officer-in-charge of the intelligence bureau at Peshawar. There was no intention of taking criminal proceedings against the returned emigrants, but their stories were recorded with a view of ascertaining their movements during their year's absence. They were fed and lodged at government expense and were finally sent to their homes. From their statements it appeared that a certain number of them had definitely allied them-

selves with the bolsheviks in Tashkent and had joined the schools there with the definite intention of being trained as bolshevik agents. The name of Mohammad Akbar, accused, was mentioned as one of those who had become probolshevik.

At the beginning of July 1921 it was ascertained that Mohammad Akbar had returned to Kabul and that he had moved on to Chamarkand, the headquarters of the extreme faction of the Hindustani fanatics. About the same time Mohammad Akbar's father, Hafizullah, began to request permission to visit Kabul, partly in order to induce his son to return and partly with the suggestion that he and his son should organise centres of information for the intelligence bureau in Kabul and Chamarkand. Hafizullah, who had at one time been a regular informer of the North-West Frontier Province CID, was at this time working as a paid informant of the Punjab CID at Lahore. His suggestions, which were made to the Punjab CID, were not greeted with enthusiasm by the intelligence bureau at Peshawar, for Mohammad Akbar's journey to Chamarkand combined with his previous training in the bolshevik schools had begun to raise serious suspicions against him. Accordingly, on 8 August 1921, Hafizullah was definitely informed by the deputy commissioner, Hazara, that Mohammad Akbar would only be permitted to reside in the Hazara district if he gave security to be of good behaviour. At the same time Hafizullah was told that, if he wished to visit Kabul himself, he should inform the deputy commissioner of his route and the time of his departure and return. Early in September the authorities received information that Hafizullah and his son, Mohammad Akbar, had been staying together in Lahore. On 25 September 1921 Mohammad Akbar and Bahadur, accused, were arrested on the far side of Shabkadar on the Peshawar border evidently on their way to cross the border into IT. This arrest led to the arrest of Hafizullah himself on 28 September. His house was also searched the same day.

It was in consequence of these arrests that the present proceedings were instituted under sanction by the chief commissioner, North-West Frontier Province, dated 10 October 1921.

(Judgment in *Crown vs. Mohammad Akbar, Bahadur, Hafizullah Khan* delivered by J. H. R. Fraser, ICS, Session Judge, Peshawar, on 31 May 1922)

### 3. MANUFACTURING EVIDENCE

By M. N. ROY

It appears that Lord Curzon is going ~~seriously to work~~ at his new adventure of setting the world on fire and, perchance, of dealing a mortal blow to his already shaken empire. He has thrown the dice, and for the time being his stars are in the ascendency. The resignation of Bonar Law means the purging of the element of vacillation and weakness from the British government, in order to make it the citadel of pure "die-hardism"! The note to Russia was the climax of a premeditated plan to sweep the entire world by a gigantic avalanche of rank reaction. For the realisation of this plan, all the available machineries are set in motion, Marshal Foch is looking over the ground and counting his men and guns. Mr Baldwin's plants have begun manufacturing munitions.

There is another side of this drama which passes unnoticed, but whose importance is by no means insignificant. The question of propaganda is the crux of the Curzon note. The souls of the "murdered" priests are now allowed to rest in peace. The reasonable attitude of the Soviet government on the question of the captured travellers and of the so-called Weinstein notes takes the fire out of Lord Curzon's gun, as far as these issues are concerned. So there remains only the question of propaganda. If the British government is determined to break off relations with Russia, the break must take place on this issue. When "unconditional satisfaction" is demanded, it is this bugbear of propaganda against the empire that the British government has in view. When the question of propaganda plays such an important role in the whole crisis, it is necessary to watch what preparations are being made to give it the most formidable appearance. It seems that Curzonian politics have gone mad; but there is method in this madness. Manufacturing evidence to prove that the Soviet government has been persistently carrying on propaganda, has been going on methodically. These evidence-factories are situated in northern India. Till the publication of the Curzon note they worked busily but secretly. They burst out with sudden discoveries in the days immediately following the publication of the note. As soon as Lord Curzon pointed his accusing fingers to-

wards Soviet Russia, evidence began to pour in to show how true the noble lord's assertions were. As if by magic, "bolshhevik agents" were arrested in India.

On 11 May, 'Reuter telegraphed from Allahabad the arrest of one Shaukat Usmani in Cawnpore, on a charge of possessing seditious literature. It was by no means an unprecedented incident in India. Arrest on such a charge is very familiar there. But the arrest of Shaukat Usmani was telegraphed out to England, and the *Times* published it in big headlines very prominently: "Soviet Plot Discovered—Bolshevik Agent Arrested." For several days the English press was regularly supplied from various points of northern India with sensational news about the "red propaganda". The detection of "propaganda centres in close connection with Moscow" was ominously proclaimed. Even 'nationalist leaders without the slightest blemish of bolshevism and the eminently respectable Trade Union Congress, which maintains closer connection with the fabian imperialists of Eccleston Square than with the Indian toilers, were accused of receiving money from Moscow.

The manufacture of evidence thus begun with the telegram about the arrest of Shaukat Usmani has now assumed quite a definite shape. According to the *Morning Post* despatch, the number of bolshevik agents arrested in India is seventy. Now there is a little discrepancy in this figure. All these accused persons are supposed to be members of the "red propaganda host" trained in Moscow and smuggled into India evidently through some ethereal or subterranean channel. But the original accusation in the note, to substantiate which this evidence is manufactured, does not mention more than seven. May we ask: whence did the other sixty-three come? Lord Curzon needs strong evidence; but the excessive zeal of the Indian police gives away the game.

We can explain how seventy bolshevik agents were arrested in India in order to prove the existence of the seven alleged by Lord Curzon. It is so. Out of the 30,000 Indian Moslems, who emigrated on account of the khilafat propaganda in 1920, three hundred-odd reached Turkestan on their way to Angora. These men had undergone terrible hardship in Afghanistan. They arrived at Bokhara almost starved and in rags, having been held several weeks in captivity by the Ferghana rebels, from whom they were rescued by the Red Army. Out of mere feelings of humanity the

then revolutionary government of Bokhara as well as Turkestan offered these emigrants their hospitality. In order to have a rest and to prepare for their journey to Angora, the emigrants accepted this hospitality and passed several months in Tashkent. This stay of a band of fanatic religious emigrants in Turkestan gave origin to the stories of propaganda and military schools where thousands of Indian revolutionaries were trained. Finding it impossible to proceed farther, the emigrants returned homewards. Upon their arrival on the Indian borders they were promptly arrested. As very few of these emigrants were revolutionaries, it required very little persuasion and lucre to buy off their services in return for their release from jail. With this material, the so-called "bolshevik investigation department" was organised as an adjunct to the infamous criminal investigation department. It is this bolshevik investigation department which supplies Lord Curzon with the material for his notes, and which has of late been very busy manufacturing evidence to bear out the case made by his lordship. The additional sixty-three "arrested bolshevik agents" are recruited evidently from the army of these returned emigrants, retained at some cost by the bolshevik investigation department at Peshawar.

Shaukat Usmani and the "others arrested after him", whose names, however, are kept hidden in mystery, are reported to have been sent to Peshawar, where their trial will take place. This trial is staged to bring to light volumes of evidence as to how the Soviet government has persistently violated the trade agreement since it was signed. A large number of Indians, alleged to have been trained in the propaganda schools at Tashkent, will make detailed statements containing a detailed account of the activities of the bolsheviks. Thus is laid the ground for crucifying the Soviet government on the question of propaganda.

So much for the anti-Russian conspiracy of Curzonian die-hardism. Now a few words about Shaukat Usmani and those who are supposed to be arrested with him. The crime of these men is that they had been in Russia, that they were engaged in communist propaganda, and that some communist literature has been found in their possession. Supposing that all these charges are true, is the guilt of the Soviet government established? If to have been in Russia is a crime, why is Mr George Lansbury a

member of the British parliament and Shaukat Usmani a prisoner? Why is Mrs Snowden a respectable British subject and an Indian youth considered to be an enemy of the empire? There is more than one communist in Great Britain; why is it such a dreadful thing for an Indian to be a communist? Communist literature is legally published in England, why are a few leaflets exhorting the Indian workers and peasants to organise in the defence of their interests enough to convict a number of individuals as "rebels against the king"? These are some very pertinent questions which the British proletariat should be called upon to face if the situation created by the Curzon note is to be met in its truly comprehensive character and solved properly.

We put these questions to the British Labour Party because the above mentioned evidences are manufactured for their satisfaction. The support of the Labour Party has to be secured for the war that Curzon is planning. Part of the price for this support will be the prosecution of youthful leaders of the Indian proletariat, and the brutal suppression of the nascent Communist Party of India. The monstrosity of this persecution can be imagined from the fact that attempts to organise a workers' and peasants' party within the limits of the pseudo-constitution have been branded as "bolshevik". We will not be surprised if the sixty-three "bolshevik agents" manufactured in the factory of Peshawar give evidence to the effect that the men engaged in the organisation of this legal party are paid from Moscow.

The entire world is threatened by the blackest reaction. The advanced section of the proletariat under the leadership of the Communist International is alone capable of meeting the situation, of taking up the challenge and giving Lord Curzon the only answer he deserves.

Where does the British Labour Party stand in this crisis?

*(Inprecor, Vol 3, No 40, 31 May 1923)*

### 3. Protest against Chauri Chaura Prosecutions and Sentences

#### INTRODUCTION

There have been several local peasant uprisings in India in the course of the noncooperation movement of 1920-22, but the incident which took place on 4 February 1922 at Chauri Chaura in Gorakhpur district (UP) attained historic celebrity because, after the full details of this incident became known to Gandhiji a couple of days later from a report in the *Bombay Chronicle*, he immediately came to the conclusion that individual and mass civil disobedience movement has to be suspended and he called a meeting of the Congress Working Committee to take the decision. The Working Committee met at Bardoli on 11 and 12 February 1922 and adopted a resolution which stated that, in view of the fact that "the atmosphere in the country is not nonviolent enough for mass disobedience, the latest instance being the tragic and terrible events at Chauri Chaura near Gorakhpur, the Working Committee of the Congress resolves that mass civil disobedience contemplated at Bardoli and elsewhere be suspended and instructs the local Congress committees forthwith to advise the cultivators to pay the land revenue and the other taxes due to the government and whose payment might have been suspended in anticipation of mass civil disobedience, and instructs them to suspend every other preparatory activity of an offensive nature."<sup>1</sup>

1. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 22, pp. 377-78.

The meeting of the All India Congress Committee held on 25 February 1922 at Delhi passed the resolution with modifications. Gandhiji in his article "The Crime at Chauri Chaura" in *Young India* dated 15 February 1922 gave the details of the incident in the following words .

"I understand that the constables who were so brutally hacked to death had given much provocation. They had gone back upon the word just given by the inspector that they would not be molested, but when the procession had passed the stragglers were interfered with and abused by the constables. The former cried out for help. The mob returned. The constables opened fire. The little ammunition they had was exhausted and they returned to the thana for safety. The mob, my informant tells me, therefore set fire to the thana. The self-imprisoned constables had to come out for dear life and as they did so, they were hacked to pieces and the mangled remains were thrown into raging flames."<sup>2</sup>

Gandhiji's account supplements and confirms the account given in M. N. Roy's article "Legal Murder in India". There is one difference. Roy's article seems to suggest that the Congress volunteers were a considerable part of the mass which retaliated against the police. Gandhiji on the other hand in his article quoted above says :

"It is claimed that no noncooperation volunteer had a hand in the brutality and that the mob had not only the immediate provocation but they had also general knowledge of the high-handed tyranny of the police in that district."<sup>3</sup>

However Gandhiji did not lay much stress on differentiating Congress volunteers from the mass who accompanied them. In a letter to Jawaharlal Nehru, who was then in jail, Gandhiji wrote on 19 February 1922 : ". . . but the brutal murder of the constables by an infuriated crowd which was in sympathy with noncooperation cannot be denied. Nor can it be denied that it was a politically-minded crowd."<sup>4</sup>

Gandhiji was fully aware of the provocation by the police and the blanket repression against the Congress movement in Gorakhpur—which makes the retaliatory action of the masses understand-

able and such incidents are part of the rising resistance of the masses to despotic rule. But Gandhiji picked upon the Chauri Chaura incident to withdraw the struggle. He said, "Mob violence even in answer to grave provocation is a bad augury... Nonviolent noncooperators commonly succeeded when they have succeeded in attaining control over the hooligans of India, in other words, when the latter also have learned patriotically or religiously to refrain from their violent activities at least whilst the campaign of noncooperation is going on."<sup>5</sup>

Actually what Gandhiji called "the violent activities of the hooligans of India" were resistance actions of patriotic elements and masses against police rule and its repression. They always accompanied the noncooperation movement whenever it was launched. It was not only in 1920-22 but in 1930-33 and much more so in 1942. Gandhiji made the Chauri Chaura incident the excuse for withdrawing the noncooperation struggle in 1922. It was a betrayal of the great movement when its tempo was in the ascendant. It created a bitter disappointment among the rank and file of the Congress and even among the closest colleagues of Gandhiji. Jawaharlal Nehru expressed his sharp disagreement to Gandhiji from jail. It gave a handle to imperialism to step up its campaign of repression, Gandhiji was arrested on 10 March and the first noncooperation movement came to an end.

Gandhiji himself was assailed with doubts: "Surely it is cowardly to withdraw the next day after pompous threats to the government and promises to the people of Bardoli."<sup>6</sup> But he rejected this as an "invitation to deny truth and, therefore, religion and to deny god himself".<sup>7</sup> He admits that some Working Committee members and his associates "did not all agree with me. Some of them probably do not even now agree with me."<sup>8</sup>

But under Gandhiji's insistence, the Working Committee passed the resolution. He himself was convinced that it was the only right thing to do. In an answer to Jawaharlal's bitter letter he wrote: "I assure you that if the thing had not been suspended, we would have been leading not a nonviolent struggle but

5. *Ibid.*, p. 416.6. *Ibid.*7. *Ibid.*8. *Ibid.*, pp. 416-17.

essentially a violent struggle."<sup>9</sup> All the same he was affected by Nehru's letter. He wrote to him, "I want a cheering letter from you after the freezing dose you have sent me through Pyarelal."<sup>10</sup>

It is significant that it was after the withdrawal of the struggle that Gandhiji wrote the famous article, "Shaking the Manes" in answer to the insolent challenge of Lord Birkenhead and for which he was tried and sentenced in March 1922: "If the existence of our empire were challenged... the challenge will be answered with all the vigour and determination at its command."<sup>11</sup> In this article Gandhiji wrote:

"No empire intoxicated with the red wine of power and plunder of weaker races has yet lived long in this world and this 'British empire', which is based upon organised exploitation of physically weaker races of the earth and upon continuous exhibition of brute force cannot live if there is a just god ruling the universe. . .

"... it is high time that the British people were made to realise that the fight that was commenced in 1920 is a fight to the finish, whether it lasts one month or one year or many months or many years, and whether the representatives of British reenact all the indescribable orgies of the Mutiny days with redoubled force or whether they do not."<sup>12</sup>

It should also be noted that the AICC resolution, which confirmed the Working Committee resolution, emphasised "that the resolutions of the Working Committee do not mean any abandonment of the original Congress programme of noncooperation or permanent abandonment of mass civil disobedience but considers that an atmosphere of necessary mass nonviolence can be established by the workers concentrating upon the constructive programme framed by the Working Committee at Bardoh".<sup>13</sup>

Later, just on the eve of his arrest, in an article entitled "If I Am Arrested", Gandhiji had again to emphasise that the struggle would be resumed:

"If the atmosphere clears up, the people realise the full value of the adjective 'civil' and become in reality nonviolent both in spirit and in deed, and if I find that the government still do not yield to the people's will, I shall certainly be the first person

9 Ibid, p. 436.

12. Ibid, p 458.

10. Ibid, p. 437.

13. Ibid, p 463

11. Ibid, p 457.

to advocate individual or mass civil disobedience, as the case may be. There is no escape from that duty without the people wishing to surrender their birthright."<sup>14</sup>

All these extracts from Gandhiji's contemporary writings go to show that there was confusion in the ranks and leading cadres of the noncooperation movement as a result of the precipitate withdrawal of the struggle after the Chauri Chaura incident. Neither the assurance of the AICC resolution (25 February 1922) that it was not a "permanent abandonment of mass civil disobedience movement", nor Gandhiji's assertion that he would be the first to restart it "as soon as the atmosphere clears up" succeeded in remedying the harm done by the sudden withdrawal. As stated earlier, after the arrest of Gandhiji on 10 March 1922, the movement slowly declined.

Gandhiji continued to hold that he was quite right and justified in withdrawing the struggle and he defended his stand in terms of his religious philosophy of "nonviolence". At the same time it is also true that in the later mass civil disobedience movements of the early thirties and of 1942 many incidents like Chauri Chaura took place, but there was no repetition of the Bardoli resolution. Towards the end of 1929, on the eve of the Lahore session after the Congress had decided to readopt the complete independence resolution and to launch the mass civil disobedience movement, Gandhiji visited the communist prisoners in Meerut jail. After communicating the impending decisions of the Congress on complete independence and on the launching of nationwide struggle to the communists, he asked them what differences now remained between him and them. On this S. A. Dange, on behalf of the communist prisoners, asked the Mahatma a pointed question: "If again a Chauri Chaura incident takes place in the course of the coming struggle, would he again withdraw the struggle?" Dange has gone on record to state that Gandhiji's reply was in the negative. There is no record available of this interview though D. G. Tendulkar's *Mahatma*<sup>15</sup> records that it took place some time before 24 November 1929.

Finally it is necessary to point out that the Chauri Chaura incident was not just a crime perpetrated by a "hooligan" crowd.

14 Ibid, Vol. 23, p. 37.

15 Vol. 2, p. 497.

It was a heroic episode in the first noncooperation movement, the main feature of which was the spontaneous upsurge of the peasant masses who were roused to the spirit of national consciousness by Gandhiji's militant slogans of noncooperation with the satanic government and "Swaraj within a year". The Allahabad high court judgment on the Chauri Chaura appeals delivered on 30 April 1923—a document of some 100 printed pages, gives interesting details of the happenings in Gorakhpur district, which confirm the above conclusion.

It was a long-drawn-out trial in which there were 225 accused, while the police had implicated over a thousand persons. The session trial commenced on 21 June 1922, some four months after the incident. The recording of evidence commenced on 23 October and the session court judgment was pronounced on 9 June 1923. The appeal preferred on behalf of the 172 accused sentenced to death came up for hearing before a bench of the Allahabad high court composed of the chief justice and justice T. C. Pigott and the judgment was delivered on 30 April 1923.

The incident took place in the village *Chaura* near the police thana. The village *Chauri* is situated near about and in between is the railway station known as *Chauri Chaura*. Peasants of some 60 villages round about participated in the movement but the bulk of the 3-4 thousand who actually marched to the thana came from two villages Dumkhel and from Chaura itself. Mass activity in pursuance of noncooperation movement in Gorakhpur district and particularly in this part began after the visit of Gandhiji in February 1921. National volunteers were formed. They were recruited from the peasants. They were composed of Congress and khilafat volunteers, who acted together in the spirit of Hindu-Muslim unity which was the remarkably dominant feature of the first noncooperation movement. "The volunteers were taught to police their own villages and tribunals were set up to which peasants were urged to refer their disputes in place of the existing courts of justice." The volunteers were pledged to non-violence and to loyalty to the movement. The British rulers were not slow to recognise the significance of national volunteers as a militant organisation. It was declared an "unlawful association" and banned by a notification of 22 November 1921 which was published in the Gazette on 26 November 1921.

The peasant volunteer organisation continued despite the ban. Its main activity was in tune with the current noncooperation programme, viz picketing of liquor as well as toddy and ganja shops. To this the volunteers added the item of picketing meat and fish shops and demanding the reduction of prices of these articles of their consumption. The campaign was to start in Mundera bazar which was a little north of Chaura police station on February 1923.

The judgment points out that the peasants were suffering severely from high prices "and were convinced that the traders... were profiteering". On 1 February which was a bazar day some 40 volunteers had assembled in the Mundera bazar. Merchants had alerted the police and both police and merchants were trying to persuade the volunteers to abandon the campaign. Volunteers were unable to do much on that day and were saying that they would come back on the next bazar day which was on 4 February 1922. But on that day an incident occurred which sparked off the explosion. The subinspector Gupteshwar Singh who headed the police party at Mundera bazar on that day thought that the trouble could be evaded by giving a threat and a thrashing to the leader of the volunteers. The police officer was blissfully ignorant of the fact that one year of noncooperation movement had transformed the peasantry of the country. The inspector called the leader of the volunteers—one Bhagwan Ahir, an army pensioner, who had done service in Mesopotamia in the first world war, and who was giving drill training to the volunteers. The inspector not only shouted at Bhagwan Ahir, but as the judgment records, he "lost his temper and struck (Bhagwan Ahir) with cane and with open hand".

The news of this insult spread like wild fire in the neighbouring villages. Lal Muhammad, one of the volunteers, wrote to the local khilafat office: "The local volunteers had been roused by the outrageous conduct of the subinspector of Chaura to such a state of indignation that if the officials would only give the word, they were prepared to teach that officer and the police generally a signal lesson."<sup>16</sup>

Lal Muhammad requested the local khilafat office to send some

one to look into the matter. Neither the khilafat nor the Congress seems to have sent anybody to the villages. The judgment makes no mention of this.

The peasant volunteers organised a meeting on their own at Dumrikhel—a village a couple of miles away from Chaura police thana. Some 1500 were assembled at the meeting, most of whom were from Dumrikhel and Chaura and a sprinkling from the other 60 villages around. The meeting was well prepared in advance for the day's campaign. It was addressed by a number of speakers. One Jagat Narain appealed to them to disperse saying that armed police was posted at the Chaura police thana. Two Muslim speakers came and addressed the meeting invoking the name of Shaukat Ali and Muhammad Ali, who were then in jail. From among the peasant volunteers, Nazar Ali, Lal Muhammad and Shyamsunder opposed the advice to disperse.

"Eventually Nazar Ali carried the entire meeting with him in a resolution that they were to march in a body first to Chaura police thana to ask from the subinspector the explanation why he had beaten the volunteer and thence to march to Mundera bazar to stop the sale of intoxicants, meat and fish."

The crowd marched in the direction of Chaura police thana after the meeting. It carried flags on bamboo poles and was shouting slogans. It had swelled to 3000 and more by the time it reached the outskirts of the police thana. It was led by Nazar Ali, Shyamsunder and Shikari (he turned approver later). The judgment describes the mood of the crowd as it was halted at this point by the subinspector and his force of armed chowkidars in the following words :

"We take it that there was perceptible in the spirit of this crowd that sort of magnetic force which the ancient Greeks ascribed as supernatural influence and which has often been noted as emanating from an army destined to be victorious in an impending encounter. Psychologically it has its basis in the recognition on the part of each member of the force that those around him are animated by the same spirit which he feels in himself; he knows that if he elects to go forward, he will not go forward alone."<sup>17</sup>

It is clear that the judges are forced to recognise the courage and the resolution of the peasant masses and they seek to give a superficial psychological explanation of the same. They however knew that the courage of the peasants assembled there was born out of the national consciousness and national unity inspired in them by the noncooperation movement and the Hindu-Muslim unity forged in its course. This also inspired in them the resolution to resist the oppressive rule of the foreign power of which the outrageous actions of the local police was the direct expression. That the judges knew this is clear from the arguments they make to justify the reduction of 170 death sentences passed by the session judge to 19, while commuting the sentences in the rest of the cases to transportation for life with concrete recommendations for clemency for different groups.

On page 91 of the judgment, the judges point out that though in case the charge of murder under section 302/149 IPC is proved, the sentence of death is "the normal and appropriate punishment", the court may, where it sees fit, pass the lesser sentence of transportation for life, but in that case it must record its reason for doing so. The session judge held that it was impossible to give such reasons in any of the 170 cases in which he had pronounced the death sentence. The high court judges disagreed with the session judge on this point but refused to argue the same in detail as they did not want to appear "to extenuate the savage nature of the crime or to come forward as the apologists of the lawlessness of the crowd".

All the same they were forced to state the following: "We take account, nevertheless, of the fact that this crime grew out of a political agitation." But we cannot expect the high court judges, the custodians of the "law and order" of foreign imperialist rule, to see this connection between the action of the peasants and the spirit inspired in them by the noncooperation movement and the message of Gandhiji in a straightforward way. The tendentious comment of the judges was in keeping with the usual imperialist propaganda. They wrote, "the ignorant peasants were drawn into the business by misrepresentation of facts and preposterous promises concerning the millennium of 'swaraj' in the fight for which they had to muster "courage and resolution on their part". The judges also remarked that some peasants were apparently in-

fluenced by blind faith in Gandhiji and by the belief that the Mahatma was "a worker of miracles".

Despite this attitude, the judges did take into account the background of the political movement and its uplifting influence on the peasants, without admitting the same, as well as the provocation given to them by the overbearing behaviour of the police officers in assessing the incident itself and in reconsidering the death sentences passed against nearly 150 of the accused.

The session court had sentenced 172 accused to death; of these two died in jail. In the case of these 170, who had preferred their appeal before the high court, the verdict pronounced by the bench was as follows: 38 were acquitted as the high court held that no charge was proved against them; 3 were sentenced for 2 years; 129 were held guilty of the murder charge under the relevant section.

The sentences pronounced on these 129 were as follows: death sentences were confirmed on 19 as in their case it was held to be proved that they had taken "prominent part in the crime", in the case of the remaining 110 the death sentence was reduced to transportation for life and reasons were given for the same.

In the light of these reasons the 110 were classified in four lists for clemency recommendations in the following way: 14—List A. no recommendation for clemency; 19—List B: recommended reduction to 8 years R; 57—List C. recommended reduction to 5 years R; 20—List D. recommended release after 3 years.

The Congress leadership in those days did nothing whatsoever to defend the Chauri-Chaura prisoners in the court or otherwise help them or their kith and kin in any way. They took the cue from Gandhiji's own instructions. Writing to Devdas Gandhi on 12 February 1922, the Mahatma wrote:

"Am fasting till Friday evening by way of penance and warning people who, with my name on lips, have brutally hacked constables to death. Strongly advise wrongdoers confess guilt and deliver themselves to authorities."<sup>18</sup>

In an interview given to the *Bombay Chronicle*, Gandhiji repeated the same idea. He was asked, what about the 15,000 pri-

18 This was an intended telegram mentioned in the letter to Devdas Gandhi. That is why the language is telegraphic. See *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 22, pp 397-98.

soners in jail and whether he would discover some form of resistance to get them released? Gandhiji replied: "The issue has been changed by the Gorakhpur tragedy. The Congress must, for the time being, sacrifice the prisoners. They must suffer for the popular misdeeds at Gorakhpur."<sup>19</sup>

All this is confirmed by what Sampurnanand, then a leftwing Congress leader, said in his speech before the UP political conference in October 1922.<sup>20</sup>

At the end, it is necessary to record how the British rulers, taking advantage of the forthright condemnation of the peasant action at Chauri Chaura by Gandhiji, vainly sought to glorify the police and their police rule. In their official annual report submitted to the British parliament, it is reported that "the interest excited by the unveiling of the memorial to the body of the police who were cruelly murdered in performance of their duty at Chauri Chaura affords grounds for hoping that the heavy obligations owed to the Indian police by the peaceful inhabitants of the country is being recognised." (!) It is also recorded there that "a cenotaph" raised to their memory, bore the words: "To guard my people" and was unveiled by the British governor of UP.<sup>21</sup>

The British rulers were not erecting a memorial for the poor Indian police who were their tools and their victims, but to the police state which they had set up to strangle the political life of the country which was then throbbing with the onward march for independence. That "cenotaph", never known to people even in those days, is long forgotten. But the martyrdom of the peasant fighters of Chauri Chaura will remain enshrined in the grateful memory of our people for ever.

The documents produced here are mostly articles from the Indian communist press printed abroad. We have not been able to trace any article on the subject from the *Socialist*. The case was widely reported and commented upon in the contemporary Indian dailies, both official and nationalist. It was mainly from this source that M. N. Roy who wrote these articles and memoranda got the information.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 408.

20. Quoted in *Vanguard*, 15 November 1922, see text below.

21. *India in 1923-24*, p. 83

## 1. LEGAL MURDER IN INDIA

By M. N. Roy

Out of 228 men put on trial for "rioting and arson" at Chauri Chaura, 172 have been sentenced to death, and six men have practically suffered the same penalty, because they died in jail of maltreatment during the trial which lasted almost a full year. Even the records of the British government in India cannot produce an instance of imperialist "justice" which surpasses this one in its majestic vindictiveness and brutality.

The incidents that led up to this legalised murder were as follows: In February 1921, the agrarian revolt in the United Provinces where feudalism reigns supreme had reached a very acute stage. Ignorant of the social-revolutionary character of this discontent of the poor peasantry, the nationalist noncooperators turned towards this spontaneous outburst to utilise it for their political agitation. The result was that the rebellious peasantry readily responded to the call of the nationalist agitators, and took up the slogans of noncooperation. It was just at the time when the Congress and particularly Gandhi was talking very much about mass civil disobedience, the main slogan of which was to be non-payment of rents and taxes. This electrified the imagination of the exploited peasantry, weighed down generation after generation under exorbitant land rents and innumerable kinds of feudal dues exacted by the landlords. The vision of the day when they would not have to bear all these burdens inspired the peasantry who, all over the province, rose in revolt to overthrow the British raj, which to them was landlord raj, and to establish "swaraj", which they called Gandhi raj. The entire province was like a volcano and the authorities were extremely alarmed.

Thousands of villagers joined the Congress volunteer corps, and in addition to the campaign of attack against the properties of the landlords, took active part in the picketing of the sale of foreign articles and liquor in the market places. Everywhere they came into conflict with the police forces. On 2 February the

volunteer pickets were fired upon by the armed police in a market, owned by a landlord notorious for his loyalty to the government and tyranny over the tenants. Two days later the volunteer corps, swelled to almost 3000 strong by peasants from the adjoining villages, decided to renew their activities in the same bazar. On their way they had to pass by the police station at Chauri Chaura, at which point they were attacked by the police. After some exchange of brickbats, the police opened fire on the crowd which grew furious and attacked the police station, set fire to it and 21 policemen were killed in the affray. Naturally the casualties on the other side must have been much greater, in view of the fact that while everyone in the police station used firearms, the volunteers had scarcely any. The government has always been very careful in putting the number of the killed and wounded among the volunteers as low as possible. But it is not hard to imagine the result of firing volleys on a crowd of over three thousand unarmed peasants. A correspondent of the loyalist press wrote: "The police must have fired on the mob in earnest, but whether it was before the rush or after it I cannot say."

From Chauri Chaura, the revolt spread in all directions but the forces of law and order were mercilessly brought to bear upon the situation, and what would otherwise have been a peaceful demonstration of the exploited masses ended in a bloodbath. Armed police and military forces were used freely to "protect life and property" and scores of lives of the expropriated peasantry were sacrificed. In a few days, a government communique declared the "situation well in hand", all the centres of disturbance being "under military control".

Thus was drowned in blood the voice of the exploited peasantry, driven to premature action by government provocation and the ignorance of the nationalist agitators. Hundreds of arrests were made; 228 of the prisoners were finally sent up for trial. They were charged with "murder, arson and being members of an unlawful assembly". After a trial which lasted 8 months, bourgeois justice has pronounced its verdict: 172 will be "hanged by the neck until dead".

The facts speak for themselves. No comments are necessary. This justice surpasses in brutality the doctrine of "an eye for

an eye and a tooth for a tooth". 172 lives must be taken to pay for 22. But bourgeois justice conveniently forgets about scores of poor peasantry that fell before the rifles of the police and military. Who is going to avenge these soldiers of freedom? Not bourgeois justice, but their own class when victorious. The reason for such brutal ferocity, and the incidents that preceded and followed it, is that in Chauri Chaura, the growth of a force threatening the rights of the landlords was to be noticed. British imperialism has proved how ably it will defend the property of those loyal to it. 172 lives will be sacrificed on the altar of landlordism in league with imperialism. A lesson for the nationalists.

(*Inprecor*, Vol 3, No 9, 24 January 1923)

## 2. AN APPEAL TO THE LABOUR UNIONS OF INDIA

Workingmen and Workingwomen !

The world has been shocked to hear of that prostitution of justice which has condemned to death 172 of the men arrested more than a year ago after the revolt of the exploited peasantry in the district of Gorakhpur was drowned in blood. These men are to be executed with the sanction of the "law", ostensibly because of their participation in the riot at Chauri Chaura, in which 22 policemen were killed. 172 men, the majority of whom are poor cultivators driven to revolt by the pressure of unbearable exploitation by the government as well as by the taluqdars, are condemned to death in revenge for the lives of 22 policemen who fell in upholding "law and order". In other words, the crime of these men was that they dared to assert their right to live and challenged the authority which orders them to toil and starve perpetually. Chauri Chaura was the scene of the revolt not only against the government but also against the established order of society, against the sacred right of property—of landlordism. Hence the hand of repression has come down there in its naked brutality, first as armed forces firing upon an unarmed mob, then in the wholesale arrest of all implicated and

lastly as this legal massacre. This cannot be denounced too strongly.

While 172 brave soldiers of freedom are standing at the foot of gallows, the National Congress which called upon the peasantry to act remains silent, content with expressing pious horror at this "barbarous violence" which overshadows the "atrocious violation of nonviolence" at Chauri Chaura. Those who have exhausted their vocabulary in condemning the government law courts today pathetically hope that an appeal to the higher courts will save the lives of these men. Not a finger is raised, not a step taken, to rescue these men from the jaws of death. They are left to the mercy of a merciless enemy.

The reason for this inactivity and indifference of the Congress is obvious. We do not desire to expose that reason here. What we want at this moment is to take some vigorous effective steps to save those comrades of ours from the gallows or life-long transportation to which at best the sentence can be reduced by the high court.

Workers of India, it depends on you to save these men. No idle resolutions, no expressions of horror, no criticism of imperialist justice will be of any avail. These men stand at the door of death as a result of their courage in responding enthusiastically to the call of noncooperation, and they can be saved only by effective noncooperation, which no other section of the people but you—the producers of everything, the life blood of society—can declare to enforce the demand for the release of your condemned comrades.

Workingmen and workingwomen of India! Demand the release of the Chauri Chaura victims under the threat of general strike. Do not permit the upper-class leaders to sabotage this urgent action in defence of your class, and in protest against the barbarity of imperialist justice. Such an action on your part will have the sympathy of and will be supported by the revolutionary proletariat of the world.

Workingmen and workingwomen of India! Declare general strike and save these soldiers of freedom.

For the Communist Party of India

12 February 1923.

M. N. Roy

(*Vanguard*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1 March 1923)

### 3. MANIFESTO OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL ON THE CHAURI CHAURA SENTENCE

To the Workers of all Countries !

Imperialist justice has condemned 172 men to death in India. One year ago 228 men were arrested on the charge of having participated in a riot which resulted in the burning down of the police station at Chauri Chaura and the killing of 22 policemen. *One hundred and seventy-two men are to be executed in revenge for the death of 22 policemen who fell while defending "law and order".* The atrocity of this legal murder is unparalleled even in the bloody history of British rule in India. 172 Indian peasants are going to be hanged while the curtain is hardly down upon the bloody drama of the Moplah massacre and while brutal repression has not yet succeeded in quelling the rebellion of the Sikh peasants. The revolt of the colonial masses has attained such dangerous proportions that imperialism has inaugurated a veritable reign of terror to maintain its position.

Since 1919 India has been a scene of mass murder and brutal repression. Beginning with Amritsar, British imperialism has gone on making free use of tanks, bombing-planes, machineguns and bayonets in order to drown the rebellious people in rivers of blood. The jails of the country contain more than 30,000 men and women arrested and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment for taking part in the nationalist movement. 6689 poor peasants of Malabar (Moplahs) are undergoing penal servitude. Five of them have been hanged and 70 suffocated to death. 5600 Sikh peasants of the Punjab are lying in jail, beaten and maltreated. To add to this inglorious record another 172 men are to be sent to the gallows.

The great majority of these condemned men belong to the poor peasantry, which was driven to revolt under the unbearable burden of war taxation and unprecedentedly high prices. The revolt was directed simultaneously against the native landlords and foreign government, both of which jointly suck the blood of the peasantry. The revolt was expressed in the form of huge mass demonstrations under nationalist slogans and direction.

These demonstrations were peaceful since the leaders of the nationalist movement are petty-bourgeois pacifists believing in the cult of nonviolence. But imperialism would not suffer even a peaceful demonstration of the unarmed masses. A procession of about 3000 people was fired upon from the police station of Chauri Chaura by which it was passing towards the nearby market in order to picket the sale of foreign cloth. This act of provocation infuriated the peaceful demonstrators who attacked the police station, all the inmates of which were killed in the affray. The casualty on the side of the insurgents was never disclosed; but the result of firing volleys upon a crowd of 3000 can be easily imagined. The fury quickly spread in the surrounding districts and developed into a dangerous agrarian uprising, which was suppressed by military forces rushed to the spot. Number of those perishing at the merciless hands of "law and order" is not known. Upon the suppression of the revolt a considerable number of men were arrested, 228 of whom were sent up for trial under the charge of "murder and arson". Trial has ended by condemning 172 of the accused to death.

The international proletariat, engaged in a bitter struggle with capitalism in every part of the world, must not let this imperialist butchery go unchallenged. The revolt of the toiling masses in colonial countries is a powerful factor in the revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of bourgeois dictatorship and the inauguration of a new order of society. Imperialism attempts to drown the revolt of the colonial masses in rivers of blood. The proletariat of the imperialist countries cannot remain indifferent. Energetic action must be taken in behalf of our Indian comrades, fighting bloody battles against imperialist terror.

*Workingmen and workingwomen!* Hold protest meetings and demonstrations, condemning this act of imperialist butchery and demanding the release of the condemned men. Demand of the Second International and the Amsterdam Federation that they call upon their mainstay, the British Labour Party, to save the lives of 172 Indian peasants whose only crime was that they were hungry and were so unbearably hungry because they had been forced to contribute too much for the prosecution of the "war for democracy". Demand of the 2<sup>d</sup> International that its backbone,

the Independent Labour Party, be asked to rise up to its noble professions of pacifism.

*Proletariat of Great Britain!* It is your duty to take the lead in this case. Call upon the Labour Party to take parliamentary action against this bloody deed of British imperialism. If the reformist leaders will not be moved to action even by such a flagrant violation of every moral and legal code which they hold up as a standard for others, you must repudiate their leadership and resort to direct action in order to uphold the right of the subject peoples to revolt, and to demonstrate the worldwide solidarity of the toiling masses in their struggle against capitalism. The wild career of imperialism gone mad can only be checked under the threat of direct action of the home proletariat.

*Down with Imperialism!*

*Victory to the Workers and Peasants of India!*

*Long Live the International Solidarity of the Working Class!*

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
OF THE RED INTERNATIONAL OF  
LABOUR UNIONS

(*Vanguard*, Vol 2, No 3, 15 March 1923)

#### 4. THE CHAURI CHAURA CASE:

The high court judgment confirms the death sentence of 19 leading men. 110 are to be transported for life. The rest are to serve long terms of rigorous imprisonment. So the curtain is going to drop on one of the tragic scenes of noncooperation. We have no observation whatsoever to make about the judgment. We know what is to be expected of imperialist justice. But the martyrdom of these ignorant peasants will go down in history as an indictment against the noncooperation movement, which has disowned all responsibility of the Chauri Chaura incident and

today refuses to lift a finger to aid these victims. So callous and counterrevolutionary has petty-bourgeois nationalism become that its press would not publish manifestos and resolutions of the Communist International and other proletarian organisations of Europe protesting against this imperialist butchery. Why? The martyrs of Chauri Chaura would not receive any better fate even in a Gandhite swaraj. The attitude of the noncooperators as well as of the other schools of nationalism have left no doubt whatsoever on this score. All the talk about the masses, "swaraj for the 98 per cent" and the like are mockery and hypocrisy. Had it not been so, the Chauri Chaura sentences would not go unchallenged. Bourgeois nationalism wants freedom for the native propertied classes to exploit the labouring masses. The workers and peasants will have to fight their own battle first to put an end to foreign domination, then to all class domination. This is the lesson which all sincere revolutionaries should learn from the Chauri Chaura incident.

(*Vanguard*, Vol 2, No 8, 1 June 1923)

## 5. CONGRESS AND LABOUR

### SAMPURNANANDA DENOUNCES BOURGEOIS NATIONALISM

In moving the resolution on the necessity of organising labour in the UP conference, Babu Sampurnananda said:

"The Congress should clearly express and state in unequivocal terms what should be its policy towards the peasants and landlords and labourers and capitalists....

"Congress leadership is in the hands of the middle classes, who are afraid of labour. Chauri Chaura frightened them so much that they did not dare to look after the dependants of the 172 victims... If the government calls a man bolshevik none will raise a voice in his defence. Every one who works for labour is dubbed a bolshevik and there was an end of him. Why should labour join us? The capitalist class hopes that it will prosper under swaraj... but if landlords and capitalists are to retain their power, why should labour join the fight for freedom?"

(*Vanguard*, Vol 3, No 7, 15 November 1923)

## 4. Third Session of the AITUC and the Working-class Struggles

### INTRODUCTION

The third session of the AITUC which was scheduled to take place at the end of November 1922 was actually held on 26 and 27 March 1923 at Lahore. We are presenting here the documents regarding this session and about the working-class struggles of 1923 in chronological order.

M. N. Roy's article "On Trade Unionism" pleads for a revolutionary and not a reformist policy to be pursued by the AITUC. It calls for "revolutionary mass action involving the pauperised peasantry, as well as city and rural wage-earners, who must be organised by those who want to see free India enter a period of social progress".

This is followed by two articles from S. A. Dange's *Socialist* of March 1923 which give in a way the background of the forthcoming session of the AITUC. In his article "The Capitalist Offensive" Dange pinpoints the offensive of the millowners seeking to make a 20 per cent cut in the wages of the textile workers and points out that "only by class war, to which the Ahmedabad workers are slowly drifting unconsciously, can labour hope to win". He links up the "boycott foreign cloth" movement with the struggle of the working class by asking the following question: "Will the heroic noncooperator tell us if the millowners of

Bombay and Ahmedabad are looking to the good of the nation by creating troubles in the textile industry, when in the interest of the boycott movement, there ought to be no trouble in this branch at least?"

M. A. Khan's circular printed in the *Socialist* calls for the formation of the AIRF and makes a bitter complaint against the functioning of Dewan Chamanlal, the general secretary of the AITUC. It appeals to him to assist in the job of organising railway workers and their existing unions on an all-India basis.

The Fourth Congress of the CI meeting in November 1922 had taken a decision to send a greeting and a message to the third session of the AITUC assuming that the same was meeting at the end of the same month. The text of the manifesto is taken from the despatch sent by the British intelligence man in Moscow to Lord Curzon at the India Office in London. The manifesto did reach the session though it was not given publicity either in the press or in the records of the congress for obvious reasons.

The actual review of the TU congress session and the details of its proceedings are given in the next two articles - "The Third All-India Trade Union Congress" by M. N. Roy and "Where Are the Masses?" by Evelyn Roy. The session is taken note of in the contemporary confidential fortnightly reports of the British government of India.<sup>1</sup> The additional facts stated therein are that the president C. R. Das was welcomed by an Akali jatha. The session was held in Bradlaugh Hall and was attended by 700 delegates and K. L. Gauba was the chairman of the reception committee. The official scribe notes that there was not much enthusiasm—a point which the two articles place in the correct perspective by comparing the session with the previous Jharia session.

*Amrita Bazar Patrika* and *Bombay Chronicle* both dated 27 March 1923 give a fairly detailed report of the session. They give additional details and the main points of the presidential address of C. R. Das. Among the delegates were N. M. Joshi, Moreno of the Bengal Trade Union Federation, G. K. Barker of the BN Railway, Kharagpur, M. A. Malik (of Rohilkhand Railway), J. B.

1. Home-Pol F 25, 1923: "Report of Internal Political Situation in March 1923."

Miller (NW Railway, Lahore). National leaders like Motilal Nehru, Mrs Sarojini Naidu and Santanam were also present. N. M. Joshi proposed the election of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das as the president of the Trade Union Congress.

In his address, Deshbandhu emphasised the necessity of the labour movement in the following words : "Labour represents 98 per cent of the population of India when we consider that labour also includes the peasants. They need organisation. . . They are ill-fed. Their lives are a long-drawn struggle. . . Two per cent of the population cannot win swaraj. If it did so, I would emphatically refuse to accept such a swaraj. White or brown, bureaucracy is bureaucracy. That is why I have always claimed swaraj for the masses. Swaraj must be for the entire population and not for any particular class however gifted that class may be. Wherever there is strike military is called in."

Proceeding Deshbandhu Das said : "What right have the government and the middle class to say to the vast population of India : 'You will not be allowed access to knowledge and culture.' Bureaucracy say to the people : 'We are trustees of the people. We will look after you.' The middle class in India also want to say the same thing to the labourers. . . Against this I want to raise my solemn protest. I do not care a straw for the self-government if that self-government is not won with the cooperation of all classes of the people. What happened in France after the French revolution? Power was transferred from the monarchs to the middle classes. 98 per cent of the population in India are everything and the country belongs to them. If the middle class ever win swaraj and I live to see that day, it will be my lot to stand by the labourers and peasants and lead them to wrest power from the selfish classes. Real politics exists where the people who go naked, where people who toil to keep body and soul together, live and work and not in clubs, in fashionable societies or in liberal associations"

Concluding C. R. Das said, "I cannot find a class which was more peaceful than the labourers in India (and asked his audience to hasten on their work of organisation among labourers and peasants). I attach the greatest importance to the organisation of labour without which the cause of swaraj is bound to fail

... The time has come when we should say boldly that the organisation of labour is absolutely necessary for swaraj."

He asked the labourers of India not to ask for special franchise and requested the Trade Union Congress to turn out spies and government agents who have infested the labour organisation.

Referring to the attitude of the Indian National Congress to labour, C. R. Das said: "It was my misfortune to force the labour resolution at the Nagpur session of the National Congress on unwilling delegates and I find it is not acted upon to this day.

"I call upon you today to steer clear of all congresses or conferences and take to your own work. Your own hands must construct the temple of freedom. I call upon you to feel in the heart of your hearts that you are the real proprietors of India. You should feel, yours is the right, as it is your duty to bring freedom to India. I press this obligation upon you and may god give you strength to carry on this struggle to victory."

We have not been able to get the full text of C. R. Das's speech at the Lahore session of the AITUC. But these extracts from the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and *Bombay Chronicle* clearly show that it was an important pronouncement. It was taken note of by the intelligence department of the government of India. In their contemporary confidential reports the British government took particular note of the fact that C. R. Das had the solid backing of the rising revolutionary movement in Bengal and was now turning to the organisation of the workers and peasants. Even the contemporary moderate nationalist press was critical of this militant posture of C. R. Das. Thus *Amrita Bazar Patrika* dated 28 March 1923 wrote: "Till recently his speeches breathed a spirit of reconciliation. At Lahore however he seems to cross the Rubicon for he called upon Indian Labourers: 'To steer clear of all congresses and conferences and feel within their heart of hearts that they were proprietors of India.'" In a further comment in the same issue the paper added: "The time may yet come when Mr Das will be obliged to follow the advise he gives to peasants and labourers (viz to steer clear of the congresses etc.) and we may find him perhaps the head of the labour party in India. At least that is the direction in which the wind is blowing."

This speech of C. R. Das which was dangerous in the eyes of the imperialists and uncomfortably militant in those of the mode-

rate nationalists of the *Patrika* is criticised in M. N. Roy's article "The Third All-India Trade Union Congress" as a nationalist nonclass approach to the rising trade-union movement in India. M. N. Roy who also had only press extracts of C. R. Das's speech before him characterised this speech as "a programme of pure and honest nationalism tempered by humanitarian sentiments". Roy characterises C. R. Das as a "utopian" but appraises him as one "struggling against the pragmatic politics of his nationalist associates" (i.e. swarajists and Gandhists). He also distinguishes him from the "self-appointed labourites", i.e. from those who were then advocating the formation of a moderate labour party. What is criticised is Das's confused ideas about "true socialism" and about "the right to private property".

In this article Roy does not deal with the resolutions passed in that session of the AITUC saying they were "conventional resolutions". *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of 27 March 1923 records a number of resolutions passed at the session, which show the influence of contemporary progressive forces on the otherwise tame session.

The Trade Union Congress session, for instance passed a resolution thanking the Workers' Welfare League of India for the services it rendered to the TUC in the cause of Indian labour. The Workers' Welfare League of India was a moderate leftwing organisation formed in London soon after the first world war and the Russian revolution by radical labour and communist leaders with the object of promoting trade-union organisation in India. The British rulers of India looked at it as an organisation promoting subversive elements and activities in India. It finds mention in the confidential home department papers of the government of India in the early twenties. It was also cited later as a coconspirator organisation in the Meerut Conspiracy Case (1929). A confidential document "Bolshevik Activity in India up to September 1920"<sup>2</sup> maintains that the Workers' Welfare League was founded in London in 1917 had Shapurji Saklatvala, A. A. Mirza and Dewan Chamanlal as its associates. Among those who joined the League in 1919 are mentioned, B. P. Wadia and

2. Foreign-Pol. F 61 M, serial Nos 1-16, 1924.

Satyamurty from Madras, B. C. Pal and G. A. K. Lubani from Bengal—who were then studying in London.

There was an antiwar resolution calling upon the workers not to take part in any war that is unjustified, a resolution demanding end of the system of begar and forced labour, a resolution against retrenchment in the railways and finally a resolution calling upon the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress to hand over to the AITUC the sum of Rs 40,000 set apart for the organisation of labour, to be administered by the TUC committee.

We have mentioned these resolutions not only to complete the record but also to show that the 1923 session of the TUC, in which there were no communists yet, was nevertheless influenced by socialist and communist trends appearing in the country.

The article "First May for Indian Workers" describes the first ever May Day meeting held in India. The meeting was held in Madras under the leadership of Singaravelu, at which the red flag was unfurled, the formation of the Labour Kisan Party was announced and its manifesto was published in Tamil.<sup>3</sup>

The first May Day in Madras took place against the background of a strike upsurge of the first years of the twenties. According to the contemporary strike statistics of the government of Madras presidency of those days, there were 19 strikes in 1921, 33 in 1922-23 and 13 in 1923-24. In the Madras city itself there were four strikes in Buckingham Carnatic Chooli Mills in 1922-23 during the course of which the police fired on a militant workers' demonstration, in which two workers were martyred. The strike upsurge covered not only textile workers but also railway workers. High level of working-class activity in Madras is shown by the fact that in 1922, a Madras Workers' Conference was held, which was presided over by the famous writer Thiru V. Kalyanasundaram. In 1923 a Labour Kisan Party Conference was held under the initiative of Singaravelu in which again Thiru V. Kalyanasundaram participated.

In the article "The End of Three Strikes", the most important strike dealt with is the Ahmedabad cotton mill workers' strike. The strike wave in the immediate postwar years—1919-22, had

3. Home-Pol. F 25, 1923—"Fortnightly Report of Internal Political Situation of May 1923".

the increase in wages as its main demand. Prices were rising, millowners making huge profits in the postwar boom. But the wages already at a low level, were not rising. After 1922 when the postwar boom passed away, the millowners complained of depression as their profit rate sank from 45.73 per cent in 1921 to 24.08 per cent in 1922. To protect their profits the millowners of Ahmedabad decided upon a wage-cut of 20 per cent and put up a notice to that effect in all the mills early in 1923. Textile Labour Association founded by Gandhiji, objected to the wage cut, demanded arbitration to settle the dispute. Rev C. F. Andrews also tried to mediate. But the millowners refused to withdraw the wage-cut. Strike began on 1 April. 56 out of 64 mills were on strike involving 46,000 workers. It lasted for 3 months till 4 June. Gandhiji and Shankarlal Banker were both in jail. Workers took the path of class struggle. They did not succeed. The millowners imposed a wage-cut of 15½ per cent.

Vanguard correctly drew the lesson : "The lesson to be learned is greater organisation, better leadership and an appeal to the country for help in the creation of a strike fund for the support of the cause of the Indian working class in its unequal struggle with the powerful foe, British and Indian capitalism, supported by all the resources of the state."

It was to be realised in practice five years later in the great textile strike of Bombay, which gave birth to the famous Gini Kamgar Union (Red Flag) under the leadership of Dange, Mirajkar and others and marked the rise of the militant trade-union movement in India.

## 1. ON TRADE UNIONISM

Dear Comrade,

As you have noticed, the *Vanguard* is a purely Indian paper devoted to the cause of Indian independence; it is the organ of that section of the Indian movement which believes that India should be free not for the aggrandisement of native capitalists, but for the benefit of the workers and peasants of India, and that she cannot be free without the conscious and concerted action of her toiling masses. We, who are forced to live in exile, have been watching with great interest the steady development of this tendency in the Indian movement, even within the ranks of the Indian National Congress, which is predominantly a middle-class organisation without much understanding of the socioeconomic needs and conditions of the working class. We strive to help the development of this tendency.

We know that the struggle of the working masses in India, as well as in all other lands, is essentially economic and social, the immediate concern of the exploited workers and pauperised peasantry is the amelioration of their unbearable economic condition—their ultimate goal is social emancipation from all class rule. But neither of these two objects—the immediate or the ultimate one—can be realised unless the entire Indian people can enjoy a free national existence which will enable them to enter into the healthy atmosphere of economic progress making inevitably for the social revolution. Therefore, the Indian working class cannot be indifferent to the political struggle for national independence. It must participate actively in it as the first stage of the great social struggle in which it is involved, and which it must carry to a successful end in course of time.

On account of the abnormal condition in which India was forced to stagnate during the last hundred and fifty years, it has become impossible that our national freedom will be achieved mainly through the efforts and under the leadership of the middle

class. The interests of the bourgeoisie, including the landowning class, of contemporary India, although jeopardised, are not entirely antagonistic to those of the imperial ruling class. The debacle of the moderates and the imminent swing of the Congress towards the right prove the correctness of this social theory. Imperialism of today is more under the control of finance capital than of the manufacturing interests. The colonial working masses have been practically proletarianised by the exploitation of imperialist capital, therefore it is inevitable that they will be drawn more and more into the orbit of the worldwide revolt of the exploited classes. Under these circumstances, the imperialist ruling class will find a docile handmaid in the colonial bourgeoisie, if the industrial and commercial aspirations of the latter are not completely suppressed. This possible alliance of the two otherwise antagonistic interests makes for the so-called "new era" in the subject countries—a new era begun in India for example with the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms. This new era expressed in the terms of an Irish "Free State", or an "Independent" Egypt, or a "Dominionised" India, is calculated to break down the unity of the national struggle of the subject people by buying up the loyalty and support of the propertied upper classes. The extremism of the lower middle class, despite the complete pauperisation of the latter, will never amount to anything unless it is reinforced by the dynamically revolutionary energy of the broad masses. Lower-middle-class extremism, cured of all metaphysical abstractions, must assume the leadership of the great mass upheaval which is the backbone of the Indian movement. The Indian National Congress, in order to survive the imminent betrayal of the present leaders, must lead the struggle ahead under the banner not of petty-bourgeois reactionary pacifism but of revolutionary nationalism.

So, the task before the Trade Union Congress is not reform, but revolution. It is not conservative unionism, based upon the bankrupt theory of "collective bargaining", but revolutionary mass action involving the pauperised peasantry as well as the city and rural wage-earners, who must be organised and led by those who want to see free India enter upon a period of social progress. Terrified by the spontaneous outburst of mass energy, the middle-class extremists are ordering a retreat which has turn-

ed into a disorderly rout. It is necessary to reassure them, to show them the fountainhead of national energy, to tell them to make common cause with the working masses, not to use them as pawns in the fight but to recognise them as the heart and soul of it. Our cry is "Not the masses for revolution, but revolution for the masses". Those who think that the economic and social condition of the Indian working class can be appreciably improved before India has realised political independence, are mistaken. To lead the working class, which is in a state of dynamic revolt, towards reformism, is to help perpetuate the exploitation of imperialist capital. The Trade Union Congress, in order to be able to execute the historic task it has undertaken, must free itself from the leadership which believes in piecemeal reform. Such leadership is, consciously or unconsciously, hostile to the interests of the working class.

To bring about this inevitable union of the two radically revolutionary forces under the banner of national independence and social progress is the task undertaken by us. We believe that you are fighting for the same object. Therefore, let us work together.

20 November 1922.

(Political Letters by M. N. Roy)

## 2. THE CAPITALIST OFFENSIVE IN INDIA

The capitalist offensive in Europe is naturally followed by an offensive of the Indian capital against native labour. The European offensive was the result of capital's resolve to smash the strong position to which labour had reached during the war. European offensive is partially successful. The success of imperial capital of Europe means bad days for the half-developed, unconsolidated bourgeoisie of India and other semicapitalised countries like India. A reduction of wages on the European labour front means cheapening of products and flooding of colonial and semicolonial markets with white goods. If, in this competition, the Indian bourgeoisie means to hold its head, it must follow two courses. Either it must become less greedy of profits, to which

it became accustomed in the war period, or it must pull labour down to the pit-level from the position to which it had reached in the days of war. The Indian bourgeoisie has decided to follow the second course. The first skirmishes of the fight will be between Ahmedabad millowners and workers. The millowners have decided upon a 20 per cent reduction in wages and refuse to decide matters by arbitration. The workers however mean to give a fight straight, in spite of the advice of some treacherous labour leaders.

When the All-India Trade Union Congress was held there was high talk of giving the Indian labour movement a "character distinctly its own". The aristocratic Mrs Naidu scornfully talked of traditions of western labour, with whom she would have nothing to do, as she did not want class war out here. Can this aristocratic lady say whether the Ahmedabad millowners themselves are not beginning the class war? The capitalists will not reduce their profits but will have a cut in wages. Is this class love or class war? Babu Shyamsundar, at the Bengal labour conference, very paternally advised labour to look more to the collective good than to class interests. Surely, Babooji, labour means to do the same. The collective good is the good of the greatest number. Labour forms the majority of the nation and so it is going to look to its interests i.e. collective interests! Will the heroic noncooperator tell us if the millowners of Bombay and Ahmedabad are looking to the good of the nation by creating troubles in the textile industry, when in the interests of the boycott movement there ought to be no trouble in this branch at least?

We advise labour leaders and workers not to heed these soft words and philosophic phrases of bourgeois intellectuals. Only by class war, to which the Ahmedabad workers are slowly drifting unconsciously, can labour hope to win. Defeats may come once or twice, but final victory is of the workers.

*(Socialist, March 1923)*

### 3. D. CHAMANLAL ON TRIAL

*(The following has been sent to us for publication from the office of the All-India Railwaymen's Federation, Lahore—Ed. S.)*

It was in May 1920 when the NW Railway strike was on that Mr Chamanlal met some of the railway strikers at Rawalpindi and was introduced to Mr M. A. Khan when he showed his willingness to work for the cause of labour. He was welcomed and asked to take up the charge of publicity branch of the NW Railway Union at the time. He carried on the work till the strike reached a successful conclusion.

The NW Railway Union committee then arranged that an All-India Trade Union Congress should be started to create an all-India labour movement and Mr Chamanlal was requested to take up the work. With this object a sum of Rs 1500 was handed over to him through Lala Lajpat Rai. Reaching Bombay he saw a number of gentlemen interested in labour cause and the first session of the All-India Trade Union Congress was convened under the presidency of Lala Lajpat Rai. The delegates of the NW Railway Union of course were very keen in making the show a reality and attended in good number. An attempt was made to affiliate all the existing unions including the NW Railway Union with a membership of 75,000. A standing committee was constituted. It was expected that the general secretary will tour all over India to organise the Congress on a working basis.

The general secretary Dewan Chamanlal and with him the Trade Union Congress went to sleep for full twelve months doing nothing. The Oudh-Rohilkhand Railway strike was ignored and he did not move at all to give his new organisation a push or a position.

The second session was held in December 1922 at Jharia, Mr Baptista presiding. Money was provided by Seth Ramjas Mal but not liking "eggs and drinking" campaign he withdrew. If at all this session could be made a success it was entirely due to the efforts of Mr Miller and his colleagues who had led the Jharia coalminers' strike to a successful end. While the session was on, these poor strikers and other miners were promised a 25 per cent increase in their wages, which afterwards was never given to them as the Trade Union Congress failed to back up their cause.

D. Chamanlal, when the session was over, again dragged the Trade Union Congress and has done absolutely nothing to the present day except sending a number of cablegrams to the *Daily*

*Herald* of which he is a regular correspondent and his friends in Europe. There have been numerous strikes and lockouts. D. Chamanlal and the Trade Union Congress have been silent and if he has worked at all he has moved to the detriment of workers. Getting down to Jamshedpur in their last strike he manipulated the prestige of the TUC only to drive the strikers into the merciless arms of their masters and the poor labourers have come to realise what D. Chamanlal stands for. The kisan movement and other attempts on the part of the exploited masses of India to get their grievances ventilated or redressed could not draw any inspiration or guidance from the general secretary who has been from the very beginning to this day essaying to retain in himself all the prerogative and all the show of the TUC.

He positively refused to cooperate with Mr M. A. Khan in the organisation of All-India Railwaymen's Federation which has of course been organised in spite of his aloofness. And then from Bombay he has moved up to Lahore and that move has transferred the office of TUC to 16 Mozang Road, Lahore. No executive member of TUC was ever informed or consulted about the change. The staff of the Nation Newspapers Limited gives him a number of unions to exploit the name of TUC; otherwise almost all the bona fide and regularly constituted trade unions of India have lost all confidence in the present make up of the congress.

This year the situation has gone from bad to worse. Thrice had a meeting of the congress been called and thrice postponed. If ever it had taken place on the second of March, Mr Biswas of Bengal Trade Union Federation would most probably have been the solitary delegate attending.

Is this confusion and stagnation, this one man exhibition of the Trade Union Congress any longer to continue? No, not at all. All the unions formerly affiliated to the congress are therefore invited to take up the question in right earnest and decide how they can make the existing machinery of TUC an effective thing. It is high time that the matter be taken up and a conference of delegates, two at least from each union, be called at some central place to make the present bogus organisation a useful body for labour work. There is the necessity of reconstituting and reorganising the Trade Union Congress Standing Committee... D.

Chamanlal's advice and collaboration will be useful, for the country to know his difficulties and then there would be found a proper way out of the present disgraceful situation.

M. A. KHAN,

*Executive member, TUC ;  
general secretary, NW Railway Union ;  
organising secretary, All-India Railwaymen's Federation.*

*(Socialist, March 1923)*

#### 4. MANIFESTO OF THE FOURTH CONGRESS OF THE CI TO AITUC SESSION AT LAHORE

Comrades,

The proletariat of the West greets you with the greatest enthusiasm in the stubborn fight which you have been waging for several years to secure the amelioration of the economic conditions of the working class of India. The Fourth Congress of the Communist International sends you warm greetings.

Comrades, while expressing our sympathy and promising you our fullest support in winning your cause, we should like to remind you that your tasks are great and that you must not narrow them down. The working class of India is not only fighting for honourable pay for honourable work, but the economic liberation of the workers and peasants of India depends on the nation's political liberty. No amelioration can be obtained in the framework of imperialist exploitation. Therefore your duty is to play an important role in the fight for national liberation. Prepare yourself to fulfil this historic role. The vanguard of the proletariat of fifty-two countries represented at this congress is with you. Beware of false friendship and treacherous counsels of leaders of compromise.

*(Home-Pol. F. 605, 1922)*

## 5. THE THIRD ALL-INDIA TRADE UNION CONGRESS

The long postponed third annual session of the All-India Trade Union Congress has met at last. Those who expected a new leadership from this quarter have been disappointed. The gathering at Lahore was a working-class affair only in name. The spirit that reigned there was one of pure nationalism and humanitarian idealism. Nationalist leaders, representing practically all the classes of our society except the working class, arrogated to themselves the role of "labour delegates". Their monopoly was broken only by a few incipient labourites who vehemently opposed any political action on the part of the trade unions. The gathering as a whole, however, acted from the beginning to the end as an adjunct to the National Congress, actuated partly by the pious desire to "uplift" the downtrodden masses and partly by the anxiety to find ways and means of enlisting the services of the working class in the cause of bourgeois nationalism, whose triumph will signify the increased exploitation of the masses.

The following quotation from the *Nation*, which breathes the spirit of the All-India Trade Union Congress, is a graphic picture of what the Lahore gathering was and what could be expected of it. On 27 March the *Nation* writes: "A huge fleet of motor cars drove up to the gate of the Bradlaugh Hall, and vociferous cheers greeted the arrival of the leaders. The hall was gaily decorated with wreaths of flowers. Several parties of musicians were present who sang national songs until the arrival of the president-elect. As soon as the Deshbandhu's car drove up, shouts of 'Bande Mataram' and 'Deshbandhu Das ki Jai' went up from all quarters... Many other ladies and gentlemen were present..." And so on and so on went the description of the gathering, which was supposed to be composed of the representatives of Indian workers living on starvation wages, or at least of sincere reformers moved by the misery of the poor! To such an elite of intellect and opulence did the native Deshbandhu preach his doctrine of "Swaraj for the 98 per cent!"

The president, whose utopianism seems to be still struggling against the pragmatic politics of his rationalist associates, could not but feel a bit uneasy in the midst of this mockery, and in

his concluding speech observed: "One criticism that has been levelled against us is that we have a Trade Union Congress in which there are not many workers. Let us hope in a few years the delegates will be the labourers themselves." A pious hope indeed; but do the present self-appointed labourites permit us to share the hope of Mr Das? If the Lahore gathering was unsoiled by the shadow of a dirty coolie or ryot, it is neither the ignorance nor the inertness of the latter that is to be blamed, as our labour leaders and intellectual aristocrats are prone to do. Mr Das, who deplored the absence of real workers' delegates in the so-called Trade Union Congress, himself pictured the truly proletarian and revolutionary atmosphere in which the previous annual session was held in the coalfields of Jharia. But what a long way this Trade Union Congress has gone since those days of 1921 when it came dangerously near to being a real working-class organisation! It is not the workers who have to be induced to attend the Trade Union Congress, as Mr Das appeared to mean in his remark quoted above, but on the contrary it is the Trade Union Congress which runs away from the filth and squalor of the field and factory, the mine and plantation. Seventeen months ago its second annual session was attended by six thousand workingmen and it was defended against the combined attack of the employers and the government by an army of over fifty thousand rebellious workers, who by the force of a mass strike wrested from the reluctant capitalists at least the promise of a 20 per cent wage increase. What a change this interval of seventeen months has wrought in the Trade Union Congress. In the place of ragged men straight from the coal pits, Lahore gaily welcomed a galaxy of bourgeois nationalists and intellectual dilettantes who rolled luxuriously to the congress in a "huge fleet of motor cars" to make speeches and pass resolutions in the name of the poor down-trodden "98 per cent": The "western method of labour organisation" as well as the corrupted capitalist civilisation of the West, which most of the leaders castigated and promised to lead the Indian workers away from, can hardly out do such a mockery and such hypocrisy!

So much for the character and composition of this august assembly which calls itself the All-India Trade Union Congress. Now a few remarks about its accomplishment in this particular

session. The first and foremost, of course, was the speech of Mr Das, who once more pronounced the same views as expressed at Gaya, leaving out the treatise on constitutional law. His was a programme of pure and honest nationalism tempered by humanitarian sentiments. He wanted "the uplift of the masses for culture and for the struggle for national freedom". It is a desire that can be shared by every honest nationalist; but why deliver this speech in what is supposed to be a working-class organisation? But Mr Das, perhaps to break the monotony and make up for the mediocrity of the entire show, came out with something new in his concluding speech. This was his definition of "true socialism" and an explanation of his views on private property. A devout believer in Hindu metaphysical philosophy which lays down that the supreme being is with and without form at the same time, Mr Das believes in private property and does not believe in it. This scholastic statement necessitated further elucidation which was: "The right of holding private property is unjust unless it leads to a higher national interest." So, one of the principal planks in the programme of Mr Das's party calls for the preservation of private property and accumulation of individual wealth, because it will lead to higher national interests. This was a very uncomfortable position for one preaching swaraj for the masses from the presidential chair of a workers' congress. So Mr Das took refuge in ethical abstractions, by which the actions of the ruling class in every age and every clime can be not only justified, but glorified. He argued that it is the evil in private property that we must fight against. "The selfish man will give up being selfish if he will think less of himself and more of humanity." But how is Mr Das going to bring about this little change in human nature? A convinced nationalist with a strong tendency towards cultural imperialism, he is, however, not to be daunted. He expects to stagger his audience by "the magnificent endowments of our temples, etc. etc." Well, certainly Mr Das is not ignorant of the fact that the money spent on humanitarian endowments by a Rockefeller or a Carnegie is not less magnificent. Therefore, we can take it that Mr Das approves of the huge accumulation of wealth in the hands of these persons because they spend a part of it not only on higher national, but on international interests. Then, he must also approve of the method by

which such accumulation takes place. And here Mr Das proves himself to be a votary of the western capitalist civilisation which, according to him, has no place in this holy land of ours.

Through such dangerous arguments Mr Das came to the conclusion: "So when people say that the right of private property should be done away with, do not be misled. It is the evil in private property that should be done away with. This is true socialism." According to this new theory Rockefeller, Carnegie, Ford and their like are not less true socialists than those ancient Hindu monarchs and merchants who endowed magnificent temples for the best interest of the nation. Well may poor old Marx turn in his grave to hear himself quoted by one expounding such a new theory of socialism!

The series of resolutions passed in this assemblage of respectable "ladies and gentlemen" is too long to be dealt with in detail. Nor is there anything deserving particular attention in those conventional resolutions. But we cannot pass by one curious detail: In its editorial on 28 March, the *Nation* mentions the adoption of a "sensational resolution demanding the socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange". But it was in vain that we searched for this resolution in the reports of the congress. We wonder what happened to it: evidently, at the eleventh hour it had to be shelved in order not to alienate the support of the "ladies and gentlemen" that honoured the gathering with their presence. One must have something; the workers were already discarded. The displeasure of the propertied patrons could hardly be risked by bringing forward an academic resolution. But why fear? One need not risk his respectability in these days by simply advocating such resolutions. Has not the very British parliament been desecrated by Snowden? It is all right so long as you do not mean business, like the spiritual guides of the British Labour Party.

The days of Indian labour are yet to come.

*(Aftermath of Noncooperation  
by M. N. Roy, Chapter vi)*

## 6. WHERE ARE THE MASSES?

By E. Roy

The third annual session of the Indian Trade Union Congress, which was scheduled to meet last November, and whose activities have been wrapped in a veil of mystery, met at last in Lahore on 26 March of this year. The five months' postponement did not seem to mar the composure of the organisers, and may have served rather to enhance the atmosphere of social breeding and culture which pervaded the whole assembly. The sessions of the third All-India Trade Union Congress were adorned, not merely by the presence of university graduates of several degrees of erudition, but by the chief figureheads of nationalist politics, distinguished for their eloquence, beauty, or fame, and by many persons prominent in the intellectual circle of the labour movement, who added the proper "tone" to the function. Altogether, by waiting a trifling matter of five months the energetic propagators of the Trade Union Congress idea succeeded in gathering together a variegated assortment of delegates and visitors, who represented practically every class in Indian society except the working class. Labour leaders there were in abundance, and perhaps one or two among them may at one time have swelled the ranks of the proletariat, but with the solitary and distinguished exception of Mr Miller, Irish railway guard and organiser of the North Western Railway Union of Punjab, there was present in that social and intellectual galaxy no worker or peasant who earned his bread by the sweat of his brow, and who had nothing to lose but his chains.

One can only guess at the motives which prompted the holding of this patriotic and labouristic conclave in the remote agricultural province of the Punjab, where the number of industrial proletariat is almost nil. The absence of proletarian elements was not compensated by the presence of the landless peasantry, with which that province abounds. Mr C. R. Das, ex-president of the Indian National Congress, and chairman of the Swaraj Party, was elected to preside over the gathering.

For the opening ceremony, let the Lahore Nation of 27 March speak in its own words.

"A huge fleet of motorcars drove up to the gates of Bradlaugh Hall, and vociferous cheers greeted the arrival of the leaders. The hall was gaily decorated with wreaths of flowers. Several parties of musicians were present who sang national songs until the arrival of the president-elect. As soon as Deshbandhu's car drove up, shouts of 'Bande Mataram' and 'Deshbandhu Das ki Jai!' went up from all quarters. Bi-Amma arrived in the middle of the proceedings, and was greeted by shouts of 'Allah-hu-Akbar'. Many other ladies and gentlemen were also present. The proceedings were charged with great enthusiasm. Deshbandhu Das's speech created a sensation in so far as it was a brilliant and passionate exposition of the case for the labour movement in India. Mr Kanhaya Lal's speech was like a string of pearls, a fine performance finely delivered."

All of which makes charming reading for patriotic nationalists and labour dilettantes, but is painfully far removed from those sweating, toiling masses which this fashionable gathering had met together to represent. The atmosphere was as charged with "social uplift" and "moral welfare" as any philanthropists' club or social service league to be found in England or America. The only other note struck was that of earnest nationalism, as voiced by the Deshbandhu, or of honest trade unionism as expounded by Mr Miller, or of simple menshevism as expressed in the glittering phrases of the Oxford don, Mr Chamanlal, general secretary of the All-India Trade Union Congress, and of his chief assistant, Mr Kanhaya Lal Gauba, whose opening speech as chairman of the reception committee was so like unto a "string of pearls".

The difference in spirit between these amateur theatricals and the grim setting of the second session of the Trade Union Congress, held in 1921 in the coalfields of Bengal at Jharia, was emphasised, perhaps unconsciously by Mr Das, who described the machineguns and cavalry called out by the government to patrol during its sittings, and the refusal of the coal mineowners to permit the workers to attend, leading to a three days' strike on the part of the latter and the tendering of a public apology and an unfulfilled promise of 20 per cent wage increase on the part of the employers. And the 'vision' of the six thousand ragged

delegates straight from the coalpits, who attended that victorious conference must have risen before the mind's eye of some of the "ladies and gentlemen" who represented the cause of labour uplift in the present session, so devoid of the perspiring and noisome odour of the masses and the reprehensible spirit of the class war.

The nearest one got to the subject of class war was when Mr Das ventured to quote the stirring peroration of Karl Marx, in the *Communist Manifesto*: "Workers of the world, Unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains!" The rest of the proceedings either trickled with the sugary sweetness of "labour uplift" or resounded with bombastic phrases of social reform. Mrs Naidu, nationalist poetess of bourgeois India, "pleaded", in the words of the *Nation*, for a human status and an equal place among the nations of the world for 98 per cent of India's population. She described with great "pathos", the condition of the ill-fed, ill-clothed labourers in the slums of Bombay and declared herself for the thousandth time to be "against identifying Indian labour organisations with those in the west". "The Indian labour movement should have a distinct character of its own", said the patriot-poetess, going on to speak of removing the stigma of untouchability from the lower castes, and of Mahatma Gandhi's mission of "compassion and sympathy" which has helped Indian leaders to grasp the fact that swaraj could only be based on the liberty of the masses.

"There can be no better description of the aims of our Labour Party", declared Mr K. L. Gauba, "than that of swaraj for the masses." And he went on to demand rhetorically: "Is there a labour problem in India?" To which he himself replied, "Of course there is. The problems of labour are manifold, and in no country of the world do these problems require more careful handling and sympathetic encouragement than in India. The claim of labour is that power should be decentralised, monopoly upset and exploitation put an end to. These claims are not wild or extravagant—they are based upon elements of natural equality." Then Mr Gauba declared that "the day is coming when government will be truly democratic—labour should be conscious of its rights before society crystallises into hard and fast divisions. The example of Europe should be a standing lesson to all of us.

A class struggle is ensuing in many countries, and Russia only recently settled the question by a terrible and bloody revolution. We have enough divisions already; we do not want more."

The presidential address contained all of the sentiments of Mr Das with which anyone who has read his public speeches during the past six months is already familiar. There was the same stressing of the necessity of organising the masses to help win swaraj; of aiming at a "swaraj for the masses and not for the classes", and avoiding the class war that rages in the West today.

Labour he described as "98 per cent of the population" and the middle class as 2 per cent. If the 2 per cent got power, Mr Das declared that he would be the first to lead the struggle to wrest power from the hands of the selfish classes and give it to the masses. "The uplift of the masses was necessary for culture, and for the national struggle for freedom." He stressed the necessity of labour organisation, and urged that the Trade Union Congress send labour propagandists to the different provinces to form unions, affiliated to the central organisation. But the work of the congress, he said, was to guide and not control, to offer advice and not to impose itself upon the branches. Labour should claim for every adult man a vote. In closing, he urged upon those present to avoid all congresses and conferences, and to take into their own hands the fight for freedom, the erection of the temple of nationalism.

The resolutions passed were of the same variegated nature as the people who were present and the ideas they set forth. There was a resolution congratulating Mr Saklatvala, Indian member of parliament, on his election victory, and another moving thanks to the Workers' Welfare League for India, for its services to Indian labour, and moving for the creation of a separate fund for the support of Indian labour by that organisation. There was a resolution moved against war as detrimental to the labouring classes, and declaring that Indian labour should not participate in any war in future, especially if waged "unjustly and oppressively". Then there was a resolution against the system of forced labour, known as "begar", which prevails in British India and the native states. It was moved that a subcommittee be appointed to examine thoroughly the whole question of taxation in India from the worker's point of view. Another resolution moved a request

to have paid over to the All-India Trade Union Congress from the Indian National Congress a fund of 40,000 rupees, in accordance with the decision of the latter body to support the cause of labour organisation. A resolution against railway retrenchment taking the form of dismissal of workers was carried, and another one to foster the spread of technical education as necessary to the industrial development of the country.

On the second day of the congress more resolutions were passed, calling among other things, for protective legislation for trade unions, for an eight-hour day and a forty-four-hour week for clerical workers. Legislation providing for unemployment, sickness and old-age insurance was demanded; improved housing and sanitation for the workers, and minimum living wages in all industries to be determined by a committee of the congress. A vote of censure was passed for failure of the government to protect labour adequately in various industries, under the terms of the Factory Act, the Mines Bill and other legislations, and a resolution was carried approving the idea of finding out the condition of labour in India by means of a questionnaire or any other means judged fit by the congress. Legislation providing for maternity benefits and the abolition of underground work for women in the coal industry was likewise called for. The congress called upon the authorities in another resolution, to establish conciliation courts and arbitration boards in every industry. The betterment of the system of recruitment and of the conditions of service for Indian seamen was demanded. Finally, two resolutions declaring in favour of adult suffrage and primary mass education for both sexes were passed, and the congress adjourned, after listening to the concluding speeches of assembled leaders, and nominating officers for the coming year. These include, Mr D. Chamanlal, general secretary, Mr K. L. Gauba, treasurer, and Mr J. B. Miller, organising secretary.

The concluding sentiments of the general secretary, as well as some unexpected remarks of Mr C. R. Das on private property, are of interest, as tending to throw more light, if light were needed, on the nature of the men who have suddenly assumed the guidance of labour's destinies in India. Mr Chamanlal, after describing the condition of the Indian working class, inquired :

who had said there were no class distinctions in India? "We should aim at abolishing them, making India one whole, and carry the message of unity and brotherhood by propaganda and organisation, throughout the country to make India a land fit for heroes to live in", declared the speaker, in a burst of eloquence which was received with cheers by his auditors, but which, we fear, destroys his claim to pass as a disciple of Karl Marx—or even of Karl Kaustky, the renegade Marxist.

Mr Das, in bidding farewell to the congress, gave vent to one of those disconcerting remarks which the faithful Reuter invariably cables to England, for the edification of die-hard-toryism. "Let us hope", said the Deshbandhu amid cheers, "that the 98 per cent of the people of this land will be the real proprietors of India. They are in fact the real proprietors, but they do not yet realise."

But lest this seem too much like bolshevism, he hastily added an explanation of his idea of property. "I do not believe in property as generally understood. I believe in it, and I do not. The right of holding private property is useless and unjust unless it leads to a higher national interest—I do not object to private property but I object to the evil in it. The selfish man will give up being selfish if he thinks less of himself and more of humanity. It is the same with a nation. Let the right of property be so pursued, that each man will of his own accord dedicate it to the country. When people say that the right of private property should be done away with, do not be misled. It is in short the evil inherent in private property that should be done away with. This is true socialism."

And amid shouts of "Deshbandhu Das ki Jai", the third session of the All-India Trade Union Congress, strange conglomeration of nationalism, utopianism and reformism (to say nothing of more dubious "isms", such as humanitarianism and opportunism), came to a triumphant close. One hears nothing more of it until, on turning the pages of the *Nation* we see a "social item": "A Garden Party—To Meet Mr C. R. Das". It reads:

"This evening, Dewan and Mrs Chamanlal gave a garden party to meet Deshbandhu Das. The party was largely attended by delegates to the Trade Union Congress, and various prominent

public men and numerous ladies. Among many others, one noticed (etc.)... The party was a great success."

So too, perhaps was the congress. But where, we would like to ask, were the masses—those Indian masses about whom it has become the fashion to speak? The new labour leaders of India have come no closer to them than the old Congress leaders.

Where are the masses?

(*Inprecor*, Vol 3, No 36, 9 May 1923)

## 7. FIRST MAY FOR INDIAN WORKERS

The First of May was celebrated for the first time in India as a proletarian holiday, when in response to the call of M. Singaravelu Chettiyar, veteran Indian socialist, two mass meetings were held in the open air in the city of Madras, where the grievances of the workers formed the theme of the addresses and the establishment of a workers' and peasants' party was announced in accordance of the manifesto previously published in the Tamil language. The audience was composed of workers and peasants and speeches were made in the vernacular so that everything was understood by them. The significance of May Day was explained, and the formation of a political party of the working class for the attainment of "labour swaraj" was urged. Comrade Singaravelu who presided over one of the meetings welcomed the advent of the first of May as a proletarian holiday in India and explained the growth of the class struggle in India as in other countries of the world. The aim of the workers of India should be labour swaraj, he declared. So long as the state was on the side of the capitalists and safeguarded the vested interests, labour organisations could accomplish little to change the lot of the expropriated working class. The relation of Indian labour to the international proletarian movement was also made clear, and the necessity of organising a working-class party to head the struggle for economic and political power emphasised. It was declared that the new party would work within the Congress. Resolutions were passed

declaring for celebration of May First as an annual working-class holiday in concert with international labour: demanding economic relief for the Indian working class; urging a united front with the workers of the world to secure labour swaraj; recommending opposition to government institutions and declaring for working inside the Congress as a separate working-class party. The meetings were largely attended and the demonstration passed off successfully. Telegrams to the press of other provinces were sent by the Labour and Kisan Party urging similar celebrations of May Day throughout India.

(*Vanguard*, Vol 2, No 9, 15 June 1923)

## 8. END OF THREE GREAT STRIKES

(*From Our Correspondent*)

The strikes in the cotton mills of Ahmedabad, the paper mills of Bengal and the oil fields of Burma have come to an end, after the prolonged and admirable resistance of the workers, who showed throughout the most remarkable self-restraint, self-sacrifice and sense of discipline to the will of the majority, as expressed through the decisions of their respective labour unions. In each case, the strikes were a struggle against the increasing tendency on the part of capitalists in India to cut down the standard of living of the working class. Added to this fundamental cause, in the case of the strikes in the paper mills and oil fields, was the resistance to official tyranny and the determination to protect fellow-workers from arbitrary victimisation at the hands of employers for daring to voice the demands and aspirations of the working class. In all three strikes, the underhand methods of the employers, tending to secret negotiations with the trade-union officials and an attempt to break the backbone of the strike by forcing the men back to work before reaching a decision on the issues involved, by the use of bribes and employment of blackleg labour, came to nothing. Partial resumption of work on the part of the men in each of the strikes was followed

by abrupt renewal of the strike on discovering that their demands had not been fulfilled, and that the majority of their fellow-workers still held out. Appeals for arbitration to the government met with no response. The striking workers were left to fight their battle single-handed against the most overwhelming odds. In the case of the Ahmedabad strike, a commission of inquiry was at last appointed and its recommendations for a compromise settlement of a wage cut of 15 per cent instead of 20 per cent, with payment of back bonus, was at first rejected, then accepted on the part of the strikers, after two months' resistance. The end of the strike seems to be due to gradual wearing down of the power to resist of the men, owing to absolute lack of economic means to hold out longer. The lesson to be learned is greater organisation, better leadership and an appeal to the country for help in the creation of a strike fund for the support of the cause of the Indian working class in its unequal struggle with its powerful foe, British and Indian capitalism, supported by all the resources of the state.

*(Vanguard, Vol 2, No 11, 15 July 1923)*

## 5. "Genesis of Workers' and Peasants' Party of India

### INTRODUCTION

In the introductory note to the articles in S. A. Dange's *Socialist* in Volume One we pointed out that the early efforts and suggestions which were the precursors of the later successful activities to build the workers' and peasants' party of India were made both by Roy and Dange, independently of each other in 1921 and 1922. Dange put forward the idea of forming the Indian Socialist Labour Party of the Indian National Congress in his *Socialist* dated 16 September 1922.<sup>1</sup> M. N. Roy had mooted the idea of forming a people's party in a general way as early as towards the end of 1921. But it was in the *Advance Guard* dated 1 October 1922 that he gave a concrete shape to the same: "A mass party consciously representing the interests, immediate as well as ultimate, of the workers and peasants—a political party of the masses based on the principle of class interest and with a programme advocating mass action for carrying forward the struggle for national liberation." Roy later wrote to Dange commenting on the latter's suggestions of starting a socialist labour party of India.

In his letter to Dange dated 2 November 1922 Roy wrote:

<sup>1</sup> 1. See appendix to this section for Dange's article.

"We were all very glad to know of the formation of the Socialist Labour Party. Your paper has been very welcome here. The programme has been translated in other languages and distributed among the leaders. It is a good step forward and it should receive all encouragement from all truly revolutionary elements in the country, I expect. The question of forming a new party to resume the leadership of the Indian movement has been very much discussed here. Even before the Ahmedabad Congress, I insisted on the necessity of beginning the organisation of a mass party. But many considerations and obstacles stood in the way. Then ever since last May, we have been preparing the ground for such a party through our paper (the Vanguard—G.A.) and other means of propaganda. So you see we look upon the step taken by you and other comrades working with you as a timely one. I take it for granted that the Socialist Labour Party of India understands the necessity of international affiliation and believes that the Communist International is the only revolutionary international body."

This letter which was written just on the eve of the Fourth Congress of the CI (5 November to 5 December 1922) was referred to in Volume One<sup>2</sup> but not fully quoted. The significance of this letter is that it confirms the statement we made there, that Roy and Dange were the first to arrive at the idea of forming an open legal mass party, and they did so independently of each other.<sup>3</sup> Roy here welcomes Dange's proposal to form a labour socialist party of India, but suggests that it should have a unoffending name. He suggests "The People's Party". Explaining the political reason for this Roy writes :

"Of course the social basis of this party will be the workers and peasants and the political direction of the party should be in the hands of the communists and socialists who alone can be the custodians of the interests of the toiling masses. But in order that the communists and socialists are not isolated in small sects, and can take active and leading part in the mass struggle, determining its course and destinies by the revolutionary and courageous leadership, a legal apparatus for our activities is needed. The people's party will provide the legal apparatus."

2. Volume One, p. 509.

3. Ibid., p. 510.

Roy goes on to elaborate the idea and makes the following points :

— "The communist nucleus should take a very active part in the formation of a mass party for revolutionary mass struggle."

— Roy tells Dange that he will be drafting a programme and sending to him which he and Singaravelu should try to present before the Gaya session of the Congress.

— This programme will not be accepted by the Congress. But in the very effort to popularise it at the session "we will be on the high road towards the organisation of a communist or socialist party, which will not be a small sect — but a great political force because it will have at its disposal the legal apparatus of a mass party preparing to capture the leadership of the Congress".

— In an obvious reference to the visit of Charles Ashleigh who met Dange in September 1922 and gave him "a number of names", Roy asks Dange to get in touch with Singaravelu of Madras and Ghulam Hussain the editor of *Inqilab* (Lahore) and others, and together with them "prepare for the organisation of the new revolutionary mass party which will enter the struggle with the programme". Roy also suggests that the programme has been discussed by the people of world experience (meaning the Comintern leaders—C.A.).

In a further letter addressed to Dange, dated 19 December 1922,<sup>4</sup> Roy made clear distinction between the organisation of the CPI and of the open mass party. He also showed the inevitable connection between the two.

In the same letter Roy mentions five groups then functioning in India as comprising the communist party.

The idea of creating a mass forum for the legal political functioning of the communist party evolved through stages in the early twenties. It was sought to be implemented by the formation of the workers' and peasants' parties in the latter part of the twenties. Between 1926-28, workers' and peasants' parties were formed in Bengal, Bombay, Punjab and UP. The first conference of the All India Workers' and Peasants' Party took place in Calcutta at the end of December 1928 and the second conference in Lahore at the end of December 1929. In the early thirties, in the days of the national struggle and of imperialist

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 593-96.

repression against it, the workers' and peasants' parties ceased to exist. In the latter part of the thirties their place was taken by an understanding and work with the Congress Socialist Party which had come into existence in 1934. This continued up to 1939 end, when the second world war broke out and another period of repression began.

The documents produced here enable us to see the genesis of the idea of the workers' and peasants' party and the early efforts at their organisation. In the period 1925-30, when these parties were formed, they functioned both inside the National Congress, fighting for a revolutionary programme for the national independence movement, and independently, organising class struggle and the trade-union and the kisan movement.

In "Labourism and the National Struggle", an article written in January end or February beginning of 1923, i.e. soon after the reports of the Gaya Congress reached him abroad, Roy is exposing the move of some reformist labour leaders in the AITUC to form a labour party which would demarcate itself from the National Congress under 'Gandhiji, and with the support of newly-awakening labour to get into the reformed councils to work hand-in-hand with the liberals. Roy agrees with "the necessity of a labour party free from the freaks of Gandhism". But by this Roy meant a working-class party which fully supports Gandhi's anti-imperialist stand but not his temporising and compromising aberrations in the name of nonviolence. He made this clear in the concluding para of the article: "Labourism and the National Struggle":

"But India stands in need of a real working-class party, which will take up the standard of national liberation abandoned by the reactionary lower-middle-class semi-intellectuals. The workers and peasant masses will be the social basis of this party, the future leader of the national struggle. This party is already in the field and has taken up the fight first of all by issuing a programme which gave the Congress the chance of considering and making its own if it so desired.

"A new chapter of India's struggle for freedom opens up with the year 1923. The National Congress is dead. *Long live the National Congress*, which must be henceforth led by the revolutionary people's party of India."

When Roy speaks here of "the reactionary lower-middle-class intellectuals" "having abandoned the standard of the national liberation struggle" and when he raises the slogan "National Congress is dead", he is obviously giving expression to the embittered reaction of the revolutionary intelligentsia to the withdrawal of the struggle by the Congress Working Committee through its Bardoli resolution, and later confirmed by the AICC in its resolution on the Chauri Chaura happenings. But the crux of the matter is his suggestion that the people's party, putting forward the programme of national independence struggle as presented by the communists to the Gaya Congress be formed and be the nucleus of a leftwing in the Indian National Congress.

It appears that the idea of forming such a party on the basis of this programme was discussed at the time of the Gaya Congress by Dange, Singaravelu, Abani Mukherji and Dr Manilal, who were all present there and seemed to have met together. These discussions at Gaya resulted in what is known as "Dr Manilal's manifesto" which was produced with the collaboration of Abani Mukherji.

A few facts about Dr Manilal before we proceed further. His real name is Manilal Manganlal Shah and he was from Baroda. He was called to the bar in Britain where he studied and where he came in contact with Indian revolutionaries. Since 1907 he had worked for Indian emigrants first in Mauritius and from 1912 in Fiji, where he led the strike of PWD and municipal workers and was deported by the British in 1920. From there he went to New Zealand from where he was again deported for having made "bolshevik speeches". He was refused permission to stay in Ceylon and came to India in 1921-22. These facts are given in the intelligence report filed with the home department of the government of India.<sup>5</sup> The same document states that Dr Manilal was a regular contributor to Dange's *Socialist* and appears to be a professed communist. Actually in the *Socialist* of October 1922 Dr Manilal's letter to the governor of Fiji is printed and in another issue (November 1922) appears the "Reminiscences of Dr Manilal", which confirms the abovementioned details.

The manifesto produced by Dr Manilal with the collaboration

of Abani Mukherji was printed in *Navayuga*, an English weekly, issued by G. V. Krishna Rao from Madras in the issues dated 18 and 25 March 1923, under the signature of Dr Manilal. We have not been able to get the text of this manifesto. Cecil Kaye in his confidential report<sup>6</sup> gives its contents as follows :

"It proposes a Labour Peasant Party of India. It upholds non-violence but advocates abolition of the standing army and the police. It proposes the arming of the masses and the organisation of militia—while dissociating itself from the bolsheviks it says it has nothing against the labour section of the bolshevik movement (RILU?)."

We get more detailed information about this document from Singaravelu's letter to Ghulam Hussain of Lahore dated 3 May 1923. This letter was written in answer to Ghulam Hussain's circular dated 27 April 1923, reproduced in this section, which gave a call for a meeting of communist groups in Lucknow to organise a new party.

Singaravelu in his letter says: "What you call Manilal manifesto is a draft manifesto framed by us some time in February last (i.e. 1923—C.A.) and it was put in circulation among a few of us through Manilal. Since then we have redrafted and rendered the manifesto more complete and sent you a wire in March asking you to go over there and establish our party on the basis of our programme. . . All of you including Manilal wrote to us that you will agree to whatever we do in the matter. . . So we redrafted the whole thing and sent to you a copy on 26 April 1923. . . we sent you circular enclosing party card. . . We celebrated May Day and inaugurated our party on that date. . . Thus you will see that our organisation is complete on the basis of our party programme which you by mistake call Manilal manifesto".<sup>7</sup>

Here it is necessary to trace in more detail how the Labour and Kisan Party initiated by Singaravelu and later supported by Dange emerged on the basis of the reformulated Manilal manifesto.

Now M. N. Roy who as we have already seen had been urging the Indian communist groups to get together to form an all-

<sup>6</sup> *Communism in India*, p. 59.

<sup>7</sup> *Home-File*, F 291 KW, 1924.

India centre and to take the initiative to organise an open mass party (e.g. his letters to Dange dated 2 November 1922 and 19 December 1922),<sup>8</sup> wanted the delegates of these groups to come to Europe for a conference so that the proposed party should be inaugurated under the CI auspices. On 12 November 1922 Roy had written to Singaravelu: "We must have a preliminary conference of those who understand the necessity of a new mass party. I would be much pleased to receive your suggestions about the ways and means of holding such a preliminary conference... I propose a small conference in Europe in the beginning of the new year... look out for the most suitable elements... we would like to have you in such a conference."<sup>9</sup> Again in a letter to Singaravelu dated 6 January 1923, Roy emphasised "the necessity of a conference before the organisation of the party is started. We must come to an agreement amongst ourselves first of all."<sup>10</sup>

In his subsequent letters to Dange, Roy developed the idea further. In his letter dated 18 March 1923<sup>11</sup> Roy outlines three tasks: (1) Indian delegates to come secretly to a conference in Europe, where they will confer with Comintern representatives and form an all-India nucleus; (2) these delegates on return will convene a national conference of communist groups to form a regular all-India centre to launch an open mass party; (3) meanwhile the returning delegates will form communist groups all over the country and coordinate their activity.

About the same time Roy was writing to Muzaffar asking him to come to Europe. In a letter dated 18 February 1923<sup>12</sup> Roy says: "A party must be organised now. These things will be discussed on your arrival here. It will be well if you can bring with you a letter of introduction from any labour association." In the same letter Roy informs Muzaffar Ahmad: "Abani has returned to the country, be careful about him. I sent a circular letter<sup>13</sup> of the International about Abani to you by last mail."

8 Volume One, pp. 593-96.

9 Home-Pol. F 261 KW, 1924.

10 Ibid.

11 Exhibit No 26 in Kanpur Case.

12 Exhibit No 33 in Kanpur Case.

13. Text of the circular letter, dated Moscow, 2 October 1922, is as follows: "It has been brought to the notice of the executive committee of the Communist International that Abani Mukherji who was formerly working in the ECCI and is now in Berlin is engaged in spreading all sorts of

In another letter to Muzaffar Ahmad dated 2 March 1923 Roy is again reminding him "come as early as possible and bring at least two rightful delegates". In this letter Roy puts Muzaffar in touch with Usmani and gives him his address in Kanpur.<sup>14</sup> Roy also wrote to Usmani on 26 February 1923 asking him to send two or three delegates to the proposed conference in Berlin.<sup>15</sup> In this letter Roy tells Usmani that his article "Thoughts on Gaya Congress" will be published in the Vanguard. The issue of Vanguard dated 1 March 1923 does contain this article. Incidentally this is the first Vanguard issue which bears under the mast-head the legend: "Central Organ of the CP of India, section of the CI."

The reason why Roy was so insistent in holding a conference of delegates from Indian communist groups in Europe is to be sought in his hostility to and lack of confidence in Abani who

compromising stories against M. N. Roy and Evelyn Roy. He is also, in the name of the CI attempting to secure the aid of some or other organisations to assist him to carry on Indian work. We hereby inform you that Mukherji has no connection with the CI whatever. We have absolutely no confidence in him and therefore we earnestly request you not to have any dealings with him. We refute his insinuation against the Comrades Roy. Comrade M. N. Roy is the only person authorised by the CI to do Indian work. As the ECCI is now investigating the activities of Mukherji, we ask you to confide this only in those comrades who are directly affected by this question. With communist greetings — KUUSINEN, General Secretary"

(Exhibit No 45A in Kanpur Case)

14. Exhibit No 36 in Kanpur Case

15 Exhibit No 45 in Kanpur Case. In this letter Roy wrote about Abani thus: "Abani has gone back to India. The devil has at last joined the Berlin crowd (Indian Independence Committee—G.A.). His ambition knows no bounds. He killed himself in the International by his own behaviour. Now he has gone back to humbug the unwary people there. He has been expelled from the party by the decision of the Comintern—enclosed is a copy of the document (as in footnote 13). Be careful of him and put others on guard." (Roy is not quite correct when he says that Abani was expelled from the party. The circular of the CI says: "ECCI is investigating the activities of Abani Mukherji." We do not know what the results of the investigation were. Abani was not present at the Fifth Congress of the CI nor was he a delegate at the Sixth Congress at which Roy himself was not a delegate nor present. After Roy's expulsion from the CI (1929) we find, according to reliable information from Soviet sources, that Abani was working in the eastern department of the CI in 1930).

was then in India and already in contact with the communist groups: Roy wanted that the launching of the open mass party should take place under his auspices in Europe and not in India, where perhaps Abani would get the credit. We have seen that Abani had met Singaravelu and Dange at Madras and Bombay respectively and then together at Gaya. Muzaffar says that he refused to meet Abani when he was in Calcutta.<sup>16</sup>

Dange and Singaravelu did not approve of Roy's idea of holding a conference in Europe. They held it to be an impractical idea at that time. Dange wrote to Singaravelu on 29 February 1923: "You perhaps know that Roy wants to hold a conference of Indian communists in Berlin. I think it is a mad venture for Indians to go hunting communism in European conferences. Whatever has to be done must be done in India..."

Earlier Singaravelu had written to Dange: "As for Roy's project, I do not know... There is good deal to be done here before one thinks of a congress... it is absolutely impossible to cross our shores at the present."<sup>17</sup>

Muzaffar Ahmad commenting on this writes that "Dange and Singaravelu congratulated each other in January, 1923 upon their having refused M. N. Roy's invitation to visit Europe" and adds with his characteristic venom "it is amazing to think how these wily birds... came to flock together"<sup>18</sup> and that "they... did not believe in proletarian internationalism"<sup>19</sup>. Muzaffar Ahmad himself was called to Europe at the same time and did not go. He writes: "... Roy asked me to come to Europe but I was working as a wholetime comrade and I wrote to him repeatedly for money. But I did not receive any money from him in 1922. It is true that I felt neglected..."<sup>20</sup> So in the case of Muzaffar Sahab, it was not lack of proletarian internationalism but lack of money! But that is Muzaffar Sahab's objective approach to party history.

Singaravelu and Dange were seriously making an effort to hold a conference in India and to launch an open mass party. On 24 March 1923 Singaravelu wrote to Dange: "Thanks for your Socialist... A few of us here have been busy in discussing Mani-

16. *Myself and the CPI*, p. 225.

17. Home-Pol. F 261, KW, 1924

18. *Myself and the CPI*, p. 306.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 304

20. *Ibid.*, p. 314.

lal's manifesto regarding the formation of an independent Labour Kisan Party, forming a section of the Congress. I understand a copy has been sent to you." Singaravelu invited Dange to come over to Madras on 30 March 1923 "to inaugurate our party".<sup>21</sup> On 13 April 1923 Dange replied to Singaravelu: "I read the manifesto. It is too faulty and I have written to Dr Manilal about the many changes that I want in it. I hope Charlu (i.e. Abani—G.A.) will see the letter and write to you about it. You know Charlu and all his business? Suppose, we call the first session of an all-India socialist labour congress? Some time we must hold such a congress... Let me know your group's views about this suggestion."<sup>22</sup>

Dange in this letter asks Singaravelu what sort of a party conference he had called and gives him a number of comrades' addresses for making contact. Dange however never went to Madras to attend the conference. Singaravelu and his colleagues in Madras held the conference on the basis of the reformulated Manilal manifesto at the end of April 1923 and inaugurated the Labour Kisan Party of Hindustan on the first of May. The first May Day celebration ever in India took place in Madras under the Labour Kisan Party of Singaravelu and the red flag was unfurled for the first time in India in 1923. The manifesto of the Labour Kisan Party, which is the first document reproduced here, was also published on that day.

This is a printed pamphlet entitled, *The Manifesto to the Labour and Kisan of Hindustan for the Formation of a Political Party of Their Own*. The facsimile of its front page, reproduced here, bears the symbol of the party—a combination of hammer and sickle and charkha in a circle and round it are the words—"For food, cloth and house. Workers of the world, unite". It was printed at Guardian Press, 158-B Broadway, Madras.

This manifesto published by Singaravelu in May 1923 and the earlier Manilal manifesto, both were based on the programme put forward at the Gaya Congress by Indian communists and which was drafted by Roy. In spite of a number of shortcomings and considerable confusion, this manifesto nevertheless put for-

21. Home-Pol. F 261 KW, 1924.

22. Ibid.

# THE LABOUR & KISHAN PARTY OF HINDUSTHAN.

The Manifesto to the Labour & Kishan of Hindusthan for the  
formation of a Political Party of their own.



1921

THE LABOUR & KISHAN PARTY OF HINDUSTHAN  
SECRETARY: SINGARAVELU

1921  
1921  
1921  
1921

Title page of Singaravelu's Manifesto

ward the leading tasks which were correct and needed to be implemented. The manifesto attempted to formulate a concrete economic and political programme for the national independence or swaraj movement; secondly it urged the formation of a 'legal' leftwing mass party inside the Congress; thirdly it stressed the necessity of forming workers' and peasants' mass organisations fighting for their urgent class demands. Roy was putting forward these ideas, as we have seen, more clearly and cogently, and what is important was simultaneously insisting on the formation of a communist party by uniting the four or five groups which had arisen in different parts of India into an all-India centre to guide and implement in practice the abovementioned task.

Both Roy and Dange in their own ways, as we shall see later, had criticised this manifesto on certain points, especially on the confused idea of "labour-swaraj" and on Singaravelu's refusal to clinch the issue of private property in basic means of production, particularly in land and largescale factory production. Besides the manifesto is deliberately ambiguous about and demarcates itself from "bolshevism". Roy as we shall see later not only sharply criticised it on this point but also constructively showed the necessity for Indian national and labour movement to affiliate itself with the world working-class movement for social and national liberation. Singaravelu is here seeking to demarcate himself from "bolsheviks and labour leaders... mainly drawn from Indian and European intellectuals... (who) not knowing what would be suitable to Indian conditions are attempting to transplant on Indian soil what they have become familiar with in the West".

We have shown earlier that Manilal manifesto took exactly similar position. It also sought to demarcate itself from bolshevism while expressing solidarity with the labour section of the bolshevik movement, viz the RILU. It is quite likely that Abani Mukherji himself may have suggested to both Manilal and Singaravelu to adopt such a stand to avoid prosecution at the hands of the British government. The arrest and prosecution of the young muhajirs as bolshevik agents just because they had been trained in communist schools in Tashkent and Moscow was already well known.

Dange, in an article printed in the Marathi daily *Lokamanya* dated 5 July 1923, had also expressed similar sentiments. In this

article Dange condemned the persecution of Indian revolutionaries as 'bolshevik agents' and expressed his solidarity with the ideas of the Russian revolution and their relevance to India, while at the same time disclaiming that his party was being dictated from a party in Moscow. A translation of this article entitled "Hunt for the Bolsheviks in India" by a police officer of the intelligence department which is found in the "Paper Book" of the Kanpur Conspiracy Case is being reproduced here for information. Dange in his statement to the court said: "I remember the document and I wrote it."<sup>23</sup>

Dange's original idea was to name the party Labour Socialist Party or just Socialist Party which was to work inside the Congress as well as independently. But later when Singaravelu actually launched the Labour Kisan Party and published its manifesto he fell in with the idea and seems to have accepted the name. Thus we find him opening in his *Socialist* of May-June 1923, a column under the heading "Labour Kisan Party of Hindustan (Monthly Reports)" and listing his own activities. At the end of the column, he gives the news item: "Provincial councils of Labour Kisan Party of Hindustan have been formed in Madras and in the Punjab." Finally there is an insertion giving the pledge which all those wishing to join the party have to sign. Extracts from this item are printed below.

It appears Singaravelu sent to M. N. Roy a letter in which he detailed the plan of launching a legal mass party and also gave the main points of the manifesto he was going to issue. This was even before the party was actually set up and the manifesto published. Thus we see Roy writing to Dange on 7 May 1923 a letter which the latter said he received, in which he welcomed Singaravelu's initiative. We have given the full text of this letter.

At this time Roy had not received the text of the manifesto issued by Singaravelu but had come to know its general contents as summarised in his letter and had approved of the same. At the same time he had received the copy of Manilal manifesto issued over the signature of "Textile workers of India and the Kisans of Northern India". Roy immediately detected the hand of Abani behind it.

23. "Paper Book" of Kanpur Case, p. 124.

Roy warns Dange against Abani and his parallel efforts to contact communist groups in India, and calls upon Dange to get in touch with Singaravelu without delay and to try to convene a preliminary conference to which besides our own comrades, "such men as Sampumanand of Benaras, Manilal of Gaya, the editor of *Vartaman* of Kanpur etc. can be invited. I would also suggest Bhupendra Nath Banerjee of the *Patrika*."

In this letter Roy suggests to Dange that he, Ghulam Hussain and Singaravelu should together plan the conference for launching the legal party. He makes it clear that "the idea is to have the political control of the legal party in the hands of the Communist Party". He suggests that the office-bearers of the legal party should as far as possible be members of the CP and even suggests Singaravelu as the head of the organisation. Roy is apprehensive of the efforts of Dewan Chamanlal and others of the then AITUC to form a labour party and also of the efforts of the dissident Abani Mukherji forming a workers' and peasants' party and wants to forestall both these. He is seeking to give Singaravelu's effort a broad all-India basis bringing all the existing communist groups and allied leftwingers in the Indian National Congress into it.

The next document, Ghulam Hussain's circular dated 27 April 1923, is an effort to call such a broad conference in Lucknow in June. We have taken the text from the Paper Book of the Kanpur Case containing printed copies of all the exhibits in the case and which was prepared by the government for the purpose of countering the high-court appeal preferred by the convicted accused in the case in November 1924. In the circular, the names and addresses of 25 persons are given, the majority of which can be identified as open communists and leftwing workers of the period. The circular calls upon them to meet at Lucknow on 30 June 1923, where the legal party will be organised and its programme adopted. It seems to have reached the principal communist workers in Madras, Calcutta, Bombay, Punjab and UP and also the hands of Roy towards the end of May.

Ghulam Hussain's circular is calling for just the type of preliminary conference in India which Roy was insisting upon in his letter to Dange (dated 7 May 1923). He had written the "Memorandum to the Conference for Organising a Working-class Party in India", which is the next document in this series, soon after

he received Ghulam Hussain's circular. This was sent in the form of a letter addressed to Qutbuddin Ahmad—a friend of Muzaffar Ahmad. It was also sent to other addresses by Roy. It was intercepted by the police and produced as an exhibit in the Kanpur Conspiracy Case. We are producing the text given in the Paper Book. This memorandum of Roy dated 5 June 1923 as well as the next document, viz the letter from the executive committee of the Communist International, dated 14 June 1923, are very important. These two documents as well as the news item "A New Party" in the *Vanguard* dated 1 June 1923 (reproduced here) show that Roy and the executive committee of the Comintern took serious note of efforts of Singaravelu and his colleagues in Madras to form the Labour Kisan Party and the support to the same given by Dange and his group in Bombay. They took the circular of Ghulam Hussain calling a conference on 30 June in Lucknow as a culmination of the efforts and proceeded to respond to the same.

The memorandum of Roy is a comprehensive attempt to sum up the discussion on the formation of an open legal mass party, which the communist groups in India were conducting since the Gaya Congress. It is also a constructive criticism of Singaravelu's manifesto, the text of which was now in the hands of Roy. The whole is meant to give the guidelines and practical suggestions to the Lucknow conference.

The next document, the letter of the executive committee of the Comintern to the Lucknow conference covers about the same ground, but it is more precise and accurate in its formulations than the memorandum. Here the attention is focused on imperialism as the main enemy and the role of the bourgeoisie is assessed in the context of the anti-imperialist struggle.

The letter is directly addressed to the conference for organising a workers' and peasants' party. It does not mention the Communist Party nor the question of dual organisation. At the same time it emphasises the class-partisan role of the workers' and peasants' party in as much as it is called upon to fight against the reformist and compromising tendencies of the bourgeois nationalists in the national-independence movement as well as in the trade-union movement. It calls upon the party to actively parti-

participate in the day-to-day struggles of workers and peasants such as strikes and peasant demonstrations for their urgent demands.

Both these documents—the memorandum of M. N. Roy and the letter of the ECCI to the Lucknow conference for organising the workers' and peasants' party of India (which did not materialise) are companion documents. They were sent out by M. N. Roy, on behalf of the Eastern Bureau of the Comintern some time in the middle of June 1923, probably in several copies to several addresses. By the time they arrived in India, Muzaffar Ahmad, Ghulam Hussain and Shaukat Usmani were already arrested. Probably Dange and Singaravelu also did not receive them. The police intercepted all the copies and produced one set as exhibit in the Kanpur Conspiracy Case in 1924.

In the July or August issue of the *Socialist*, Dange criticised the manifesto of the Labour Kisan Party issued by Singaravelu. We have not got the original. What is reproduced here as document: "Good Criticism but Bad Programme", probably written in September 1923, is Roy's criticism of Dange's article in the *Socialist*.

The programme put forward by the communists at the Gaya session of the Indian National Congress was to be the basis of the legal mass party to be formed by the communists. In the *Vanguard*, Roy compared "Three Programmes": that of the "non-changers", the one put forward by the swarajists and the programme put forward by the communists at Gaya. Here he made it clear that the programme of that stage was not "bolshevist" but nationalist. He said "India is not ripe for bolshevism. She must evolve through the stage of bourgeois democracy... till that day Indian communists must stand with the honest nationalists who really desire the freedom of their country and the improvement of the conditions of the people. Our programme here is a programme of national liberation and national construction."

Before we conclude, two interesting references to Singaravelu's manifesto in the contemporary confidential record of the government must be mentioned. A demiofficial from E. S. Lloyd to the acting secretary of the government of Madras in May 1923 stated:

"The manifesto of the Labour Kisan Party of Hindustan... was handed to API for transmission upcountry at the beginning

of the month, but they refused to take it on the ground that the matter is objectionable. Singaravelu and his henchman M. P. S. Velayudhan Pillai held a communist meeting on May Day, but attracted very few labourers. The movement is viewed with disfavour by both the Congress and Swarajist parties on the whole and seems to find little support. . . . Though the manifesto states the question of private property is reserved for the future, the manifesto has a distinctly bolshevik flavour. No action for the present, watch developments."<sup>24</sup>

The fortnightly report for the second half of May records :

"M. Singaravelu Chettiyar has issued printed membership cards with a synopsis of rules, aims and objects of the Labour Kisan Party. Each member before joining has to fill a card and also sign an oath that he is prepared to sacrifice even his life to safeguard the interest of the party. About 24 members are said to be on the rolls."<sup>25</sup>

It is also on record that a contemporary English daily of Bombay, *Servant*, published an account of the formation of the Labour Kisan Party, of the May Day celebration of 1923 and the press telegram sent by Singaravelu about that May Day. This is given in Singaravelu's letter to Ghulam Hussain dated 5 May 1923, in which he tells the latter that it is "now necessary to start provincial organisations of our party in Bengal, Punjab and Bombay and to enrol members from among the industrial workers".<sup>26</sup>

24. Home-Pol. F 25. 1923—"Fortnightly Reports of Internal Political Situation".

25. *Ibid.*

26. Home-Pol. F 261 KV, 1924



come out of the elements that entered the Congress at Nagpur and has consciously felt that the blue swaraj gave [no] comfortable position for them. They are therefore out for organising a class party of their own and are keen in capturing labour in order that they may use labour for their own party ends. The split in Gaya appearing under the caption of council-entry or no-council-entry is at bottom nothing but the difference between the blue and yellow bourgeois parties in the language of European politics. Their high-sounding phrases (like Mr C. R. Das's recent speech at Dacca) to lead labour to hope for many things is but a ruse to capture labour for their party purposes. As the actual result so far as they—the producing masses—are concerned is nil and there is no likelihood of the yellow party making any more difference to the toilers than the substitution of the white bureaucracy by their own yellow bureaucracy. The programme of the yellow party would make it impossible for the proletariat (workers) to have any effective voice in the administration of the country and in the betterment of their condition, as one will see from their manifesto requiring such qualification for candidature as would prevent a common working man from sitting in the legislative and executive bodies of their swaraj. "Representatives shall have done some good work", they say, "should if rural be literate and if urban should possess higher educational qualifications and in case of provincial and Indian councils, should have superior educational qualifications or should have retired from business." "The good work"—the qualification required—is work judged to be good according to the bourgeois standard. For example a man would have taken side with the scavengers of Baroda or Madras on strike would hardly have a chance of nomination or support at the hands of the yellow party. [?] But making "private property would be recognised and maintained and growth of individual wealth would be permitted" a permanent part of their creed, the yellow party has barred the poor workers against real economic justice.

The so-called independent party or parties are of the same colour with a difference of one or two shades. Therefore the masses have nothing to expect from the orthodox NCO and their step-brothers—the yellow party and the yellowers. This is one side of the Indian political situation.

On the other side, part of the landless workers—the proletariat of India—have developed a spontaneous subconsciousness of class solidarity of their own. The origin and growth of trade-union movement throughout the land proves this beyond any possibility of doubt. Labour has realised that they must have the necessities of life, and in order to secure them they have to put up a fight, as is proved by epidemics of strikes occurring since 1918.

Our rulers being bourgeois of a higher standard have realised the cause and tendency of this new movement of the workers better than our politicians and leaders. They have realised that the masses, though dumb and illiterate, if once organised, will form a force too colossal to resist. This force—that is the force of the workers combining with the yellow and the yellower parties—can make swaraj a settled fact. But the masses lack proper leadership and the Indian intellectuals (bourgeoisie themselves) being afraid of the colossal force are trying to subjugate them in various ways. Whilst the masses instinctively feel the clash of their class interest with that of the bourgeoisie, they refuse to sacrifice themselves at the altar of nationalism. Comprehending this, the government is aware of the economic causes of this movement and have come forward to counteract it by means of subtle legislative acts suitable to the various provinces, namely the Bengal Tenancy Act, Malabar Tenancy Act, Oudh Rent Bill and of the Akalis [?], workingmen's compensation bill etc. etc. But the upshot of all such government activities is of no value to the peasants and workers. These laws are meant to bamboozle the masses. Besides the government is also trying to counteract all mass movement by means of aman sabhas and agents and spies within the trade unions. Such sabhas have already spun their network over the whole of India. Therefore one notices that the mass organisations and trade unions have lost their morale and are vaguely depending now on themselves or on their government or sometimes on the Congress.

Then we come to the war of capitalists against the workers and we cannot fail to notice that the workers, whether the tramway-men of Calcutta, Jamshedpur Labour Union, transport workers, or industrial workers of Bombay and Madras, are crushed to the ground because the government as well as the upper and lower

middle classes find it [in] their interest to do nothing in support of the toilers in their fight. Even the Congress refused to let the East India railwaymen (according to the Socialist of Bombay) have three lacs of rupees to prosecute their campaign during the last strike to a successful issue, when it was beyond doubt that this action would have done far more damage to English trade than all the boycott resolutions and khaddar propaganda put together. In this capitalistic war against labour, both the Indian and the foreigner have joined hands as exploiters. Their principal move is to suppress or remove either by legislation or dictation or resolution those very elements which have become class conscious from the workingmen's point of view.

Then one notices another small factor in the shape of foreign agents calling themselves bolsheviks or labour leaders and benefactors. They are mainly drawn from Indian and European intellectuals and whose sole aim is to ingratiate themselves into the secrets of labour activities and to act as indicators to the government, if not worse. Some of these men not knowing what would be suitable to Indian conditions are attempting to transplant on Indian soil what they have become familiar with in the West. Movements started by such people would prove disastrous (and in some cases it has actually proved so) to the real interests of the workers. We declare once for all that we have nothing against the labour section of the bolshevik movement, as we correctly understand it that the workers of the world should unite to protect their common interests. What we resent is the subjugation of labour to mere intellectuals and spies.

Thus a quadruple force is about to seal the fate of labour and peasants of red India. But as the labour and peasants have to live, it becomes necessary for the class-conscious section of that body to organise themselves into a party by bringing into line the dumb and illiterate millions to protect their own interests, and in forming this party care should be taken that it does not drift away into the hands of utopians who will be inclined in running it upon the lines of British Labour Party and similar organisations.

## II. GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF THE PARTY

The party which is to be organised shall be called the Labour and Kisan Party of Hindustan (by kisan is meant the landless agricultural workers and poor peasants). People belonging to this class and such of the bourgeoisie who have drifted towards the former intellectually and economically are only eligible to the membership of this party. The other section of the bourgeoisie can join it by surrendering as matter of principle the right of private property, when called upon by the community to do so, and after an year's probation.

This party is to act as the vanguard of the Indian labour and kisans in their struggle for existence. The creed of this party is to achieve labour swaraj by nonviolent means. This party will adopt all methods and tactics for attaining its end, including noncooperation, passive resistance, constructive programme and civil disobedience as suited to labour and kisans, and such other ways and means for the speedy attainment of swaraj. Its chief aim is to bring economic relief to the masses. The party reserves its programme, both political and economical, including the definition of labour swaraj for a suitable time to come and will go on working on a provisional programme as will be accepted in the congress by its members. This provisional programme will be changeable according to the development and needs of the producing masses of the country.

This party as an organised body will affiliate itself to the Indian National Congress making it the labour and kisan section of the Congress. This party has no objection to establish an entente for the attainment of national swaraj with the other parties in the Congress—blue, yellow or yellowish—who may come with a programme acceptable to this party in order to make the Congress a real national body.

This party would reserve the question of private property for the future. But it makes it clear that in any form of swaraj, it will demand economic relief for the masses or a substantial change in the means of production and distribution by the gradual adoption of cooperative labour system. The chief authority of the party will be the congress of its members, but to execute the resolutions of the congress and for general directions, an ex-

cutive or working committee with a presidium will be appointed by the party congress fresh every year. This executive will have powers to frame temporary bylaws, rules and regulations consistent with the fundamental principles of the party for their term of office. All members and party officials will be required to obey their executive and give their full support and allegiance to them. They will have the right to suspend any member or members acting against the disciplinary jurisdiction of the executive. Such measures are subject to the ratification of the party congress. The members of such committee and other officials of the party will be expected to give their whole time for party work. No office-bearer of the party will receive an amount exceeding Rs 30 to Rs 40 a month and third-class fare while travelling for party purposes under ordinary circumstances. In case of imprisonment or death of such workers, their needy family will be looked after by the party. All office-bearers must be permanent residents of Hindustan unless otherwise permitted by the party.

For party propaganda, the party will organise various centres in the country where party propagandists will be trained and besides labour literature, labour libraries and amusement centres, day and night workers' schools, cooperative stores will also be organised to develop the class consciousness of the masses. The organisation of youths under 18 and of workers will also be kept in view.

As finance is one of the chief things to be considered by the party, recourse to raise a party fund may be had by approaching the philanthropists in the country but the main financial resource of the party should be by subscriptions and donations of the members themselves. Therefore regular monthly subscriptions will be expected from all party members and to this effect party cards will be issued where all such dues will be duly acknowledged. It must be borne in mind that the producing masses, especially the labourers of the organised industry in the land, number several millions and one anna from each per month will be enough for the maintenance of the party. Yearly finance will be regularly audited by auditor experts nominated by the party congress.

To meet immediate needs of labour and kisans, the party besides its programme will have an action programme expressing

the current demands. To accelerate such demands the party will make use of the Congress and its methods, of the new party, of the trade unions, and of the governmental institutions etc.

### III. THE ACTION PROGRAMME OF THE LABOUR AND KISAN PARTY OF INDIA

#### *Labour*

(1) To devise means and methods to save the labour fighters and their families put to suffering while in discharge of their class duties.

(2) Right to form union.

(3) Recognition of right to strike as a lawful weapon in the hands of labour for their selfprotection.

(4) Formation of arbitration courts to deal with labour disputes composed of labour-union representatives, capitalists and state officials or neutrals in equal number.

(5) Improved housing condition.

(6) Minimum wages guaranteeing the value of 350 lb of rice or wheat according to the custom of the provinces per month and 10 pairs of dhotis per year.

(7) State insurance against accident, old age, ill health and unemployment.

(8) Provident fund for workers.

(9) Privilege and casual leave with full pay similar to that of state officials.

(10) Reduced tramway and railway fare to labour and poor kisans.

(11) Eight hours law, 6 hours for miners and nursing women and 4 hours for children.

(12) Free medical aid.

(13) Four months' delivery leave with full pay.

(14) Maternity protection.

(15) Abolition of labour recruitment by sardars under whom they work and who take a percentage of their earnings and whose interest coincides with that of capitalists.

(16) Adoption of labour recruitment free or through labour union.

*Peasant*

- (1) Protection against ejection.
- (2) Twenty per cent reduction on all economic rent in ryotwari settlement.
- (3) Equal standard of rent for small holders in zamindari area as in ryotwari.
- (4) Eventual abolition of permanent settlement.
- (5) Extraction by zamindars, their servants or state officials as extras, be it in cash, kind or labour, should be made punishable by law.
- (6) Protection against oppression of zamindars.
- (7) Abolition of "salami", that is a large sum of cash payment extracted by the zamindars (also jenmies) while transferring the land from one to other tenants.
- (8) Free irrigation.
- (9) Abolition of dowry etc.

*Common*

- (1) Universal suffrage.
- (2) Easy access for the producing masses in state institutions, that is, lowering the standard of qualifications for candidature in local selfgovernment and provincial or central government institutions. The position as official in trade unions or labour party should be considered qualification enough to sit on those bodies representing labour and kisans.
- (3) Free and compulsory education till 16th year.
- (4) Abolition of taxes like salt tax, chaukidari tax, road cess etc.
- (5) Sharing the industrial profit by labour together with the capitalists.
- (6) Establishment of cooperative credit, consumers' and marketing societies to help the needy labour and kisans by loans and supply of their material needs at cheaper rate and to gather, preserve and sell their produce in proper time and market to fetch highest price for the small producers' benefit.
- (7) Differential railway tariff to such cooperatives.
- (8) Protection of untouchables by legislation giving them equal political and religious rights.
- (9) Universal suffrage in Congress election.

### *Synopsis of Political Demands*

Ultimate unification of legislative and executive bodies; villages in rural areas and towns in urban areas are to be considered as units of the government with substantial autonomy. Then there will be administrative centres in districts, provinces and interprovincial federation.

In the event of a man dying with or without leaving a will whoever may be his heirs should pay a certain percentage of his inheritance as succession duty to state. Percentage will be in a gradual scale. Abolition of the standing army and police. They are to be replaced by voluntary conscription from suitable or willing elements of the people and arming of the masses and organisation of militia for police duties. Abolition of usury. No secret treaties. Right of independence of smaller and dependent nations. Abolition of indirect taxation of salt etc. and direct taxation of chaukidari tax and road cess type. Freedom of religion and worship, speech and press. Establishment of cooperative credit and consumer societies.

### *Economic : Labour*

Joint share profit system of industry. The industries are to be controlled and guided by a joint body of labour and capitalist representatives in equal numbers—the first as producers and the second as distributors. All differences to be settled by 3 representatives namely one capitalist, one neutral and one elected by particular union to which the labour concerned belongs. The reserve fund in any industry to be treated as capital of the workers. After deducting 3 per cent of the profit on the actual outlay for the capitalists and the contribution to the reserve fund the rest of the profit must be equally shared out amongst the workers. Eight hours law for male adult; 4 hours for children under 16 and 6 hours for women. Children under 16 should be declared ineligible for employment. Minimum wages guaranteeing the value of 350 lb of rice or wheat as the case may be per month and 10 pairs of dhotis a year, better housing condition. Free medical help. Four months' delivery leave with full pay for women labourers. The abandonment of the system of recruitment of labour by sardars under whom they work and who take a percentage from their wages and whose interest coincide with

those of employers. Compensation for accidents, death or disability. Recruitment and dismissal of local workers as well as of colonial emigration through labour unions. Facilities for union workers for travel in foreign countries to get acquainted with the labour world etc; privilege leave as it is with the state officials. Reduced railway and tramway fares for workmen and poor kisans.

### *Peasantry*

Permanent settlement on the land. Economic rent to be fixed at 10 per cent of the income and to be paid in kind or cash according to the local condition to be determined by the peasant unions. Right of union. Free irrigation. Loans either in seed or in money without interest. Supply of modern agricultural machineries and manure by the state at cost price. Establishment of laboratory or experimental fields and agricultural schools for the peasantry. Stoppage of all extra payments, like contributions towards a motor car, a title, a third marriage or a bhandar of the zamindar and similar exactions by zamindari servants and government officials.

Protection against the oppression of the zamindars. Introduction of improved methods of agriculture and better production by gradual establishment of peasant communes. Restrictions to purchase crops before ripened as is customary now.

## *Chapter I*

### PROVISIONAL PARTY SCHEME OF SWARAJ

Our country will be called Hindustan and its administration will be known as federated Hindustan panchayat. The unit of such administration will be villages in rural areas and cities and towns in urban areas with substantial autonomy with a power of reservation in the central government. All the panchayats will be elected periodically by universal suffrage, irrespective of education, sex or social position. Equal rights for villagers and producing masses to sit as representatives with the bourgeoisie in legislative, executive or judicial bodies, irrespective of their want of property and what passes as education. Care would be taken that in the panchayat administration of the country the voice of the real worker will be a substantial factor.

## Chapter II

### ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS

The present territorial divisions of the present villages, towns, cities, taluks and districts will be maintained. The provinces will be linguistically divided as in the present Congress administration.

## Chapter III

### ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS

Each unit will administer its legislative and executive affairs by an elected, centralised body called panchayat which will have in view the ultimate unification of these functions.

*Education* : universal, free and compulsory education of all children of both sexes up to 16 years of age with free feeding of the children as will be adopted by the joint session of both the bodies of central legislation. The administration and finance of education will entirely vest with the central government. This should form the scope of the national educational item of the Congress constructive programme, provision for recreation, of public gardens, parks, museums, playgrounds, libraries, reading rooms, art galleries, popular lectures, recitations, processions, pageants, religious festivals (katha, jatra, kalakshepam, kirtana, Ramlila, Krishnalila, Buddhist, Mohamedan festivals and feasts, Christmas, and Easter celebrations etc), refining, elevating and instructive dramas, cinema and magic lantern shows, games, sports etc.

*The Police* : At present being the body outside the society though recruited from it has become an engine of oppression to the majority and therefore it should be replaced by a regular militia recruited from time to time and the police being under the administration of the provincial government. Justice will be administered by local panchayat according to law and procedure framed by the central government. Justice will be free. The appellate courts will be under the administration of the central government and justice will be free. Free medical help will be rendered through the panchayat as well as sanitation.

## Chapter IV

## ECONOMIC, INDUSTRIAL, AGRICULTURAL WELFARE

Various unions such as kisan, labour, handicraft, employees etc with a measure of control by the workers and cattle-breeding and other productive industries relating to fisheries, salt, sericulture, arboriculture as well as arts and crafts and trade and commerce will come under panchayat administration. Nationalisation of the means of communication such as railways, tramways, posts, telegraphs, telephones, waterways, water works, roads, buildings, mines, forests etc. under state administration. Freedom of religious worship, speech and press, provision for the unemployed, opening of public works such as canal, road, public building, parks, museums, tanks, resthouses under the provincial government, special provision being made for scientific research. Protectional tariff and state subsidising for the development of industry and shipping. This should also form scope of the Congress constructive programme relating to khaddar.

## Chapter V

## TEMPERANCE

In obedience to the Congress constructive programme the manufacture and the import of intoxicating commodities except for medical use will be entirely prohibited. Removal of untouchability by legislature will be undertaken giving the suppressed classes equal right in all the administrative, legislative, religious bodies in the country.

## [Chapter VI]

## LOCAL PANCHAYAT

These will make rules and regulations for their local administration, and the chief legislation of the country will be regulated by the central legislation.

*Local Officials*

Local units will have their own respective officials appointed by themselves and the head of the administration should be recognised by the provincial authority.

### The Connection of the Units -

The connection, control and interdependence of the various units such as village, taluk, district and province will be detailed in due time.

(a) The number of members of the panchayat will depend upon the population of the unit.

(b) The panchayat itself will have its presidium amongst whom the chief function will be divided.

(c) The village panchayat will administer local school, sanitation, hospital, medical aid and tanks, temples and public buildings, avenues, recreation, local militia in collaboration with the panchayat. It will have its special arbitration section to deal with all civil and criminal cases under the court named by the central legislature.

(d) The cooperative credit, consuming, marketing societies will be created to finance the needy populace without interest in kind or cash, to supply them with all their material needs at cheap prices in competition with private trade as well as to gather and market the production of individual small-holders in centres far off from rural areas. The administration of these bodies will be the societies themselves under labour unions and labour parties, the panchayat local or central will be required to give state aid to the societies.

### DISTRICT PANCHAYAT

The district panchayat will be elected by universal franchise of the people of the district and the number of panchayat members will be settled hereafter. The chief function of the district panchayat is to find a uniform policy and concord between it and the rural and town panchayats.

### Education

The district panchayat will be responsible for higher education, science, art and technic.

Agricultural schools, laboratories or experimental fields will be established for the peasants of the district.

All kinds of innocent recreation, amusements, arts etc. will be encouraged by the district panchayat.

The police administration of militia will be cooperated with the panchayat.

The district will maintain large hospitals, bigger medical relief etc. having the right of supervision over unit panchayat.

The cooperatives mentioned above will be functioned in an enlarged form in the district. These higher cooperatives will be centralised bodies having the chief guidance under the central government with powers of supervision and control of unit organisations.

#### TOWN PANCHAYAT

The municipal functions of the towns will be taken over by the panchayat and their organisations will form urban units and in a general way they will correspond with rural units and larger town will be the seat of district panchayat. Town panchayat will be formed by universal franchise as other panchayat units.

#### PROVINCIAL PANCHAYAT

Provinces will be framed according to language like the present Congress provinces. Its panchayat will be elected by universal franchise irrespective of the urban or rural condition.

The provincial panchayat would advise the district panchayat and coordinate them and their work, using residuary powers of control under proper safeguards. Its special work would be to maintain advanced educational institutions which would give expert cultural and technical training and promote research.

#### ALL INDIA PANCHAYAT

The central government will be composed of two bodies. The all-Hindustan panchayat, the members of which will be elected by universal suffrage. This will be the chief legislative organisation. A cabinet to operate the executive functions will be elected by this body from its members.

There will be a congress of all panchayats in Hindustan consisting of properly elected delegates from the unit, district and provincial panchayats. This congress will meet yearly to criticise the actions of the central legislative and executive body and to suggest

such proposals as will bring about a uniformity of action in all the panchayats. This congress will elect a body from themselves constituting the second house of the central government, the consent of which will be necessary to validate the laws and regulations of the all-Hindustan panchayat. Members of the body will not be eligible to sit in the cabinet.

No distinction will be made in the proportion of seats in the central government for the urban or rural areas.

The functions of the government will be similar to that of the provinces, with the special one to deal with means of communication, public utility, military, navy, stamps, posts and telegraphs, railways, currency, weights and measures, general laws and regulations, civil and criminal codes, foreign policy including Indian state's tariffs and customs.

The language of the central government will be Hindi while provinces will have their own mother-tongues and if willing Hindi

Chief taxation will be upon land and the taxation will be readjusted at 10 per cent of the income of individual holders. In the zamindari system the zamindars will be required to pay 90 per cent of their current income.

Legislation should be made prohibiting the payment by the poor peasants to zamindars any amount more than 10 per cent of the tenants' income and stoppage of all extra payments extracted by the zamindar from the tenants.

Protecting tenants from ejection. Free irrigation. Abolition of indirect taxation like salt and abolition of chaukidari tax, road cess etc. Gradual taxation on all income over Rs 1000 a year. Supertax on income over Rs 25,000. Special taxation on unearned income, taxation on jewellery and precious metals etc. Taxation on all freehold property, religious or private. Taxation on inheritance of all properties over Rs 5000. Excise duty on capitalist industry. Protection tariff. Taxation on luxuries such as motorcars, vehicles, horses, costly furniture, stamps, amusements (exempting pilgrimage), hotels, restaurants, private commerce.

#### *Qualification of Franchise*

Every man or woman between 25 and 70 residing in Hindustan for 7 years is eligible to be elected on all the panchayats and once elected they should be permanently in the country till the

expiry of their term. The constituency will have the right to recall their nominees in any panchayat, for any reasonable cause provided that two-thirds of the constituents express their desire to recall.

Provincial, district and other units will be given certain powers of local taxation.

WORKERS OF THE WORLD, UNITE !

M SINGARAVELU,  
(Indian communist)

President, Madras Maha Bodhi Society, president, Mill Workers' Labour Relief Committee; president, Hindustan Panchayat, Ex-president, Madras City Congress Council.

Member and general secretary, Congress Ex-Labour Relief Committee; member, Provincial Khilafat Working Committee (Madras); member, Tamil Nadu Provincial Committee; member, Madras City Congress Working Committee, member, All-India Congress Committee and chief commandant of the Congress City Volunteers; member, All-India Congress Labour Committee.

M. P. S VELAYUDHAM,  
(Indian communist)

Member, Madras City Congress Council; Madras representative, People's Publicity Service, Bombay.

1 May 1923  
Madras

2. HUNT FOR THE BOLSHEVIKS IN INDIA<sup>1</sup>

By SHIRIPAD AMRIT DANGE

All are aware that the bolsheviks are ruling in Russia. The Indian people did not know as yet the movement of these bolsheviks has reached India.

<sup>1</sup> This is the official translation of the article in *Lokamanya*, Marathi daily, done by S. S. Joshi on 5 May 1924 and produced by the prosecution in the Kanpur Case. Though it does not read well, one can get an idea of what Dange must have written.

And for that very reason the paper called *Pioneer* which is in favour of the government people came to know it. It was *Pioneer* who first told the news to all that seventy people are arrested as bolshevik agents.

Similar to the Labour Party in England the Bolshevik Party trying to win for themselves the machinery of the Russian state. The European rulers and journalists did not listen towards them until the chances of Russian wealth of European capitalists going out from their hands and of the bolsheviks' attempts being successful where not making themselves visible.

It was after their success in 1917 and a consequent hiatus in the way of the Europeans having access to Russian fertile zones that the voices of European capitalist newspapers became audible and they unanimously raised a common hue and cry against Russia, the voice being pregnant with lies and billingsgate.

All nations of the world are under the direct influence of capitalist cult. Taking advantage of this fact it was purposefully given out a wide publicity that bolsheviks are entering every one of them. Hereafter a general rule was as if established to the effect that every new movement in any nation was none else than a bolshevik movement.

This rule was applied to India. This movement is a bolshevik movement and the bolsheviks' gold is financing it—was a charge attempted to be laid against the movement of noncooperation when that movement was ushered into existence by Mahatma Gandhi. But this attempt met with failure. Now this bolshevik bogy is trying to come with a different garb on its face.

The leaders and other people are getting themselves convinced that more attention must be paid towards the growing organisation of the workers and peasants and as in India this sort of organisation is now in a growing condition day by day.

With a view to connect this forward step of Indian politics with some already ill-famous name and so to put a brake on its forward march it was broadly given out that bolsheviks are sending money and propagandists to India. To back this allegation some arrests are also being arranged to be made. A slight breeze of this particular nature is lately loading the Bombay climate and I personally have felt it more particularly. I am mentioning here how and how much of it reached me individually. Readers will

know the cause of the personal tale as soon as they know the tale itself.

Every conscious reader began to read the account of the Russian revolution after it came into existence in 1917. Similarly the doctrines through which this revolution brought about are taught briefly in the classes of B.A. Some students get themselves rather dissatisfied with the brevity of education concerning their subjects and subsequently they enter upon specialisation. I studied socialism and came to see through its extra nationalist character according to this general rule.

I started the paper *Socialist* with a view to let people know this culture methodically. European subscribers liked it most because in that continent this culture is in a better established state.

A certain mail delivered me a contribution signed M. N. Roy. I did not know this name. I printed the article as it was a very good one. But to my surprise I came to know the importance of this name on the very third day of its publicity. The police enquired whether or not I was acquainted with Roy and whether I had any connection with the person denoted by that name. The aroused curiosity led me to enquire what kind of man he was as I was convinced already of his being entity. Subsequently I came to know that he was an out and out communist and he had tried to overthrow the British empire while he was in India. From this time onwards, government began to keep a special watch on me. A censorship was applied to whole of my correspondence. For 24 hours my doors were under the direct eye of the CID.

Mr Steward, deputy superintendent of police, sent me an invitation when the expedition against the bolshevik agents was set in motion. The reason mentioned for this invitation amounted only to the superintendent pointing out to me some technical mistakes in my paper. But the information the super. tried to gather was manifestly more than this reason required for itself. A conference of all the communists in the world was held at Moscow in November 1922. The representatives of all the communist and socialist parties all the world over and affiliated to the central body were present at this conference. There is no such party in India as yet. Mr M. N. Roy sent a friend of his to

me hoping that I may be available to act according to the dictation of this (Moscow Central Communist Party) party as I was a socialist though all the time he knew that there was no such party here. The name of the man was Charles Ashleigh. He came and saw me here. Mr Ashleigh told me that I along with other people holding views similar to the one I held should come to the Moscow world congress. But as I was not ready to work under a party in a distant country, I told him that I was not ready to present myself at the congress. I also told him that Indian politics differed vastly from the European one.

Deputy super. of police called me and asked me about the abovementioned gentleman. This police officer also enquired of me whether or not that gentleman was a bolshevik and whether he tried to bait me with bolshevik gold. He kept silent as I presently met him with a question as to whether there was no other way than to use the bolshevik gold for political workers in India. The next question was as to how I maintained myself. In reply to this question I supplied information about my business service and such other similar matters. In reply to the question whether I ever received letters from Roy I showed the superfluity of the question itself bringing to the superint. notice that all letters I received from Roy come through the superint himself after being duly censored. This reason why I have retold this long tale only to eradicate the unprovoked misstatements about our party sought to be broadly established. Even Mrs Naidu has helped to a small extent this false propaganda by styling us bolsheviks in fun. The goal of the Socialist Party of India is one of an open and straightforward nature. The peasants and workers must be taken hold of as a helping hand in the attainment of swaraj. They will not hold their hand up for our help only if we hold to them false promises without changing the fundamentals of their present state. To take away the means of production of food and raiments from the hands of profiteers and to confide them into the hands of the society is the minimum goal of the Socialist Party. We do not feel the necessity of bolshevik gold or the help of their agents to convince the people about the necessity of this gold. The propaganda of this party is open as that of the noncooperation party. We have written this with a view to caution (the people) as govern-

ment have started the hunt to nip in the bud the growing labour movement.

(Exhibit No. 62X in Kanpur Case)

### 3. LABOUR KISAN PARTY OF HINDUSTAN

#### MONTHLY REPORT<sup>1</sup>

A public meeting was addressed by S. A. Dange in Nasik in the local spring lecture series. Marathe, editor of local daily *Swatantrya*, was in the chair. Subject of the lecture was "Revolutionary Swaraj".

Dange further accused the existing parties in the Congress of purposely ignoring the interests of the workers and peasants though they repeatedly passed sham resolutions to organise them and better their lot. This he substantiated by the apathy and inaction shown by the Congress at the time of the E.I. Railway strike, the Assam labour exodus, the Ahmedabad strike and other Bombay strikes.

He exhorted the audience to clarify their ideals and fight for a swaraj, which will not allow the power over food and clothing at least to pass into the hands of speculators and big business and establish a system where the means that provided their necessities of life were managed and owned by them, just as they could manage their roads through the municipality without giving ownership to any profiteer. That is what he meant by revolutionary swaraj, i.e. a swaraj in which the economic and hence political and cultural foundations of society were fundamentally changed and superior method of production and distribution was ushered in.

Another meeting was held in Poona on 18 May 1923 under the

1. These are detailed notes, the original could not be secured—C.A.

auspices of Vasant Vyakhyan Mala. Subject was "Swarajya and Socialism". L. B. Bhopatkar was the president of the meeting.

Dange proved by facts and figures that the exploitation of the 80 per cent of the population is carried on jointly by British imperialism and Indian capitalism. The present agitation helped by the Indian bourgeoisie, is for a swaraj which shall give full monopoly of exploitation to the Indian bourgeoisie by turning out the British bourgeoisie. But the lot of 80 per cent of the people who are workers and peasants and clerks will remain the same.

The official Congress party has definitely refused to interfere in the question of capital and labour. The new Das Party has also definitely sided with big business as shown by its clause on private property in its manifesto.

A purely proletarian party alone can achieve swaraj which will not allow the means of producing food and clothing of the people to be a subject of speculation and exploitation for profits of capital.

In the meeting N. C. Kelkar was for a "golden mean"—he defended the property clause. D. V. Gokhale wanted socialism "which retained the distinct marks of Indian genius". Bhopatkar wanted socialism of MacDonald type.

\* \* \*

Provincial councils of the Labour Kisan Party of Hindustan have been formed in Madras and the Punjab.

Anyone wishing to be a member of the Labour Kisan Party of Hindustan has to sign the following pledge :

"I . . . a member of this party solemnly declare that I shall be faithful to the party creed,<sup>2</sup> aim and programme.<sup>3</sup> I shall submit

2. The creed is the attainment of labour swaraj by *nonviolent means*

3. The programme is to help labourers' and their dependants' rights to form unions, to strike when necessary, secure minimum wage of \$50 lb of rice or wheat or its value per month and 10 pairs of dhotis per year, 8 hours of work for men, 6 hours for women, maternity protection, free medical aid and education, better housing, insurance against sickness, accidents, old age, privilege and casual leave with wages, etc.

myself to the rules, regulations and discipline of the party, I bring myself to the risk of my life to stand by and defend the party. I agree to surrender my right to private property as a matter of principle."

(Socialist, May 1923, pp 372-73)

4. M. N. ROY'S LETTER TO S. A. DANGE  
DATED 7 MAY 1923

Dear comrade,

Yours of 6 April 1923 received, together with circular.<sup>1</sup> The latter is a good idea and worth helping. We have not received however your paper for two months. Only the first issue as a monthly came, two copies, one at Leipzig and the other here.

Have you sent anything else to Leipzig? Do not do so henceforth. The address you have for letters is good and literature can be sent to Pall. You can also write private affairs to the address: A. J. Brandsteder, Ruyschstraat 10, Amsterdam, Holland, inside envelope Ex. MNR. This will reach us. We shall be glad to have a series of addresses from you for the same purpose. Also as mentioned previously, the name of some responsible party who will receive and turn over subscriptions and donations to the work there.

We have received a project for the organisation of a legal mass party from M. Singaravelu and it appears some progress has been made in the right direction. His manifesto must have been published by this time but we have not as yet received it. Judging from the outlines sent by letter it seems to be quite good. He wrote that in accordance with our suggestions he invited several comrades including yourself to come together in a preliminary conference in order to discuss the projected manifesto and begin the organisation of a party but complains that nobody turned up. He has reason to be distressed. But he is a fine old man and is

1. The circular was about People's Publicity Service. See document reproduced in section seven below from *Socialist*, March 1923.

going ahead alone but is terribly handicapped for lack of good workers of whom as you know there are very few in India till now. It is, therefore, all the more urgent that a few good comrades we have should get together and work in coordination.

I think you know my views on the necessity of organising a mass party and yourself understand the necessity of it. You write that you have paralysed the Congress organisation in that district and expect to capture it. That is good, but your efforts should not be confined to one district alone, we must organise on a countrywide basis with our own party and programme though functioning inside the Congress like the rest. The programme is already formulated; it may be necessary to modify it in some details, but the general outlines are there. Much propaganda has to be made on the same lines. As far as my information goes, there are good elements scattered all over the country and these should be gathered together into one central organising committee. To this end I request you very urgently to get in touch with Singaravelu without delay and to try to convene a preliminary conference to which besides our own comrades, such men as Sampurnanand of Benaras, Manilal of Gaya, the editor of *Varta* man of Kanpur etc. can be invited. I would also suggest Upendra Nath Banerji of the *Patrika*. Of course before calling a conference formally, yourself, Hussain and Singaravelu should meet together and plan out the whole question as it should be brought before the conference. We must insist upon our minimum programme as drafted for the Gaya congress, be adopted by the new party with the least possible modifications. The idea is to have the political control of the legal party in the hands of the Communist Party. As far as possible the office-bearers and leaders of the legal party should be members of the CP.

A few remarks about Singaravelu. I am convinced he is the best man available to be the figurehead of the legal party. He is very energetic and possesses a very splendid spirit which more than makes up for his possible shortcomings in the way of theoretical understanding. He provides us with an access into the ranks of the Congress which is very valuable. Through him we can lay our hands on the labour subcommittee, which otherwise will soon die off and Chamanlal will make off with the Rs 40,000. Therefore it is very urgent that you come in close touch with

Singaravelu and work together for the organisation of a legal party. By associating with him inside an organisation you will be able to control his ideological weaknesses.

Other efforts are being made to organise a workers' and peasants' party. If we do not hurry up we will be faced with an accomplished fact in the shape of a so-called workers' party under very questionable leadership. For example, several rivals of Chamanlal are busy in [this] direction. Our policy should be to discover the good elements and absorb them within our group. I am sure there are good people among them. For instance Manilal is connected with such an attempt made by a spurious group which has lately issued a manifesto over the signature of "The Textile Workers of India and the Kisans of Northern India". There is no such organisation in existence as far as I know, but it represents the efforts of a few careerists trying to carve out a way for themselves. A copy of the manifesto has been received here and it is a piece of plagiarism. The name, the constitution and social clauses are taken from the plan of Singaravelu and the programme is taken bodily from our provisional programme issued in 1920 and from the draft sent to the Gaya congress. The remaining parts of the manifesto are full of stupid schemes and mean slanders. Abani Mukherji who formerly worked with us is the moving spirit behind this spurious group. I have already warned you against him. He has been expelled from the International as well as from our party. He is a questionable and dangerous character.

Our party press must be organised. This question should also be discussed jointly. I will wait for a report on this question after it has been discussed by at least 3 of you together, Hussain, Singaravelu and yourself. It is very hard for us to do anything in a centralised manner from here, if small presses are isolated in different provinces, working independently of one another. Our means are also limited. We may accomplish more in every way by centralisation of effort, then with one or two printing presses, at least one English monthly, one English weekly and one Hindustani monthly can be published and gradually a Bengali weekly can be added. Unless the 3 of you act as an organising committee which can be collectively responsible for our entire activities, nothing big will come out of our work. You are at liberty to have

the collaboration of other comrades known to you, but the pioneers would be our own men and party members, working according to centralised [...]² which embraces the whole of India though each may work in his own [...].

[...] do this our connections must be improved. You can safely write [...] by the several addresses I have given. We would like to have regular efforts [...] about your work and organisation, the Congress, Swaraj Party, Independence Party and TU Congress, of the party, as well as we [...] on a comrade in Bengali that you turned all his letters over to [...]. Of course it is difficult to discriminate between spies [...] men, but we should make sure before acting so drastically. We [...] him to communicate with you at Gaya. All that is necessary is [...] such persons produce identifications in the shape of a mandate or [...]. We must learn to build both a legal and illegal apparatus [...] time.

[...] to hear from you soon with the information and address re[...].

Fraternally yours

M. N. Roy

(Exhibit No 23 in Kanpur Case)

## 5. GHULAM HUSSAIN'S CIRCULAR

WORKERS & PEASANTS OF INDIA, UNITE

Inquilab Office

Railway Road

Lahore

27 April 1923.

Dear Comrade,

Without indulging in any introductory paragraph we urge upon you the absolute necessity of organising Dr Manilal's Manifesto Party immediately. All of us must meet at Lucknow on 30 June 1923. There we shall pick up a name and an organisation for our

2. The last part of the MS of the letter had gaps where the paper had torn, this is shown by [...]—C.A.

party and place before our countrymen a programme instead of a scheme of swaraj. Please pass this invitation on to a comrade you know. It is addressed to him as well.

We shall make lodging arrangements and inform you about a week before your time to start for Lucknow.

Any useful suggestions about board and lodging etc. would be welcomed if they reach us by the 1st of June.

Yours in Comradeship,  
GHULAM HUSSAIN  
SIYAMSUDDIN HASAN.

Circular to

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Comrade Singaravelu<br>Chettiyar<br>22 South Beach<br>Triplicane, Madras                 | 8. Comrade Iyer<br>C/o M. Singaravelu<br>Madras   |
| 2. Comrade S. A. Dange<br>C/o The Socialist<br>434 Thakurdwar<br>Bombay-2                   | 9. Comrade Alf Din<br>"Nafis", Vakil<br>Campbellpur   |
| 3. Comrade Sampurnanand<br>Editor <i>Maryada</i><br>Jelepí Devi<br>Benaras                  | 10. Comrade Aur-ul Hasan -<br>Patel Building<br>Sandhurst Road<br>Umarkhadi<br>Bombay                 |
| 4. Comrade Editor <i>Navayug</i><br>Madras  | 11. Comrade R. S. Nimbkar<br>C/o Maharashtra<br>Congress Committee<br>180-B Budhwarpeth<br>Poona City |
| 5. Comrade B. N. Biswas<br>C/o Employees'<br>Association<br>5132 Canning Street<br>Calcutta | 12. Dr Manilal<br>C/o Postmaster<br>Gaya (U.P.)   |
| 6. Comrade M. L. Sarkar<br>C/o Employees'<br>Association<br>Calcutta                        | 13. Comrade Jivanlal Kapoor<br>Bar-at-Law<br>Begam Road<br>Lahore                                     |
| 7. Comrade Muzaffar<br>Ahmad<br>C/o Mr Biswas<br>Calcutta                                   | 14. Comrade Abdul Ghaffar<br>Shalihusseni<br>Larkhana, Sindh  |

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>15. Editor Quomi Report,<br/>Madras</p> <p>16. Comrade M. A. Khan,<br/>Lahore</p> <p>17. Comrade H. A. Malik<br/>Editor Mazdur<br/>Lucknow</p> <p>18. Editor Korni<br/>72 Canning Street<br/>Calcutta</p> <p>19. Comrade Md. Abdul<br/>Rahim<br/>School Master<br/>Nanappa Mudali Street,<br/>Old Washermanpet<br/>Madras</p> <p>20. S. Amar Singh<br/>Secretary<br/>Gurudwara Prabandhak<br/>Committee<br/>Baba Atal, Amritsar</p> | <p>21. Comrade Hamidullah<br/>Khan<br/>C/o Hakim Abdul Ghami<br/>98 Lower Chitpore Road<br/>Calcutta</p> <p>22. Comrade Sunder Singh<br/>Lyallpuri<br/>C/o Pardesidi<br/>Akali Newspaper<br/>Amritsar</p> <p>23. Master Tara Singh<br/>(Same as above)</p> <p>24. Bhai Piara Singh<br/>(as above)</p> <p>25. Comrade Mazer Ali<br/>Secretary, Prov. Khilafat<br/>Committee<br/>Lahore.</p> |
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(Exhibit No. 14 in Kanpur Case)

## 6. A MEMORANDUM TO THE CONFERENCE FOR ORGANISING A WORKING-CLASS PARTY IN INDIA<sup>1</sup>

Dear Comrades,

Since it is not possible for me to be with you in the conference, which will begin the historic task of launching a political party of the working class, I put forth my points of view in the following memorandum.

1. This document in an abridged form and various stylistic changes was later printed in *Political Letters* as chapter x, "On Organisation and Programme", where it is dated 15 July 1923.

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# POLITICAL LETTERS

BY

MANABENDRA NATH ROY

PUBLISHED BY  
THE VANGUARD BOOKSHOP  
ZURICH 1924

## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The work undertaken by us is of historic significance, since the appearance of the working class in the political field is an objective necessity. There is no gainsaying the fact that the workers and peasants of India can no longer remain an appendage to bourgeois nationalism which is decidedly antagonistic to any movement calculated to affect in the least the present state of social relationships. The object of bourgeois nationalism is the transference of political power from British imperialism to native upper classes. Although for all intents and purposes nationalism is a class movement, our nationalists of all shades and opinions are hostile to the very idea of class interests. This hypocritical attitude is due to their desire of preventing the growth of class consciousness among the working class. Bourgeois nationalism wants to exploit the ignorant but rebellious working masses with the name of freedom which, when realised, will mean the freedom of the native bourgeoisie. In order to keep this class character of bourgeois nationalism confused, the nationalist leaders decry any movement which gives to class interests predominance over national interest. But the experience of the last two years has proved unquestionably how these very nationalists who preach the doctrine that India is immune from the curse of class war have not hesitated to sacrifice national interests for the interests of the native propertied classes. This they have done in every crisis that overtook the noncooperation movement. The instances of such sacrifice of national interests, of such betrayals, are numerous. But we need not cite them here, since they are too well known to all of us assembled here. In short these repeated betrayals have ruined the nationalist struggle, but at the same time demonstrated the class character of nationalism. When it is evident that the programme of bourgeois nationalism cannot have any room for the interests of the toiling masses, the latter must enter the period of independent political existence to conduct simultaneously the struggle for national as well as social welfare. The working class cannot be led in the anti-imperialist struggle with the programme of bourgeois nationalism, but on the other hand the anti-imperialist struggle cannot be successful without the active participation of the working class. Therefore not only for its own economic emancipation, but even for the imme-

mediate object of national freedom, the organisation of an independent working-class party has become essential. The "national independence" sought for by the bourgeoisie will hardly make any provision for the economic betterment of the toiling masses, but that does not alter the fact that the burden of imperialist exploitation falls mostly on the shoulders of our workers and peasants, and that consequently that workers and peasants must first of all fight for national liberation. In fact the workers and peasants are much more interested in the struggle for national emancipation, because there remains for them no such half way house as a compromise with imperialism, which bourgeois nationalism seeks. Thus looked at from every angle of vision, the necessity for the working class to play an independent political role becomes evident. The party we propose to organise will be the conscious vanguard of the working class in its struggle, first for national and then for social liberation.

#### THE NAME OF THE PARTY

Our party being the political organ of those living on the proceeds of their own labour will be called the workers' and peasants' party of India. Although of foreign origin the word India is preferable to the word "Hindustan" which seems to be often used as a token of nationalist spirit. In view of communal rivalries and religious animosities, so persistently fomented by the government as well as by the upper classes, it is advisable to avoid the name *Hindustan* which may not be taken kindly by the Muslim masses. *Hindustan*, after all, was the name of the country centuries ago when the population was almost exclusively Hindu. Nothing but a stretch of excessive nationalism can induce one to go back to antiquity. We have no reason to be partisans of such a brand of nationalism, and use a term which is certainly open to controversy. It is however a petty question.

#### THE PROGRAMME

As correctly pointed out in the circular signed by comrades Ghulam Hussain and Shamsuddin Hasan calling this conference, we must in this conference adopt a programme instead of a scheme of swaraj. My views on this question do not need fur-

ther elaboration. Without any introductory remark, I propose that the programme drafted for the consideration of the National Congress at Gaya be adopted as the programme of our party, of course it is only a draft and as such should be subjected to the examination of this conference. As far as the details are concerned, certainly there is ample room for improvement and elaboration, but the fundamental principles contained in it are principles upon which a working-class party can be built. In putting forward this draft programme, I propose that it be accepted by this conference on general principles, and be referred to a small commission for elaboration. I propose that the said commission be composed of comrades Ghulam Hussain, Manilal, Singaravelu, Dange, Sampurnanand, Muzaffar Ahmad and Sundar Singh. The programme elaborated by this commission will be reported to the central executive of the party within three months and will be considered by the latter. The final adoption of the programme will however be left to the next party Congress which will be called in the course of the year.

Now comrades permit me to make some general observations on the question of programmes. Although the foregoing paragraphs contain my concrete proposition on this matter I cannot pass on the other points without touching briefly certain misconceptions prevalent even among ourselves. Needless to say that here we are not engaged in the task of elaborating a theoretical programme which is reserved for a future occasion. Not only the theoretical programme of social revolution but even that of national revolution still remains to be elaborated. Now we must adopt a programme of action—a programme which will rally the working class in the present struggle against foreign domination and prepare them for the future struggle. But a programme of action presupposes the definition of the objects for the realisation of which the action is taken. Or in other words while talking of the immediate interests of the workers and peasants we should not exclude the big issues from our programme. This tendency nevertheless is noticeable in many comrades who are eager to organise the working class into an independent political party. The first and foremost problem that every political party in India must face and solve is the problem of national liberation. The fate of every party depends upon its ability to find a solution of

this problem. The bankruptcy of the noncooperation movement is due to its failure in finding this solution. It refused to tread on track that led to this solution. We must be careful that the same fate does not overtake our party, only in a somewhat different way. "To bring economic relief to the producing classes" which appears to be the aim of many a comrade present here cannot be the programme of a political party which fails to declare that this aim is unrealisable within the frame of imperialist domination. Therefore the mere formulation of this aim obliges us to challenge the political domination of the Indian people by a foreign power. It does not make any difference if this domination will be eventually readjusted to the demands of the native upper classes in order to secure their services for the joint exploitation of the workers and peasants. Our party which stands for the liberation of the producing classes from all sorts of exploitation cannot leave the question of national liberation out of its programme because national liberation, i.e. the release of all the forces of social production, is the first step towards the ultimate realisation of our programme which is the end of class domination. Some of the comrades may argue, in fact this argument has already been heard, that we shall leave aside the question of national freedom since it hardly concerns the working class in its present stage of consciousness but will unnecessarily bring the wrath of the government upon our party. This is a very vulgar way of looking at the situation. Firstly if it is true that the working class fails to show any conscious interest in the question of national liberation then more necessarily does it become for our party to take up the question in right earnest in order to show the working class how vitally they are concerned with it. It is true to a certain extent that bourgeois nationalism cannot create any active enthusiasm among the masses; and it is because of this failure of bourgeois nationalism to draw the masses into the struggle for national freedom that the organisation of a working-class party has become an historic necessity. *The working class will be actively interested in the national struggle as soon as the struggle is carried on not purely from the bourgeois point of view but becomes the first stage of a fight for socioeconomic emancipation.* To show that the national struggle is really such is the task of our party. Secondly, it is idle to think that our

party can escape the wrath of the government if it really is what it is meant to be. We cannot fight for the economic interests of the producing masses without at once threatening the power and position of those classes that thrive on unearned income, and no sooner the slightest indication of this threat is noticed than the forces of the state will begin to move with the object of crushing those from whom comes the threat. 'There is only one way of avoiding the hostility of the government. It is the way of reformism. If the object of our party is to alleviate the sufferings of the toiling classes with the aid and sanction of the bourgeoisie then we may expect to be left unmolested. But is it worth the trouble to organise a new party with this object? Any efforts made with this object will only be gilding the chains of bondage. The economic freedom of the producing classes can be conquered only through a revolutionary struggle from beginning to the end.' This should be clearly set forth in our programme. A few ambiguous generalities will not take us very much farther than the reformist and utopian slogans of the nationalists.

The next point I want to touch is the slogan of "labour swaraj". Whatever this may be it cannot be the programme of our party. Such a slogan will inevitably lead us to elaborating schemes of swaraj. What is meant by labour swaraj? How is it to be attained? How can we talk of labour swaraj, which means dictatorship of the proletariat if anything serious is meant by it, when the very question of swaraj, i.e. national independence, remains unsolved? The dictatorship of the proletariat presupposes the existence of a proletarian class consciously working for that dictatorship. Before the Indian working class can take up the slogan of the dictatorship it has to go through a period of political education which it will gain in the struggle against imperialism—a struggle carried on, not for the benefit and under the leadership of the bourgeoisie, but with a class programme consciously for the interests of the workers and peasants, and under the leadership of a revolutionary vanguard—the political party. Therefore our slogan should not be a vague labour swaraj which cannot be realised for a long time yet but a democratic government based upon universal suffrage with as much protection as possible for the workers and peasants. This first victory gained, and the working class will be in a position to carry the revolutionary

struggle farther towards labour swaraj which will have become realisable by that time.

Upon our ability to formulate these principal points in the political aspects of our programme will depend the possibility of a working alliance between the working-class party and bourgeois-nationalist parties. This alliance should be sought during the anti-imperialist struggle. The revolutionary significance that the nationalist bourgeoisie possess will be brought to bear fully upon the situation under the pressure of the revolutionary masses. This pressure will be effectively felt when the working-class party makes use of every available opportunity for striking an agreement with the bourgeoisie in the common struggle against imperialism.

Our party must not only lead the workers and peasants in the everyday struggle for existence but should formulate the demands which correspond to the permanent interests of the toiling masses. Such demands will open up a new vision before the working class which will thus develop the will to fight.

In formulating our programme it should be borne in mind that India is still overwhelmingly an agricultural country; therefore the agrarian question must be pivot of our programme. Nearly 70 per cent of the entire population is tied to the land. Consequently any programme that will fail to put forth a solution of the problem of land ownership cannot be expected to secure response from the peasant masses. No amount of talk about the panchayats will infuse enthusiasm. The question has to be tackled in the revolutionary way. Nothing less than a total abolition of landlordism will begin a radical solution of agrarian problem.

#### ORGANISATION

The party will be conducted by a central executive committee and provincial committees. The central executive will be elected by the vote of the general membership during the party congress. The first central executive will be elected from this conference. It will consist at present of 15 members and 10 substitutes, 25 in all. The provincial committees will be elected from provincial conferences. But since it will be some time before the pro-

vincial conferences can be held, the conference will elect provincial committees of five members and two substitutes for Bombay, Punjab, UP, Bihar, Bengal and Madras.

#### FOREIGN BUREAU

Since a working-class party in India must have international affiliation and since many pioneers of our party are obliged to live in emigration, a foreign bureau will be created. It will act as the representative of the party and serve as the connecting link with the Communist International to which the party will be eventually affiliated. The question of affiliation, however, I will not touch definitely at the present moment. The foreign bureau will be composed of three members, who will be also members of the central executive committee.

#### PARTY PRESS

The party press must be strictly centralised and conducted according to the principles laid down in the programme. The central organ of the party must be in English so that it can be circulated all over the country. The organs of the provincial committees will be in the local vernaculars.

#### TRADE UNIONS AND KISAN SABHAS

The political party of the working class must maintain the closest relation with the economic organisation of the workers and peasants. As the trade union is the first form of proletarian organisation so is kisan sabha as regards the poor peasantry. The party will assume the active leadership of the toiling masses by participating in the daily life of trade unions and kisan sabhas where they already exist and by bringing them into existence where the toiling masses are still unorganised. By trade union we should not mean the nominal organisation set up by careerist nationalist politicians and reformists. Our activities should ignore these selfconstituted bodies and should be pushed within the masses of the workers and peasants organised or unorganised. Organs for carrying on the immediate economic struggle of the workers and peasants should be built all over the country clearly on the basis of class struggle.

## INTERNATIONAL AFFILIATION

This is a very important question and deserves serious consideration especially in view of the fact that attempts are being clandestinely made to bring the Indian labour movement under the influence of British Labour Party whose colonial policy is but thinly-veiled imperialism. The only international proletarian organisation that stands unconditionally for the freedom of subject people and the liberation of the working masses from class domination is the Communist International. Of course only a communist party subscribing fully to the programme of the Communist International can be formally affiliated with that body. But pending the full development of sociopolitical character of our party we can maintain relation with the Communist International as a fraternal party. The political and other importance of such relations cannot be overestimated. Therefore I propose that the central executive committee be entrusted by this conference to send as soon as possible a delegation of three to the Communist International. This delegation in conjunction with the foreign bureau should be empowered to give the executive of the Communist International a detailed report about the situation in India, the formation of our party, the programme, etc. and determine what should be the relations of our party with the Communist International and how these relations will be maintained. The willingness, rather the eagerness, of the Communist International to help the growth of a revolutionary working-class party is well known. An official delegation from a properly-organised party will facilitate the materialisation of this help and will cement an organic relation between the Indian working class and the revolutionary vanguard of the international proletariat. Since it may take some time for the delegation to leave it will be necessary to inform the Communist International of the formation of the party together with a report of the conference and to intimate our resolution of sending a delegation to settle the question of affiliation and other affairs. Meanwhile the foreign bureau should be authorised to act as the representative of the party.

Besides two representatives from the trade union should be attached to the delegation with the object of linking up the

Indian labour movement with the Red International of Labour Unions. It is to be expected that the officials of the so-called trade unions that exist at present will be opposed to the affiliation to the RILU. But we must struggle against this opposition and at once start a minority movement within the ranks of the membership. The representatives mentioned above can be selected from such minority.

#### ILLEGAL ORGANISATION

While believing firmly that legal existence is indispensable for the growth of a mass party, I must urge upon you the necessity of an illegal apparatus which should be built as a parallel organisation. Since the party, which will be born out of this conference, may not from the beginning adopt a communist programme, it cannot take the place of the Communist Party of India, therefore the latter should continue as the illegal apparatus of the legal mass party and all its members will be automatically members of the legal party while, on the other hand, those members of the Workers' and Peasants' Party who fully subscribe to the communist programme will be allowed to join the Communist Party and maintain their membership of the legal party at the same time. The Communist Party will maintain its own press, and the Vanguard will continue to be its central organ. In course of time it can have its illegal press inside the country. The question of coordinating legal and illegal activities and of building the two parallel organisations one within the other will have to be discussed more fully in the central executive committee and with the executive of the Communist International. There is absolutely no apprehension of any possible conflict, since the programme of the Workers' and Peasants' Party will be the minimum programme of the Communist Party and therefore will have the fullest adhesion of the latter. Every member of the Communist Party in his capacity of a member of the Workers' and Peasants' Party will be subjected to the discipline of the latter. Nor is there any chance of overlapping, since the two organisations will simply supplement each other's activities. I am against liquidating the Communist Party, because experience all over the world has proved that the working class can reach final victory only under the banner of the communist pro-

gramme. In consideration of the situation we have to work in, it may be necessary to have a "dual organisation". But the role of the Communist Party cannot be taken by any other organisation.

#### TACTICS AND SLOGANS

A definite programme adopted and a party organisation set up, we must now turn to the question of tactics and of giving out such slogans as will embody the conscious and unconscious demands of the workers and peasants. The potentiality of our programme will be demonstrated only when it can be put into action by means of tactics adopted to the situation that arises from time to time and success of each tactical move depends upon the giving out of proper slogans. Of course ours being the party of workers and peasants, land to the peasant and bread to the worker, is the permanent slogan which embodies the essence of our programme. But for the successive stages of this struggle different slogans will have to be adopted. Such slogans are embodied in the draft programme I propose for adoption.

Equally important is the ability to abandon old tactics, slogans and forms of struggle as soon as they cease to create popular enthusiasm. There are many among us who will still cling to the slogans of noncooperation even to the extent of adding the refrain of "nonviolence". The term of noncooperation has acquired a bad colour. The masses have suffered so many betrayals and disillusionment at the hands of the noncooperator that they naturally look upon the term with suspicion. Like the "national holiday" of chartism the slogans of noncooperation and civil disobedience have proved to be but empty air bubbles. It will be a great blunder if our party will face the masses with these wornout slogans. Everybody beginning from Kelkar and Pandit Malaviya is a noncooperator, so elastic has noncooperation become. We need not altogether abandon the catch phrases that have electrified the country during the last three years but we must know that they are worn out and a new party should not depend entirely on them. New slogans will have to be given out.

Our tactics should be elastic. We must utilise every means available for carrying on agitation and propaganda. It should be remembered that to swear by the term "nonviolence" will not

save the party from the penal code; therefore it is a mistake to suggest that we must hang on to that term on tactical ground. The best way will be to leave out of our propoganda the controversy of violence versus nonviolence. That will be the best tactical move we can make without giving the lie to our programme. As a party of the workers and peasants we cannot help being revolutionaries. Economic emancipation of the exploited can only be attained by the expropriation of the expropriators which cannot be done by peaceful and nonviolent means. It is ridiculous to say that we are "nonviolent revolutionaries". Such a breed cannot grow even on the soil of India. The expropriators will never give in without resistance nor will the British leave India out of respect for our ability to suffer. And those assembled in this conference certainly do not believe that the economic conditions of labouring masses can be improved by means of organisation of charkha, khaddar, panchayat and such other remedies of the orthodox noncooperator. The workers and peasants are to be organised not to face sufferings but to develop the will and power to fight for freedom. Therefore the term nonviolence negates all the essential principles upon which our party is based. It should be dropped from our programme. This will by no means commit us to acts of premature violence nor will it oblige us to indulge in stupid talks which can come under the purview of the penal code.

In conclusion, comrades, I wish you success in the tasks you have undertaken and put myself at the service of the Workers' and Peasants' Party of India.

5 June 1923.

M. N. Roy

(Exhibit 12 B in Kanpur Case)

## 7. TO THE FIRST CONFERENCE OF THE WORKERS' AND PEASANTS' PARTY OF INDIA

Dear Comrades,

Cominunist International hails the first working-class party of India. It is a historic task you have undertaken and in this task you can count upon the heartiest sympathy and the fullest support of the revolutionary proletariat of the world.

The collapse of noncooperation movement proves that the struggle for national liberation cannot any longer be carried on exclusively under the leadership of the middle classes with their confused ideas and hesitating tactics. The upper strata of the middle classes are already inclined towards a compromise with imperialism if it would make some concessions; the lower strata on the other hand have declared themselves against any form of mass action, because they lack resoluteness and revolutionary inspiration.

Having assured themselves of some of the facility of other sections of the propertied classes the British government was enabled to cope with the noncooperation movement. The recent defeat in the legislative assembly on the question of salt tax which Lord Reading with extreme arrogance and cynicism succeeded in getting through in the face of the unanimous protest of the whole country is an excellent proof of the fact that the British once again believed themselves to be master of the situation. Characteristic of the collapse of the noncooperation movement is the increasing hostility between the Mohammādans and Hindus not without the instigation of the British government in conjunction with the reactionary upper classes of the communities. Once again the old tried principle of British colonial rule *dividē et impera* has triumphed.

Radical elements of the bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia are now making efforts to capture the leadership of the masses, who have been of late either falling into depression or drifting under the influence of the counterrevolutionary reformists who are anxious to lead the masses safely away from the political movements. Both wings of the National Congress are bidding for the services of the Trade Union Congress by offering subsidies. But the Trade Union Congress, as it is at present constituted, is no

working-class organisation. Its last session at Lahore does not leave any doubt whatsoever on that score. While organising the Workers' and Peasants' Party, you should bear in mind that the greatest danger for the young Indian labour movement lies not only in the bourgeois nationalists who are intriguing to subordinate it to their class interests, but also in the reformists and humanitarians who are at the head of all the trade unions at the present moment. These leaders are under the influence of the British imperialism or the Indian bourgeoisie to whose interests they always subordinate the class interests of the Indian labour movement.

Under the circumstances it is clear that the workers and peasants on whose shoulders falls the greatest part of the burden of imperialist exploitation can no longer remain an adjunct to bourgeois nationalism to act or keep quiet at its bidding. The struggle for the freedom of the Indian people must be continued till the victory is won. As bourgeoisie lacks the courage to head the struggle the working class must come forward as an independent political force and take up the leadership.

The Indian bourgeoisie is so situated today that at least temporarily its interests will be best served by an agreement rather than a revolutionary struggle with British imperialism. The tendency towards an agreement is to be seen all around. Such an agreement however will signify the great defeat for the toiling masses because it will mean more intensified exploitation. The working class alone can save itself from this dreadful eventuality by snatching from the faltering hands of the bourgeoisie the standard of the national revolution.

National freedom of the Indian people is an historic necessity. The struggle against imperialism must be carried on with increasing vigour till national freedom is attained. Although the bourgeoisie lacks the courage and determination to fight, the full economic development of their class also demands the overthrow of imperialist yoke. Indian bourgeoisie is a revolutionary factor because its interests are objectively in conflict with imperialism. The struggle for national liberation is a revolutionary movement. In leading this movement the political party of the workers and peasants must act in cooperation with and give fullest support to

the bourgeois parties so far as they promote the struggle against imperialism in some form or other.

Among the leaders of the young labour movement in India there is a tendency to take the working class safely away from the political struggle. This counterrevolutionary move is to be expected from the reformist humanitarians and trade unionists under the influence of British imperialism. But such a tendency should not be in any case tolerated within the ranks of your party. The arguments that we should leave aside the question of national freedom because it hardly concerns the working masses in the present stage of the consciousness is utterly erroneous. The workers and peasants are vitally concerned with destruction of imperialism and therefore must cooperate with, help and participate in every political movement directed against imperialism. The only difference is that henceforth they must act through their class party.

Without the active participation of the masses the nationalist movement can never be successful. But the revolutionary energy of the masses cannot be evoked to the fullest might under a programme which neglects altogether the interests of the working class. It can only be done through the efforts of the party which will stand clearly on the ground of class interests of the wage-earners and poor peasantry. To formulate such a programme is the task of the first conference of the party you have undertaken to organise.

The fundamental points in the programme of a political party of the Indian workers and peasants must be the following :

- (1) Complete separation from imperial connection.
- (2) Establishment of a democratic republic.
- (3) Abolition of landlordism and radical readjustment of land-ownership.
- (4) Nationalisation of the means of transportation and other public utilities.
- (5) 8-hour-day.
- (6) Minimum wages.
- (7) Workers' councils in factories and peasants' union in the villages to protect the interests of the toiling masses.

To organise the workers and peasant masses under the banner of the party, to infuse enthusiasm in them, to draw them within the ranks of the political struggle for national liberation—these are of course the immediate tasks of your party. This task will be accomplished by taking part in the everyday struggle of the workers and peasants, by leading them in the strikes that are so frequent, by organising resistance against new taxation, by demonstrations for recognition of the workers' rights to organise for 8-hour day, for reduction of land rent and such other questions which affect the daily life of the toilers in the factory as well as on the land. Movement carried on such grounds will not only draw the toiling masses into the ranks of the party but will give political education to the workers and peasants, an education which is essential before the party can assume the supreme lead of the struggle for national liberation and subsequently for social revolution.

The Communist International will render all assistance to the revolutionary party of the workers and peasants of India and warmly wishes you success in your efforts to form such a party which will lead the toilers of India to final emancipation.

Long live the national and social emancipation of India!

Down with British imperialism!

Long Live the international solidarity of the proletariat!

*Executive Committee of the  
Communist International*

KOLAROV

Mokhavaría 16,  
Moscow

Telegrams: International, Moscow

Telephone: 2-24-12-56-71

14 June 1923

## 8. A NEW PARTY

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT)

Bombay, April 11th. A new party has been formed under the leadership of M. Singaravelu of Madras known as "The Labour and Kisan Party of Hindustan". The object is twofold: (1) To secure economic relief to the masses; (2) to win labour swaraj. The method is nonviolent noncooperation, including civil resistance, defiance of law courts, etc. The tactics are all available tactics which will secure more food for the masses. They include council-entry, whether national, provincial or local, as an organised party to form a government opposition; noncooperation and passive resistance wherever possible, strikes and other forms of mass action. All the existing political institutions in the country will be made use of which will in any way further the party ends. Membership is strictly limited to workers by hand or brain, excluding the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie include the big landowners, mill or factory proprietors, lawyers, medical men and all those who make use of labour to amass fortune. This is a rough classification, but all those who accept on principle the relinquishment of large private properties will be admitted to membership on a year's probation. Membership will be by party card. The manifesto will be issued to the country in a few days.

(Vanguard, Vol 2, No 8,  
1 June 1923)

## 9. GOOD CRITICISM BUT BAD PROGRAMME

The *Socialist* criticises the manifesto<sup>1</sup> of the projected workers' and peasants' party of India. The manifesto certainly contains many points which call for criticism of much severer nature than that ventured by the *Socialist*. It is a very confused document, full of undigested ideas of the labour movement, sloppy sentiment-

1. Manifesto of Labour Kisan Party of Hindustan—G.A

tality and clauses which are positively pernicious. The authors obviously lack the understanding of the task they have set themselves to do. Among the innumerable contradictions and incongruities contained in that manifesto, the *Socialist* picks up only two points to criticise. They concern the aim of the proposed party and private property. "Achievement of labour swaraj" is certainly a vague programme so long as "labour swaraj" is left undefined. We have had so many brands and interpretations of swaraj during the last three years that one more variety does not make much difference, nor does it dissipate the confusion into which the people have been thrown. The *Socialist* points out that ambiguity and suggests that the object of the projected party should be not a "class swaraj" but a classless swaraj. So far so good; but the criticism should be more penetrating if the ideological confusion of the authors of the manifesto is to be cleared, in order that the party may be born under proper auspices. The term "labour swaraj" does not necessarily mean the dictatorship of the proletariat, as the *Socialist* appears to assume. It is hard to say what is in the mind of those who wrote the manifesto; but a perusal of the document certainly does not permit such a conclusion. The pretence of a programme formulated in the manifesto certainly does not tend towards any dictatorship. On the other hand, "labour swaraj" may mean the "classless swaraj" which the *Socialist* suggests; because, when the class living on unearned income is eliminated, then society will be so composed that every member will have to contribute a certain amount of labour for its upkeep. But the "labour swaraj" of the manifesto means neither one nor the other. It is just an empty phrase, coined by people perhaps with good intentions, but certainly without any understanding of the term. Had it not been so the manifesto would deal with more immediate political questions without solving which neither "labour swaraj" of one sort nor of the other can be attained. However, the *Socialist* certainly justifies its name by frowning upon such childish phrases, although it fails to go as far as it should have gone.

Then, the question of private property is not the only question which has not been touched in the manifesto. The *Socialist* could point out omissions of much more vital significance. Coupled with "labour swaraj" the question of private property, of course,

stands out as the most glaring of such omissions; because it is simply ridiculous to talk of "labour swaraj", be it dictatorship of the proletariat or be it a communist society, without committing oneself to the total abolition of private property. Lack of clarity on such a vital question will not only create dissensions in its ranks, as the *Socialist* warns, but will make the very existence of a working-class party impossible. In its earlier stages, the working-class party may find it necessary to put forward a minimum programme, which leaves out questions of fundamental social re-adjustment. It goes without saying that the workers and peasants of India, under the present circumstances, must be organised with slogans corresponding to their most immediate necessities. Therefore, such questions as the abolition of private property, communal reconstruction of social economy, etc. need not be included in the minimum programme. Why then talk of such faroff things as "labour swaraj"? It does not come within the purview of immediate necessities. It is certainly out of the realm of practical politics. But the outstanding feature of the manifesto is the lack of all sense of proportion. We have already fully expressed our views on the manifesto and the so-called programme of the projected workers' and peasants' party.<sup>2</sup> Here a reference to the criticism of the *Socialist* is only intended.

The commendable criticism of the *Socialist*, however, is followed by a bad programme. The prospects of a working-class party in India would not be any brighter if the programme set forth in the manifesto is rejected in favour of the suggestions made by the *Socialist*. If the one is ambiguous and childish, the other is incoherent and mechanical.

There is no system in the programme suggested by the *Socialist*. In it the faroff ideal is mixed up with what is supposed to be the "tactics" or the methods of immediate fight. Much more attention is given to the building up of the "classless swaraj" (which according to the *Socialist* should be the aim of the party) than to immediate political problems and economic necessities. The economics of the *Socialist* is rather shaky. For example, it goes merrily on to the pleasant task of setting up nice little village units, which are to be inhabited by free cultivators, without

2. *Vanguard*, 1 August 1923.

bothering itself with the thorny question of landlordism, which reigns supreme in India. The Labour Peasants' Party Manifesto advocates a "labour swaraj" (whatever that might be), without defining its attitude about private property; the programme advanced by the Socialist proposes a regrouping of the village, without saying a word as to what should happen to those who own the land today. It is difficult to choose one from the other.

The programme proposed by the Socialist calls for a "classless swaraj" which, according to the definition given, is something like a socialist commonwealth. It is certainly a farfetched programme just at this moment. There are much nearer goals to attain. It is no use being utopians or absolutists. A more immediate and more probable political programme is necessary. It is a long jump from medieval feudal-patriarchy to a socialist commonwealth. There is danger of breaking one's neck or being laughed at. Socialism, at least a correct understanding of it, does not overlook the various stages of political existence through which a given community must pass before socialised production, distribution and exchange are reached. The Indian masses will still have to go through not a few of these economic and political stages. A normal march along this line of social evolution has been obstructed by imperialism; therefore, the first and foremost task is the overthrow of the latter. National liberation is no less necessary for the ultimate freedom of the working class than for the immediate aggrandisement of the native bourgeoisie. It is idle to talk about the socialisation of the means of production, while this still remains in an almost primitive stage. Neither a handloom nor a piece of land held by the greed of a small peasant can be socialised by dint of a programme. In India we still live in the age of the handloom and of primitive agriculture. Is it not premature to talk of the socialisation of the means of production? The production itself is yet far from being socialised. Therefore, we need not fix our gaze so high up in the air. A political institution, which is necessary for carrying our people through the intervening stages of economic development, should be our immediate goal. To lead the working class for the conquest of that goal is our task.

The Socialist naturally (because it is socialist) won't have private property. It proposes nationalisation of public utilities, key

industries and "housing-land". But then comes the fatal slip and the whole programme becomes mere words. "The owners of socialised property will be maintained by the state by way of compensation." How is the state going to get the money for this purpose? By selling the "confiscated" (?) properties or by taxation? The first will mean simply a change of hands and the second embarrassment of riches for the worker. The entire value of the socialised property cannot be covered by taxation at once. It has to be spread over a certain period, and for this period the state will be the debtor to the expropriated (?) class. The conclusion of this situation is not difficult to make—a circle will be described—the state-power will revert ere long to those who hold the purse-strings. The vision of classless swaraj will vanish in the thin air. Too academic and too puntanical understanding of socialism leads us to such a vicious circle. Socialism tempered by realism, or in other words, ability to apply Marxian dialectics to the Indian situation is what is needed. The programme suggested by the *Socialist* lacks this ability no less conspicuously than the confused manifesto.

The economic structure of the village units, which, according to the *Socialist*, should be the cornerstone of the new society, is too mechanical to be applied on a large scale. Besides, the meaning of that particular clause is far from clear. As soon as something concrete is approached, a serious contradiction is revealed. For instance, in the "classless swaraj" the "hiring of labour will be permitted". What does it mean? The wage system is not to be abolished. And the inevitable outcome of a situation, where wages are paid and taken, is the development of classes with conflicting interests. Furthermore, "any ryot unable to run his quota may hire himself out, lease his holding or share it with another". Such an arrangement will inevitably lead to the accumulation of land in the hands of a few, and it will not be very long before we come back to the same point from where we started the journey towards the "classless swaraj", which can never be reached through such a mechanical and perfunctory programme. So, on the question of landownership, which is the most vital economic problem in contemporary India, the programme misses fire altogether.

Although in a previous clause private property is allowed except

in the public utilities and some vital industries, in another place it is stipulated that "private trading will be absolutely forbidden in foodstuffs, etc." This is another of the contradictions that result not from simple oversight, but from the slipshod manner in which is drafted a programme for the building of such a faroff ideal as a "classless swaraj". Better results could be expected if the Socialist could apply itself to problems which affect the Indian working class more immediately. Such topics as tactics, direct action, propaganda, strike, boycott and general strike are dealt with. Not only the definitions of these terms given are not always correct, but nothing at all is said as to what should be the tactics of an Indian working-class party at this period of political subjugation, economic backwardness and social stagnation.

In short, the programme is very defective theoretically. If it is meant to be the maximum programme of a socialist party, it falls very short of the mark. Nor is it the minimum programme for the building of a working-class party. No attempt has been made to formulate the demands which will correspond to the everyday necessities of the worker and peasant. The vague ideals and perfunctory economic proposals contained in it do not make the programme any more understandable for the masses than the programme of the bourgeois parties. The profound theoretical difference between spiritual swaraj and classless swaraj is certainly beyond the intellectual ken of the average Indian peasant or worker. It is not enough to say what will happen when the general strike takes place; what is more important is to formulate a programme of action which will develop the movement in such a way that the possibilities of a general strike will be nearer every day. But the Socialist has nothing to suggest in this respect. Its programme confines itself, on the one hand, to a mechanical scheme of new social order and, on the other, to some incorrect definitions.

*(Aftermath of Noncooperation by  
M. N. Roy, Chapter xx)*

## APPENDIX

FORMATION OF THE INDIAN SOCIALIST LABOUR  
PARTY OF INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

India was perhaps destined to see her regeneration but the famous debacle foiled the hopes and nation has become stagnant except for a class that profits by harmless patriotic hawking. Radical-minded men of the Congress are seeking for means with which to stir the nation to its very basis and prepare it for its immediate political goal. But the base cannot be stirred unless the base and not the upper parasitic construction that burdens the base is promised its emancipation. How to lead and work out the great movement for the emancipation of the vast mass of human beings rotting at the base is an intricate problem. We must look around, see and then move as others already in the field before us are moving. The vast European and non-European mass of the humanity of the West is already on the path to end the domination of a class which by means fair or foul has usurped the reins of government for subjugating the weak and the so-called backward people and suppressing the legitimate rights of those that by ill-luck or social, intellectual and economic inferiority have fallen a prey to their greed and lust of power. The idea of this vanguard of humanity may sound new to us but in our arrogance and pride of being an older and too wise a nation we are not justified for the sake of our people in brushing aside their ideas. We must understand the trend of world politics. Unfortunately our leaders having been leavened with the ideology of our capitalist ruling class (which fact they will indignantly repudiate) have simply shut their eyes to the real needs of the country: *needs of organising the lower strata of our society which by far forms a major part of our population.*

The radical men of the Congress should have per se one cardinal objective of introducing in the Congress politics an element of strong opposition to vested interests in and outside of it. The blind acceptance of the infallibility of an individual or institution found wanting in rationality, however great, popular and commanding he or it be due to great sacrifice or age-long service will lead nowhere but to inaction and create out of a spirited nation

a dotard depending upon influences and suggestions foreign to its own reason and falling into a dead mass when this supply of single individual or external inspiration is cut off.

To rouse the nation to its depth by the light of the great international movement that is coming to the forefront which will before long be the party in power in advanced countries, we suggest to the Indian National Congress to have connection with this worldwide movement of true freedom of the masses. We suggest to the radical-minded men of the Congress who have not grown superstitious and have not taken to counting the beads to come forward to forge in the spiritual furnace a programme of a party suited to our present conditions.

The party may be called the Indian Socialist Labour Party of Indian National Congress.

It should be organised on the basis of the socialist movement and should have for its object the establishment of the people's state in which land and capital are owned communally and the process of production, distribution and exchange is a social function democratically controlled.

#### POLITICAL AND INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY

The ISLP must believe in democracy organised both in its political and industrial aspects for communal ends.

The basis of political democracy must be the whole body of citizens exercising authority through a national representative assembly directly elected by the people with a decentralised and extended system of local government. The basis of industrial democracy must be: (1) the organisation of the wage and salary earners, and (2) the organisation of (consumers).

A central body representative of the people both as producers and consumers must decide the amount and character of communal production and service necessary. The internal management of each industry, administrative, technical and manual, must be in the hands of the workers engaged therein, operating in conjunction with the representatives of the organisation as step by step is taken towards the attainment of the socialist commonwealth.

### IMMEDIATE OBJECTS

The party should declare its immediate objects to be--(a) to disseminate as widely as possible a knowledge of socialist principles, (b) to obtain control of the national and local (governing) bodies and to assist in extending their activities on socialist lines, (c) to coordinate and develop trade-union organisations with a view to securing working-class solidarity and obtaining control over industry, (d) to strengthen and extend the cooperative movement with a view to its participation in the administration of the commonwealth.

### THE TRANSITION PERIOD

In the transition from capitalism to socialism the party should work for legislative and industrial changes which contribute to its final aim, oppose those which tend to preserve the existing state of economic exploitation by capitalism. Any scheme of nationalisation or municipalisation must

(a) give the workers in the industry an effective share in and responsibility for its administration as defined above;

(b) tend to eliminate capitalism and prevent the creation of new means of financial exploitation.

### INTERNATIONALISM AND IMPERIALISM

The party should form part of the international movement and cooperate with kindred bodies in other countries to assist in the worldwide spreading of socialism.

It should recognise that the interests of the workers throughout the world of whatever race, colour or creed are one and that war, imperialism and the exploitation of the native races are mainly caused by the greed of the competing capitalist groups and therefore realise that the socialist commonwealth must ultimately be international and that the prevention of these evils can only be secured by world organisation of free peoples cooperating in the production and distribution of world's goods. With this end in view it should work for the development to its fullest extent of the international labour and socialist movement and for the most effective action by that movement in the prevention of war,

the abolition of conscription and militarism in all their forms and the liberation of the subject peoples.

The party must oppose the exploitation of the economically backward races by the more advanced and the introduction of the capitalism as a substitute for the economic structure of the native society.

#### METHOD

The party must take its part in the struggle of the people to win freedom from the economic tyranny imposed by the capitalist class and capitalist state. The best way of effecting a change to socialism is by the organisation of the workers politically to capture the power of the state and industrially to take over the control and management of the industrial machine.

The party must recognise that circumstances may arise when a government or reactionary class might attempt to suppress liberty or thwart the national will and that to defeat such attempts democracy must use to the utmost extent its political and industrial power.

We think such a modest programme will not frighten even the most chicken-hearted spiritualist for he too must realise that the spirit too requires first a flesh-and-bone house to live in, which refuses to stand erect without bread and water and commune with the High Master above. The immediate attainment of political swaraj means nothing if not the conquest of this bread and water snatched by others. If we do not move with the cry of "land and bread" neither the peasant nor the worker who forms the vast horde of 25 crores is going to fight for a swaraj of convent beads and spirits where he is likely to find himself as much in want of land and bread as he is today.

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## 6. On the Aftermath of Noncooperation

### INTRODUCTION

Most of the articles reproduced here appeared in the *Vanguard* which resumed publication from February 1923. The article "The Next Step" appeared in the double number of *Vanguard* for 15 October-1 November 1923.

The first article, which is the introduction to *One Year of Non-cooperation*—a collection of M. N. Roy's articles and manifestos issued between the Ahmedabad and Gaya sessions of the Indian National Congress—analyses the situation after the Gaya congress when it became clear that noncooperation movement has ended as a political force. It poses the question: "Why is movement that drove fear into the heart of the government on the eve of Ahmedabad prostrate, disheartened and impotent today?" The answer is given in this and in succeeding articles: "Under the pressure of class interests, the leaders condemned the action of the masses and thus the Congress in reality was divorced from the dynamic forces of revolution."

But the main focus of these articles is the criticism of the Swaraj Party, which was formed soon after the Gaya congress, symbolising a virtual split in the Congress. When the AICC met at Gaya after the session was over on 1 January 1923, C. R. Das, the elected president for the year, tendered his resignation. But both the question of his resignation and the question of council entry, which the

Swaraj Party headed by C. R. Das (president) and Motilal Nehru (secretary) advocated, were held over for the next meeting of the AICC. The AICC met again on 27 February 1923 but the question of council entry propaganda was again put off till the next meeting which took place at the end of May 1923.

The May meeting accepted the resignation of C. R. Das but his proposal that the work for council entry and preparation for participating in the coming general election under the new reform scheme should go on side by side with the constructive work and noncooperation movement was not accepted. This was considered a violation of the Gaya congress resolution which had called for the preparation for the resumption of the noncooperation movement.

The AICC met again at Visakhapatnam and adopted a resolution to convene a special session of the Congress to consider the question of the boycott of the councils. This special congress met in September 1923 at Delhi and the resolution on council entry adopted was permissive. The way was cleared to those who were inclined to take part in the ensuing election. Pattabhi Sitaramayya writes that "congressmen were for the first time divided in their attention to a programme which itself was divided in its course". The Swaraj Party set forth its principles and policy in a manifesto.

The article "The Next Step" was written after the Delhi special Congress session. The permissive decision to enable congressmen to contest the coming election is evaluated and the lesson is re-emphasised.

The next article is a commentary on the presidential address of Jawaharlal Nehru at the UP political conference held on 13 October, 1923. Nehru's speech is here characterised as "the most important pronouncement lately made by any outstanding personality in India". It is well known that Jawaharlal Nehru disagreed with those who formed the Swaraj Party, though his own father was its secretary. He mentions this in his *Autobiography*.<sup>1</sup> He also referred to his sharp disagreement with the decision taken at the Bardoli conference of Gandhiji as a

1. *History of Indian National Congress*, Vol. 1, pp. 260-61.

2. Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, pp. 98-99, 104-5.

reaction to the Chauri Chaura happenings. Though the Gaya congress had called for a preparation for the eventual resumption of the noncooperation movement, there was no revival and the movement was as good as dead. Besides the split in the Congress on the question of council entry, the controversy between the pro-changers and the no-changers had made matters worse. In his presidential address before the UP political conference Jawaharlal Nehru describes the situation thus :

"Those were brave days,<sup>3</sup> the memory of which will endure and be cherished possession of all of us. Then our leader left us, and weak and unstable and inconstant we began to doubt and despair. The faith of the old went and with it much of our confidence. There followed a year of strife and dispute and mutual recrimination, and all our energy was diverted to combating and checkmating our erstwhile comrades in the rival camp. Pro-changers and no-changers went for each other and the average no-changer was not behind the pro-changer in forgetting the basic lesson of nonviolence and charity and imputing the basest of motives to persons of a different way of thinking... And so gradually nonviolent noncooperation began to lose some of its fundamental features and for many became an empty husk devoid of all real significance."

Jawaharlal Nehru was in a dilemma. The noncooperation movement had practically come to an end. But he was not prepared to admit that the Delhi special congress "means the end of noncooperation". So in his address he launches into a panegyric of the "gospel" of nonviolent noncooperation, of "the mighty weapon which a subsequent generation will wield and prove that this is the only way, the best way which ensures true freedom and ends strife". At the same time while admitting that the Delhi "decisions were opposed to the basic principles of Gandhi", he welcomes them. In the same address he says :

"But even from the point of view of the original performance, I welcome the Delhi decisions. They do mean a going back and

3. Reference is to 1920 and 1921, when as Nehru says in the earlier part of the same speech, "We did not sit down to debate and argue, we knew we were right and we marched from victory to victory. We felt the truth in us and every fibre of our being thrilled at the idea of our fighting for the right and fighting in a manner unique and glorious"

it is always difficult and painful to do so when one believes firmly in the old method. I believe that this going back or rather this permission to others to go back was necessary at this stage."

He defends the withdrawal of the struggle and blames it on the masses: "No one can expect large masses of people to indulge continuously in direct action. Only the elect can do that and the masses can sympathise with them and join them occasionally for a short time." It is this point in his speech which is the first issue of criticism made in this article. He is told that "as one of the revolutionary vanguard, he is called upon to undo the wilful blunders committed by the Congress" and not to defend and rationalise them.

The article welcomes Nehru's coming out with complete independence as the goal of the Indian national movement as "very timely", in view of the fact that the middle-class swarajists are demanding only "some measure of self-government leading up to dominion status". It is worth while to quote for record the relevant passage in Nehru's speech:

"But the question has arisen whether we should not define 'swaraj' in our creed as 'independence'. Personally, I shall welcome the day when the Congress declares for independence. I am convinced that the only proper and right goal for India is independence. Anything short of it, whether it is styled dominion or a partnership in the British commonwealth of nations or by any other name, is derogatory to the dignity of India. There can be no peace or friendship between India and England except on the basis of perfect equality and this equality cannot be gained so long as India remains an appendage of the British empire... I would therefore on general grounds strongly advocate that we should keep independence as our objective."

While welcoming his "revolutionary pronouncement", he is at the same time sharply criticised for his faith in nonviolent philosophy and his condemnation of "terrorism" of the revolutionaries following the path of individual violence. His confused outlook, it is pointed out, leads him to the queer position of lumping Lenin and Mussolini together and contrasting them with Gandhi, who is declared as representing "the soul of India". He was told "to learn something about bolshevism and fascism and such other burning world topics before passing judgment on them so light-

heartedly". The criticism concludes with the remark: "...the soul of real India, that is of the majority who toil and starve, will be stirred to action not by the reactionary pacifism of Gandhi nor by the nationalist jingoism of Mussolini, it will only respond to the little-known but much-maligned programme of bolshevism, that is, a programme which will stand for the economic liberation and social emancipation of the toiling masses." The reference here is to the programme put forward by the communists at Gaya.

Nehru himself refers to this address in his *Autobiography*<sup>4</sup> and explains his dilemma in these days in his own way thus :

"The real difficulty, of course, was that even when that time (for aggressive activity) came, would not some incident like Chauri Chaura upset all our calculations and again hold us up? To that he (Gandhiji) gave no answer then. Nor was he at all definite in regard to our objective. Many of us wanted to be clear in our minds what we were driving at, although the Congress did not need to make a formal declaration on the subject. Were we going to hold out for independence and some measure of social change, or were our leaders going to compromise for something very much less? Only a few months before, I had stressed independence in my presidential address at the UP provincial conference. This conference was held in the autumn of 1923..."

This was written some 12 years after, in 1935. By that time, fascism in the form of nazi counterrevolution led by Hitler had come to power in Germany. Communists were in forefront in exposing the demagogy and fighting the counterrevolution of fascism and building the united antifascist front. In the world political arena the confrontation between the two camps stood out clear and sharp : between the camp of imperialism and fascism on the one hand and the camp of the working class and the democratic forces, of the socialist Soviet Union and the countries fighting for their independence from imperialism on the other. It was no longer possible for any honest nationalist and democrat to confuse fascism with bolshevism and Nehru wrote in his *Autobiography* : "As between fascism and communism my sympathies are entirely

4 *An Autobiography*, pp. 24-25.

with communism." He added "...I am very far from being a communist... bourgeois background follows me about and is naturally a source of irritation to many communists."<sup>5</sup>

The quotations from Nehru's 1923 address are taken from the original manuscript text preserved in the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. The quotations given in M. N. Roy's article also tally with the manuscript text. Roy could only have got the extracts from the address as reported in the contemporary daily press, as the date of the UP conference is 13 October 1923 and that of *Vanguard* 15 November 1923.

## 1. INTRODUCTION TO "ONE YEAR OF NONCOOPERATION"

Now that the noncooperation movement based upon the doctrine of satyagraha is a thing of the past, it will not be without a wholesome lesson to look at it with a historical retrospect. We are certainly not ignorant of the fact that there are not a few in India even now, who will vehemently protest against the assertion that the noncooperation movement is dead. We also know of those who still cling to the illusion of "spiritualising politics" and believe that the "special genius" of India will carve out a path of progress for her people, a path which will be distinct from that followed by the other nations of the world. Nevertheless the reality cannot be made nonexistent by utopian desires, nor by the explicable anxiety of those chary in admitting a defeat.

*Noncooperation as a political force is dead. We made this assertion, not today, when there are few serious-minded people who do not subscribe to the same view. To us, the collapse of noncooperation was a foregone conclusion. Ever since its inauguration, we have been telling that it would succumb to its own contradictions. We have said so even in those days when its success appeared to be imminent. When it was at the height of its glory, we exposed its fallacies and criticised the doctrines on which it was based. In spite of the highest esteem for the personality of its prophet, we never hesitated to point out the true significance of his philosophy. In short, we committed the sacrilege of questioning the wisdom of the Mahatma while the multitude was worshipping him. The object of the following pages is to remind our countrymen that, while drunk with the over-exaggerated estimate of their own wisdom they have been but chasing a will-o'-the-wisp, there was a voice which endeavoured to call them back to reality. For more than a year, ours was a voice crying in the wilderness. But history has justified our standpoint. The noncooperation movement has fallen victim to its own con-*

traditions. Gandhism has proved to be of no avail in politics. Its socioeconomic philosophy stands with failure writ across it.

What is desired to be shown in the following pages is not individual wisdom. On the contrary, they contain a trenchant criticism of subjectivism, which has been the greatest weakness of the noncooperation movement, a phenomenon brought about, as any other historical event, by objective causes. The philosophy of noncooperation was fed with the cult of inspiration. It was hero-worship. It sunk so deeply in the morass of this deplorable subjectivism, that the vision of the forces impelling it was altogether lost. The leaders of noncooperation believed that they could lead the movement, not according to the dictates of the objective forces that gave it birth, but to suit their own desires. In short, the leaders conspired against the very forces that had created them. The object of the following pages is to show that those who knew how to subordinate personality, however great it might be, to the objective conditions, were correct. They alone could have a right perspective on the situation, even in those days when events were succeeding each other with bewildering rapidity.

We point out the collapse of noncooperation, neither with the relief of the government nor with the satisfaction of the liberals. Our object is entirely different. In the past, we indicated its mistakes and criticised its wrong philosophy only with the intention that the movement might grow stronger by rescuing itself from these causes of weakness. Today we hold up a picture of the past year, in order to show that our criticism was right. We do so only with the object of demonstrating the potentiality of a certain method of sociopolitical reasoning which we have always sought to introduce into the Indian movement. According to this, the political movement in India is neither the expression of a spiritual awakening nor the creation of some superman, nor a gigantic wave destined to sweep the world clean of material civilisation. The Indian movement is the outcome of a great social upheaval brought about by changed economic conditions. It is the result of a popular unrest created not by the insults and indignities of foreign rule but by a dynamic process of social readjustment. It is a movement not backward towards a mythical golden age which never existed, but forward to conquer more comfort, more enjoyment, more freedom for the human animal. This being

the essence of the movement, its direction should be inspired with the same vision. Leaders who consciously focus these objective forces are alone capable of leading this great movement of social regeneration, which militates with the immediate object of national liberation. Unmindful of these dynamic causes and pretending to create history by their own personality and wisdom, even the greatest of leaders are mercilessly discarded by the inexorable operation of the same agencies that brought them into being.

This imperious law of economic determinism is equally applicable everywhere. India is not immune from it. The noncooperation movement was subject to it, but the leaders of the noncooperation movement were utterly oblivious of it. They acted contrary to it—hence their defeat. Their followers accepted their doctrine as gospel truth. Every voice of reason was condemned as blasphemy or heresy. The great movement was cramped within the narrow limits of subjectivism. Therefore the present deplorable situation. As soon as the clay feet of the god were discovered, the worshippers were totally discomfited; but they were not in a position to mark out a new way. So they settled down to a period of degeneration, deceiving themselves all the while with high-sounding phrases and with the picture of an imaginary victory which could be theirs before long.

The contradictions inherent in the noncooperation campaign and the inevitable collapse resulting therefrom were palpable to those able to read events in the light of historical materialism. Such a reading of the noncooperation movement is contained in the following pages. They include the unmasking of reactionary philosophy masquerading in the bewitching garb of spirituality, a criticism of fallacious economic theories, an indication of grave tactical blunders, and above all, repeated warnings of the inevitable defeat which was sure to follow such a philosophy and such methods.

The contents of the present book are of historical value, in that they vindicate the correctness of the social outlook, economic theories and political principles held by our party. They are written over the period of more than a year, and deal with almost all the critical stages of the noncooperation campaign. In spite of their publication at various times, in various forms and through various means, a uniform line of reasoning; a uniform method of inter-

preting events runs through them thus giving them the character of a comprehensive picture of a given historical epoch. The warning given to the Congress in the manifesto issued on the eve of the Ahmedabad session was not heeded. The present plight of noncooperation will convince all honest revolutionaries of the correctness of that warning, which in the meantime opened the eyes of not a few who have infused vigour into the movement in some way or other. The collapse of noncooperation to us does not mean a defeat of the Indian national struggle, not even a weakening of it. On the contrary, it signifies the development of the revolutionary forces whose first confused expression was the noncooperation movement. We only intend to show in the light of historical experience that it was possible only for Marxist materialists to see through this confusion, and point out to sincere revolutionaries the solid bedrock on which the movement was reared.

The Marxian analysis of the socioeconomic character of the noncooperation movement and our repeated assertion that noncooperation was a reactionary movement were clearly vindicated by the hostility with which the programme of national liberation and reconstruction, prepared by the Indian Communist Party for the consideration of the Gaya congress, was looked upon by the entire noncooperation press. The reaction to this programme clarified the situation so much that the Congress was forced to throw down the mask of its superclass character, a mask which, with the help of the hypocritical cant of "spiritual culture", befogged the vision of many a revolutionary objectively free from all class affiliation. Our social philosophy teaches us to look for class antagonism behind all political movements. It holds—not dogmatically but by virtue of the positive knowledge of social sciences—that material necessities give origin everywhere to variegated social customs and institutions; that human development all over the globe follows a uniform line, modified but secondarily by local conditions; that social evolution and political awakening are determined by the stage of economic development of a particular people; and that the essence of the life of the human animal is an eternal struggle with the forces of nature, which overwhelm him in the primitive stages, but are conquered by him as he goes on evolving higher and higher means of production. Every political

movement is fundamentally a socioeconomic struggle; therefore it is determined consciously or unconsciously by the above law. The urge behind our national struggle is essentially material; therefore the only way by which it can be rescued from the degenerating consequences of noncooperation is to invigorate it with a revolutionary ideology commensurate with its genesis.

The history of the great failure of noncooperation, as recorded from the point of view of historical materialism, will help the revolutionary elements in the Indian society to crystallise this much-needed revolutionary ideology. A Marxian reading of our struggle will reveal to these revolutionaries many things that are not to be held within the compass of the philosophy maintained by them hitherto. It will help them to be more of realists and less of utopians. It will give them an impetus to look at our movement from a new angle of vision. It is with this confidence that the following collection of the most important manifestos, articles, programmes, etc. written from the Marxian standpoint is presented to the Indian public. Those chapters previously published are supplemented by new ones written in order to make the book a complete history of a given period.

One year of noncooperation, from Ahmedabad to Gaya. What has been the achievement? Let the history recorded in the following pages answer this question. Why is the movement that drove fear into the heart of the government on the eve of Ahmedabad prostrate, disheartened and impotent today? What has happened during these twelve months to make such a difference in the spirit, enthusiasm and determination of the Indian people? One must read history to answer these pertinent questions, a frank and courageous reply to which will enable us to find a new way, to rally our forces again and to give battle to the enemy with renewed vigour, which will be evoked by a less ephemeral stimulus.

The answers to these questions will be found in the following pages. To summarise, at Ahmedabad, we found the Congress terrified at the mighty hosts rallied under its banner. The leadership was proven too conservative, too nonrevolutionary, too timid to guide the army at its command. All it could do was to temporise, hoping that the acuteness of the situation would subside, thus relieving it of the unwelcome revolutionary burden. Under

the pressure of class interests, the leaders condemned the action of the masses, and thus the Congress in reality was divorced from the dynamic force of revolution. The government was not slow in seizing upon the weakness, which had been always innate, but not revealed. It came down with the heavy hand of repression. As if to give encouragement to the policy of repression, the Bardoli resolutions were passed under the personal supervision of the high priest of noncooperation. What followed was simple. It was a prolonged funeral to the spirit of noncooperation killed at Bardoli.

This partly romantic, partly tragic drama was staged on the background of the conflict of class interests. The class conflict was so fierce that even the Mahatma himself was not spared. But he had done his work. Perhaps unconsciously, he had sacrificed the noncooperation movement on the twin altars of landlordism and industrialism, the latter of which he so heartily hated. This is the lesson of the last year of noncooperation. To learn this lesson, not to ignore a disagreeable reality on the pretext of a fictitious "spiritual civilisation", and to apply the experience gained from the failure of this year, will be of great value for the future of our movement.

April 1923

MANABENDRA NATH ROY

## 2. THE NEXT STEP

A very sensational act in the drama of our national struggle is over. The noncooperation movement has been brought to a close. No sophistry, no loud talking to the gallery, which is being done amply, can change this fact. What has been accomplished at Delhi is nothing more or less than a total repudiation of the programme adopted at Calcutta. The programme of organising a *countrywide mass movement with the purpose of challenging the authority of the British government* has been abandoned. The trend of things during the last year and a half was clearly in this direction. Therefore, to us as well as to everybody who was not

carried away by rosy appearances, the Delhi decisions do not come as a surprise. We, particularly, have all along fearlessly laid bare the tendencies that were latent in the leadership of the non-cooperation campaign. Our object in doing so has not been sterile criticism. We wanted to open the eyes of the revolutionary elements which are today thrown into utter confusion by the volte face even of those leaders who had the reputation of being the stalwarts of orthodox Gandhism. We were branded as bolsheviks actuated with the evil purpose of fomenting class hatred in a holy land where human beings are considered equal. Our audacity to question the wisdom of the leaders was certainly not relished. Our suggestions largely fell upon deaf ears. Nevertheless the logic of events has proved the correctness of our position. The apparently mighty noncooperation movement flourished, floundered and failed along the lines indicated by us. We don't claim to be prophets. What we want to impress upon the revolutionary elements of contemporary Indian society is the soundness of the social philosophy, economic theories and political principles we profess. The other point we desire to make is that the life, struggle and progress of the Indian nation is bound to pursue generally the same lines followed by other nations. The doctrine that India will work out her destiny in her own peculiar way is erroneous. It serves no other purpose than to hinder the progress of revolution.

Now that the liquidation of the noncooperation campaign can no longer be obscured by phrases, the question that faces those who are not in conformity with this liquidation is: "What next?" The ability to answer this query requires a careful and objective study of the rise and fall of the great noncooperation movement. It is obviously impossible to make such a study here. The required study is made in other publications of our party. Here only a cursory review can be made in order to strengthen the suggestions which will be presently made concerning the next steps to be taken for pushing the national struggle further ahead.

We need not go into history to prove that the Delhi decisions mean total repudiation of the noncooperation programme. The question of council entry is of little significance, in spite of the fact that it was made the crux of the whole controversy. The resolution to enter the reformed councils or to contest the elec-

tion, by itself, does not constitute a violation of the original non-cooperation programme. In fact, an amendment to this effect would strengthen the programme. The revolutionary significance of the noncooperation programme lay in the fact that its realisation demanded mass action. The programme of paralysing the government could not be realised by the efforts, however sincere and determined they might be, of the educated few, a considerable section of whom again was voluntarily allied with the bureaucracy. The forces that make the existence of the present order possible, therefore, should be tapped. The existence of the British government is dependent upon neither the cooperating councillors, nor the practising lawyers, nor again the clerks and students. These have their relative importance. A concerted effort by all these elements to withhold their cooperation would certainly embarrass the government; but under no circumstances would make it impossible. Then the very structure of the present order is such that it is wellnigh impossible for these elements to noncooperate with the government for any length of time. Therefore the determination to paralyse the government by withholding all support presupposed the necessity of eventually falling back upon other social forces—forces that are more vital for the existence of the government and even the shortest period of noncooperation which can seriously injure the government. These are the productive forces of society, namely, the workers and peasants. The profit that British imperialism makes out of its domination over India is not produced by the lawyers and students. Clerks contribute but little to it. The toil of the workers and peasants, who constitute more than 90 per cent of the population, goes into the accumulation of this profit. Any act that will cut into the source of this profit will weaken the position of the government. The very organisation of society is dependent primarily and principally upon the workers. The government will not necessarily collapse if the council chambers remain empty, the lawyers take to spinning and the school-rooms are deserted. But even a week's cessation of work on the railways, in the harbours and other public utilities will throw everything out of gear. The refusal of the Indians to enlist in the army and that of the troops to fight will be the beginning of the end. Nearly 40 per cent of the entire revenue comes from the peasant-

try only in the form of direct land rent. If this source of income is disturbed the whole structure of the state will crack.

We know as well as anyone else that these formidable forces cannot be brought into action overnight. What we desire to point out here is that the original noncooperation programme implied the necessity of invoking these forces of revolution. Had that programme been consciously conceived and determinedly acted upon we would not be where we are today. No sooner did the very sponsors of noncooperation realise what a dangerous path they had involuntarily trod upon than they began to sabotage the essential significance of the original programme. Delhi repudiation is but the logical consequence of Bardoli betrayal. By the end of 1921 it was clearly manifest that real noncooperation was too big an affair to be confined within the limits of the programme perfunctorily adopted in Calcutta and ratified at Nagpur. The triple boycott was but a meagre vehicle for the expression of the revolutionary energies kindled in the country. The fullest mobilisation of these energies was necessary if the programme of paralysing the government was to be earnestly carried through. But it was too much for the Congress which stood at the head of the gigantic movement. The idea of paralysing the government by withholding popular cooperation evolved out of the objective situation which did not permit any other form of direct fight with the established order. This spontaneously evolved form of struggle was taken up by the Congress under the leadership of Gandhi whose subjective limitations, however, hedged in the revolutionary programme of noncooperation. The wave of revolutionary mass movement, which alone could have led to the realisation of the noncooperation programme, precipitated the clash between the objective and subjective factors that went into the making of the noncooperation campaign. The Congress succumbed in this fatal clash. The journey towards Delhi, then the councils, the negotiation with the bureaucracy and finally compromise with imperialism was begun.

Why blame those who have buried at Delhi the cadaver of noncooperation? The bewildered "no-changers" today accuse their idol Mohammad Ali of having betrayed the heritage of the Mahatma. But it will be too realistic for them to think that Mohammad-Alism is the inevitable consequence of political

Gandhism. You cannot at the same time do and not do a thing till eternity. The noncooperation movement either had to be a *revolutionary mass movement or die of inanition*. When at Bardoli it decided not to be a mass movement it committed suicide. Now a form of struggle suitable for the masses is not suitable for the bourgeoisie. The triple boycott had some meaning so long as behind it loomed the possibility of a national strike headed by the productive element of the nation. The vision of this national strike was to be seen in the promised slogans of nonpayment of taxes and mass civil disobedience. Once these slogans were put away as something outside the realm of practical politics, the Calcutta programme became worthless. It rejected mass action, but insisted upon a form of struggle not applicable to the requirements of the upper classes. It consequently became necessary to formulate a new programme, to devise other forms of struggle with imperialism to be carried on by the upper and middle classes. The collapse of noncooperation does not mean the end of national struggle, which is the antithesis of foreign domination, and therefore must go on in some form or other.

At Delhi has been completed the task undertaken at Bardoli, namely, revolutionary mass action as a form of struggle for national liberation has been abandoned. The new programme adopted is the programme of constitutionalism; the tactics will be parliamentarism, negotiation and compromise. It cannot be otherwise, since the basis of the Congress has been shifted from one social class to the other. During the last three years it almost lost its upper-class moorings and came dangerously near the masses. The balance has been recovered. The Congress has again become the respectable organ of bourgeois nationalism which may indulge in beautiful idealism and high rhetorics, but never forgets its pocket.

Now the rank and file "no-changers" are totally dismayed. They slept upon their illusive victory at Gaya and woke up to see the Congress leadership out of their hands. They are burning with righteous indignation because realism has induced others to call a scrap of paper a scrap of paper and not an article of faith. All they can do is to hurl anathema upon everybody on the authority of the Mahatma. But it will be of little avail. They stand face to face with a settled fact: the Congress has repudiat-

ed the noncooperation programme and reverted to constitutionalism, which certainly will be more militant than that of prewar days, because the bourgeoisie has developed considerably since then. But it will be constitutionalism nonetheless with the ultimate object of striking a bargain with imperialism as to the respective share in the exploitation of the country and its productive forces.

This being the case the next step for the social class to which the "no-changers" belong obviously is to prepare for equally definite and determined action in accordance with the interests of those sections of the nation who will be little benefited by the policy to which the Congress is committed at Delhi. The noncooperation movement collapsed because the Congress refused to mobilise and lead those revolutionary social forces that alone could make it a success. Those forces are still in the country. Their objective potentiality is no less today than in 1920-21, if not more. Those revolutionary patriots who are not satisfied with the turn the Congress has taken at Delhi should not waste their time in recrimination. Their slogan should be "Forward!" They should show that noncooperation is a powerful weapon. But they can only do it when they will learn from the voluntary or involuntary blunders of their leaders. They should invoke by all means those forces of revolution which were shunned by the Congress. The next step therefore is the organisation of a *People's Party* comprising all the exploited elements of our society. Such a party alone will carry the noncooperation programme to its logical consequences.

September 1923

### 3. JAWAHARLAL'S SPEECH

The presidential address of Pandit Jawaharlal to the UP conference calls for more than passing notice. It is by far the most important pronouncement lately made by any outstanding personality in India. In asserting that "the basis of noncooperation is direct action" he indicated the only way that should be follow-

ed by the revolutionary nationalists who are not satisfied with the neoconstitutionalism of the Swaraj Party. But the Panditji himself does not seem to quite understand what is direct action. Otherwise he would not make the statement that direct action cannot be carried on by large masses of people, but by a selected few. He appears to hold the masses responsible for the failure of noncooperation. This is an absolutely wrong view of the case. On various occasions during the last few years, the masses were ready to act, but it was the general staff of the noncooperation movement that held them back. Jawaharlal betrays an ignorance of history when he states: "No one can expect large masses of people to indulge continuously in direct action. Only the elect can do that, and the masses can sympathise with them and join them occasionally for a short time." History shows the case to be the contrary. All great movements are carried through by might and sacrifice of the masses and not by the elect, though the latter may appropriate the glory. He apparently does not agree with the Delhi compromise; of course as a revolutionary he cannot. But he endeavours to justify it by throwing the blame on the masses. He argues that it is necessary to go back a little "to some kind of constitutional action whenever large numbers of people are tired of direct action". The Congress has reverted to constitutionalism, not because it could not get the support of the masses for a programme of direct action, but because it was afraid of leading the revolutionary masses in the path of direct action. The masses that enthusiastically rallied round the standard of noncooperation did not get tired of "continuous direct action"; on the contrary, their zeal to act was dampened by the timidity and indecision of the leadership which is evidently constituted from the "elect" of the Panditji. Of course, if by the elect Jawaharlal means the conscious vanguard determined to lead the masses in the fight, he is right; and as one of this revolutionary vanguard, he is called upon to undo the wilful blunders committed by the Congress.

- The next important point in the speech is the declaration that complete separation from the British empire is the goal of the Indian nationalist movement. For the first time it has been stated authoritatively that our fight is not against bureaucracy, that is a certain form of administration, but against imperialism. Indian

nationalism does not strive for some modification in the relationship between the Indian people and the British overlord. What is wanted is the end of this relation. As the Panditji made clear, free India may have all sorts of relations with Britain as an equal, but no equality is possible on the basis of imperialism. This revolutionary formulation of the political programme of Indian nationalism is very timely, in view of the fact that the programme of the Swaraj Party, which to all practical purposes has captured the Congress, has removed the ambiguity in which the noncooperators preferred to leave the question. Complete independence is not a question of dignity, nor should it be a creed. It will also be ridiculous to declare outright that India is independent. The independence of India should be the first clause in the programme of Indian nationalism. Not only the liberals representing the propertied upper classes, but also the middle-class swarajists will be satisfied with some measures of self-government leading up to dominion status. This programme does not take the interests of the majority of the people in consideration. Larger measure of self-government, even dominion status, will not materially alter the politicoeconomic condition of the masses, including the propertyless lower middle class. Greater opportunities will be conceded to Indian capital and more political power will come into the hands of the propertied classes; but the people at large will remain politically disfranchised and economically enslaved. British imperialism will take the Indian upper classes into political partnership only on condition that its right to exploit the Indian masses economically is not seriously contested. Therefore the programme of dominion status cannot rally the majority of the people under the banner of the Congress. In this connection nothing better can be done than to quote Jawaharlal's words :

"I suppose there is hardly an Indian who does not in heart of hearts desire independence, but there are many who dare not say so—many who think that it is unwise to make the assertion at this stage. Let us get rid of this mentality—this cowardice. We may not be strong enough to gain our object for a while, but we should be brave enough to declare it and work for it."

It should only be added that it is not a matter of cowardice or heroism, the desire of independence is born out of material

necessity. Those who talk of dominion status do so not out of cowardice. They will be satisfied with dominion status because it will meet, at least temporarily, their economic demands. The majority of the people must fight for complete independence, because *no compromise with imperialism will better their economic conditions.*

This revolutionary pronouncement of Jawaharlal, however, is rendered meaningless by his philosophy of nonviolence. He still suffers from the malady of Gandhism, which does not allow him to take a realistic view. His denunciation of terrorism is correct and incorrect at the same time. It is correct politically. Spasmodic acts of violence do not lead anywhere. Revolutionary energy is only dissipated thereby. But the ethical scruples of the Panditji are utterly mistaken. Why condemn the ardent youths who have been driven into the blind alley of futile terrorism by disillusionment? They are mistaken, but they are idealists. Show them the highroad of revolution, instead of condemning them on moral grounds. These romantic revolutionaries suspended their activities with the hope that something consoling for them would come out of the noncooperation movement. When some of them desired to participate in the noncooperation movement, they were treated as outcasts who could be taken into the sacred folds of Gandhism only on their making public penance. The collapse of noncooperation and the nonrevolutionary nature of its leadership have thrown these young enthusiasts back upon their own resources. Instead of declaring them moral culprits, the Panditji should find in them the material for his "elect", which would act as the conscious vanguard of the masses. But this demands a more realistic leadership on the part of Jawaharlal. He will not get these misled revolutionaries to follow him in such ridiculous theatricals as the flag demonstration; something more dynamic should be found. Through these youths is expressed the violent energy, which will have to be invoked sooner or later for the realisation of the political programme formulated by the Panditji himself. But the pacifist prejudices of Jawaharlal get him into troubles. He is entangled in philosophic fallacies. He proposes to destroy the mightiest imperialism that the world has ever seen, but he sings the song of love and peace. This confused outlook lands him in such a queer position that he loses all perspective

and is unable to distinguish black from white. In his bewilderment he says :

“Bolshevism and fascism are the ways of the West today. They are really alike and represent different phases of insensate violence and intolerance. The choice for us is between Lenin and Mussolini on the one hand and Gandhi on the other. Can there be any doubt as to who represents the soul of India today?”

Beautiful as a peroration, but all wrong historically and politically. One cannot be expected to do better when an attempt is made to understand the great world currents, taking the ethical concept of violence versus nonviolence as the standard. If our nationalists of the type of Jawaharlal would care to learn anything outside Indian history, it would be apparent to them that the programme of bolshevism is no more bloodthirsty than Gandhism, *although there is no other point of contact between the two*. It is not the teachings of bolshevism that have driven it to violence. It was thrust upon the bolsheviks either to turn traitors to their programme, or to take up the challenge and defend it. If Jawaharlal will remain true to his ideal, if he will conquer the freedom of the Indian people, he will find his ethical formulas unavailing. It is only deplorable ignorance that can herd Lenin and Mussolini, bolshevism and fascism together, merely because both use violence. Then Jawaharlal has no patience for impatience. Well, in that case his outburst does not mean anything. If he would damn the bolsheviks, because they could not tolerate the czar and his retinue of landlords and capitalists, who sucked the life blood of the Russian people, by what ethical code can he justify his intolerance for the British in India? Yes, he can argue that his intolerance is Gandhian ; it is not violent. Well, history will prove that. *The impossibility of riding on the two horses of ahimsa and revolution will be soon revealed.*

It is not possible to correct Jawaharlal's wrong ideas about the cause of the present chaotic state of the world in a short article. This may be done on some other occasion. Meanwhile he would do better to learn something about bolshevism, fascism and such other burning world topics before passing judgment on them so lightheartedly. If Gandhism still represents the soul of India, as Jawaharlal believes, then the day of her liberation is far off. The

spirit of Mussolini is not hard to find in India. The weakness of Indian nationalism lies not only in its pacifist prejudices, but in its fascist (reactionary jingoist) tendencies. When our disillusioned lower middle class forsakes Gandhism it hails Mussolini as the prophet. But the soul of real India, that is of the majority who toil and starve, will be stirred to action not by the reactionary pacifism of Gandhi nor by the nationalist jingoism of Mussolini; it will only respond to the little-known but much-maligned programme of bolshevism, that is, a programme which will stand for the economic liberation and social emancipation of the toiling masses. India will be free only through the conscious action of these potential followers of bolshevism. Many a river of blood will have to be traversed and many a tenet of reactionary nationalism will have to be forgotten before that goal is realised.

M. N. Roy

*(Vanguard, Vol 3, No. 7,  
15 November 1923)*

## 7. Articles from the "Socialist" and "Vanguard"

### INTRODUCTION

As we have stated earlier, very few issues of *Socialist* are available to us. Since February 1923 the *Socialist*, which started as a weekly in August 1922, became a monthly. The articles produced here are from two issues—one of March 1923 made available to us by S. A. Dange himself and the other of May-June 1923 which was an exhibit in the Kanpur Conspiracy Case. Two articles from the *Socialist* of March 1923, viz "The Capitalist Offensive" and "D. Chamanlal on Trial" have already been reproduced in the fourth section.

The first of the articles reprinted from this issue is written against the background of mounting communal tension and a series of communal riots which took place throughout 1923. "Proletarian Hindu-Muslim Unity" exposes the hand of the powers that be and of the big capitalists and landlords, stoking the fires of this fratricidal conflict in the wake of the declining influence of both the noncooperation and the khilafat movement, which had stood for Hindu-Muslim unity in their own way.

The article, which forms part of the editorial notes, contrasts the Hindu-Muslim unity fostered by the nationalist leaders, both Hindu and Muslim, which is based on sentiment with that

Probing at the root.

# THE SOCIALIST

434, Thakurdwar,  
Bombay, 2

[Edited by S. A. Dasg.]

"None shall have salt unless everyone has bread"

Vol. I, No. 1.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 5, 1922.

[Weekly] Price 5 pice.

## In the Indian Labour World.

Civil Disobedience is resumed in Calcutta by the Congress and Khilafat Volunteers. The Marwaris, remembering the last year's experience, are alarmed, lest a trade depression may follow. They have begun to sell cloth cheaper. Government has also resumed arresting pickets.

In a meeting of the Calcutta Corporation a motion to give franchise to women was adopted by 21 to 4 votes.

The Bombay Tramway Company is forbidding Tramway Union men from collecting union subscriptions from members on the Company's residential premises for the Tramway men.

The Union held a meeting of its members, a thousand in number, to take ballot on strike action. Decision is pending.

The Pathans in the suburbs of Bombay are carrying on a systematic campaign of terrorism by night attacks on the houses of men whom

they know to be rich. They loot property and kill freely anyone who opposes them. The Police have arrested 157 of them.

The Workmen belonging to the Road Department of the Bombay Municipality are on strike.

On the day of the second anniversary of Lokamanya Tilak, the Bombay Millowners did not close the mills. The workers of the Turic mill on Prabhadevi Road refused to enter the mill and started visiting other mills. After some time, they succeeded in getting out of comrades and closing almost all the mills.

## Socialism Abroad.

### America

The persecution of the Industrial Workers of the world (I. W. W.) by hirelings, aided by state law is going on. The cases of Tom Mooney and Louis Davis, the champions of the workers, have aroused the working classes.

Mexico had succeeded in establishing a socialist ministry in Government and nationalised the great industrial concerns.

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Advertisements printed in the March 1923 issue of the Socialist. In the right-hand column are given some publications of the Socialist Series.

forged by the toiling masses in the course of their cooperation in work in the field and factory and their common suffering.

It mentions that Hindu-Muslim unity was in grave danger in the Punjab. An official report states: "In March and April there were open riots of a serious nature in Amritsar, Multan and in other parts of the Punjab."<sup>1</sup> It gives an overall account of the communal tension and riots spreading throughout India. It pin-points as causes the competition for the redistribution of seats in municipalities and district boards and the shuddhi, Hindu Sabha and sanghatan movements, carefully concealing how the imperialist government and its agents used this very "cause" for their sinister intrigues to foment the conflict.

The official report concludes with undisguised satisfaction: "It was indeed impossible to disguise the fact that the political entente which, at the cost of so much energy, he (Gandhi) had established between the two communities was now a thing of the past. All such movements as civil disobedience were necessarily still-born till a fresh agreement between the Hindu and the Muhammedan could be established."<sup>2</sup>

The next item reproduced from the March issue is the editor's note inaugurating the People's Publicity Service. Elsewhere Dange has explained how he came to start this service in 1923. "We had started the People's Publicity Service with Parvate as editor. It mostly contained reprints of articles from the *Inprecor*. Yet we had no authentic works or writings of Lenin or the resolutions and theses of the Comintern in our hands except for what we got in the *Inprecor* whose copies only occasionally slipped through the British censorship net."<sup>3</sup>

It is significant that some of the items of the first despatch of the service printed in the March issue were statements by the Russian trade delegation in London, exposing some anti-Soviet slanders circulated in the western capitalist press. In the early twenties, Britain had not yet given recognition to socialist Soviet Russia and only after the fiasco of its counterrevolutionary intervention in that country, had it established trade relations. The imperialist press service Reuter and its affiliates, which had the

1. *India in 1923-24*, p. 258.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 257

3. S. A. Dange's article "Comrade Ghaté—Our First Secretary" in S. V. Ghaté, CPI Publication, 1971, p. 10.

monopoly of supplying news to the Indian daily press, did not circulate the communiques of the Soviet trade delegation in London and specialised in anti-Soviet slanders. Hence the significance of the Socialist printing extracts of these communiques which it obtained from the issues of *Inprecor*. The next item is also significant because it exposes the "imperialist nature of (Italian) fascism" as early as in 1923, when Indian patriots had a sneaking admiration of "Premier Mussolini".

An interesting item in this issue is an advertisement. The Liberty Publications of the patriotic businessman of Bombay, R. B. Lotwala, who befriended young Dange and his *Socialist*, was perhaps the first publisher of authoritative pamphlets on scientific socialism in India. In this advertisement we find the *Communist Manifesto* of Marx and Engels, *Religion of Capital* by Lafargue and *Communism* by R. Palme Dutt. These pamphlets which continued to circulate throughout the twenties in India were among the meagre sources of the knowledge of scientific socialism available to the English-educated intellectuals of those days. Many of these pamphlets were seized by the police from the communists and trade-union leaders arrested in the Meerut Conspiracy Case (March 1929) and one of these viz R. Palme Dutt's *Communism* was put in as an exhibit against the accused and printed in the records.<sup>4</sup>

The combined issue of May-June 1923 (Vol 1, No 5) is preserved in the records of the Kanpur Conspiracy Case. As very few issues of this valuable pioneer journal are at all available, we are giving a number of extracts and reproductions from this issue. These will throw light on the history of *Socialist* (a Magazine of International Socialism) itself, and the role it played in popularising the theory of scientific socialism, in the early efforts to build the Workers' and Peasants' Party, in fighting for a revolutionary orientation of the national independence movement, in establishing contacts with the working-class movement and in defending the Soviet Union—the first socialist state in history—against imperialist slanders.

The first two items we reproduce are the notes by the manager and the editor, which give us briefly the history of the paper since

4. It is listed as Exhibit P 416 (3); one of the items seized from the office and residence of Muzaffar Ahmad—C.A.

it began appearing as a weekly from 5 August 1922. The editor's note ("New Policy for New Year") also gives us the scope of the journal and its object after it became a monthly from February 1923.

May part of the issue contains an interesting note on the question of organisation. Dange calls upon the new emerging socialists and communists in India "to come forth fearlessly and openly" to organise industrial workers in trade unions. He is here putting forward a programme for openly fighting for the creation of militant class-conscious mass trade unions of industrial workers—a programme which he and other communists and trade-union workers were to carry out after 1926. As for the British imperialists, they prosecuted Dange and his other early colleagues for merely putting forward the idea in the Kanpur Conspiracy Case (1924) and again later when they translated the idea into practice and built massive militant trade-union movement in the Meerut Conspiracy Case (1929-33). But the seed was sown and it struck roots in the working-class masses giving rise to a massive crop of a militant trade-union movement despite the obstruction of foreign and native bourgeoisie, and played a glorious role in India's freedom struggle. Dange's comment on the tactics of the Communist International is not so much a critique as a plea for their adaptation to the specific Indian conditions. It may also be a deliberate demarcation for the purpose of legality. All the same the British imperialists prosecuted Dange, Muzaffar and two others in the Kanpur Case for being active agents in the conspiracy initiated by the Communist International!

An item from this joint issue on the monthly report of the Labour Kisan Party of India has already been reproduced in the earlier section entitled "The Genesis of the Workers' and Peasants' Party of India". Of the three items from the issue which are reproduced in full here, the first two—viz "The Investor's Prayer" and "Government and Ourselves"—speak for themselves.

The last article, "The Massacre of the 26 Baku Commissars", is based on a longish article which appeared in the *Inprecor*. This was a review of the book published in 1922 end or in 1923 beginning in Soviet Russia by one V. Chaikin, who had actually lived through the days of imperialist intervention in Transcauca-

sia in 1918. In this book he was giving four years later the full story of how the "26 members of the Baku council of people's commissars" were murdered by the British interventionists acting in collusion with the mensheviks and socialist-revolutionaries, who had gone over to counterrevolution.

Chaikin's book is no longer available. But the account reproduced from it in the article in the *Socialist* tallies with what we find in the authentic Soviet publications in English and Russian available to us now.<sup>5</sup>

\*            \*            \*

The two articles reproduced here are from the *Vanguard* of the second half of 1923. The first article is the "Manifesto on the Hindu Moslem Unity and Swaraj".

We have already reproduced what Dange's *Socialist* wrote on the question of Hindu-Muslim unity against the background of the communal tension developing in the Punjab in the early months of 1923. Dange's article appeared earlier in the issue of May-June. *Vanguard* writes later in October. The situation of communal riots which began in the early months of 1923 continued throughout the year. *India in 1923-24* which we have quoted earlier in this connection writes that in May there were further riots in Amritsar and a riot in Sind. In June and July there were riots in Meerut, Moradabad and Allahabad districts of UP. In August and September there were further outbreaks at Amritsar, Panipat, Jabalpur, Gonda, Agra and Rae Bareilly. At Saharanpur there was a serious outbreak involving bloodshed and arson.

It is against this background that the *Vanguard* article is written. Dealing with the question of Hindu-Muslim unity more concretely, it investigates the nature of Hindu-Muslim unity achieved in the days of the first noncooperation movement. It comes to the conclusion that "it was built on the unreliable foundation of religious sentimentalism". It makes the suggestion that the khilafat movement be now wound up. "Whatever service it may have done in the past, the religious movement if carried further with the same zeal is bound to create disastrous results in the political movement in India." One such result cited is the "emergence of the Hindu Mahasabha movement" which arose as a

5 cf. *History of the USSR*, Part III, FLPH, Moscow, 1948, p. 255 ff.

reaction to "separate Moslem political organisation, especially the khilafat conference". It calls upon Indian Muslims to "take lesson from the decision of the grand national assembly of Angora, which has declared the separating of the khilafat from the sultanate, i.e. separating religion from politics".<sup>6</sup> Finally it gives the call for the organisation of a party which will "subordinate the communal question to the great politicoeconomic question" and will speak to the masses in terms of "land, bread, housing, clothing, etc. and its immediate goal would be to free India from the domination of England".

Another point to note is that the manifesto is signed "Communist Party of India". It should also be noted that the *Vanguard* issues of 1923 all bore the legend: "The organ of the CC of the Communist Party of India—section of the CI". From this we need not rush to the conclusion that the CPI which had then four or five groups in different parts of India was already affiliated to the Comintern. All the same the name of the CPI appearing on this manifesto and on the masthead of *Vanguard* in 1923 has a significance, especially as the *Vanguard* was issued by M. N. Roy who was then in an authoritative position in the Eastern Bureau of the Comintern. That significance is probably to be understood in terms of the statement which Zinoviev, the then president of the Comintern, is reported to have made in his concluding speech before the Fourth Congress (November 1922).

"The creation of a strong nucleus of a communist party in a distant country has now more political importance than the Versailles treaty, than the Lausanne conference. The creation of a nucleus of a communist party of India, for example, is from historical point of view a much more important matter than all these conferences."<sup>7</sup> It is probably on the strength of this recognition by Zinoviev in November 1922 that Roy was putting the name of

6. Actually the Turkish grand assembly took the decision to end the sultanate in November 1922. This practically meant the abolition of the khilafat as the sultan had united the state and the church in his person. Khilafat was formally abolished in Turkey on 3 March 1924, other reforms such as introduction of the international calendar, modern civil law and the Latin alphabet took place in the succeeding years, completing the process of the separation of the church and the state. (*Welt Geschichte in Daten*).

7. Cecil Kaye, *Communism in India*, p. 48.

the CPI under the masthead of the *Vanguard*. This also corresponds to the fact that the communist movement in India had already emerged, and a nucleus of the CPI was already attempting to establish all-India contacts. This fact gets further recognition when in early 1924 the British government launched the well-known Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy Case.

The last article is by M. N. Roy—"a criticism" of the "spiritual communism" of Aurobindo Ghosh. This is the first of a series of articles on the subject which M. N. Roy probably proposed to write. The continuation of this article has not been traced in the succeeding issues of the *Vanguard*, though the paper continued to appear as a fortnightly up to 15 December 1924. Obviously it is not a complete critique of the philosophy of Aurobindo as he had developed it up to 1923. The quotations are taken from the *Standard Bearer*—which is described as "an organ of Aurobindoism".

Aurobindo defines his "spiritual communism" as a creative gospel. It aims at the evolution of a new human society. How does he characterise his new human society? First, it will be liberated from the present "conflict of separative egoism". Secondly, it "establishes itself on the firm foundation of harmony and unity of being". Thirdly, "Spiritual communism starts with a new conception and experience of man—the realisation of the supramental and spiritual being."

In his critique Roy, in essence, points out that the desire to end the present order based on class domination and exploitation (separative egoism) and the urge to usher in a new society based on cooperation of all for the good of all (harmony and unity of being) is of course praiseworthy. But how is that to be achieved? Roy quotes Aurobindo's answer: "'Spiritual society' accepts the present arrangements and order, but accepts only to take up and transform the imperfect system and remove it in the spirit and type of living spiritual realisation of oneness and soul unity."

The answer of scientific communism, Roy says, is that the present order based on the conflict of antagonistic class relations (different and antagonistic claims) cannot be changed by preaching spiritualism or mysticism, but by changing the material conditions on which these relations are based.

Roy comes to the conclusion that "the spiritual communism of

Aurobindo Ghosh is a mixture of Hegelian idealism and Hindu mysticism. Consequently it is incapable of studying the process of human evolution from the right angle of vision."

At this point, we would like to draw the attention of the reader to a recent Communist Party publication (July 1969): *A Critique of Shri Aurobindo's Philosophy* by Bhowani Sen. The author, who subjects Aurobindo's philosophical system and consequently his ideas about social evolution to incisive and well-argued Marxist critique, was in a position to review all the works of Aurobindo from the early twenties to his death in 1950 in Pondicherry. Bhowani Sen's conclusion is somewhat similar, but it is based on more profound analysis concretely worked out and fully documented.

## 1. PROLETARIAN HINDU-MUSLIM UNITY

Many, it seems, feign to be shocked by our 'heretic' criticism of Congress affairs and individual leaders. But our forecasts and correct reading of situations are being borne out from all quarters. The *Socialist* was always ringing the alarm-note that the Congress has no hold on the masses, that it does nothing for them and as such can expect nothing from them. The Hindu-Muslim unity was boomed outright in flamboyant headings in newspapers and big leaders, Hindu and Mahomedan, embraced each other on public platforms or dined in common plates, at the common table in restaurant cars when on tour. But the mass-Hindu and mass-Mahomedan knew nothing about these lilas of the upper gods on the high spiritual plane. They only saw the beautiful pantomimes and cheered lustily perhaps; and soon forgot everything about it. It was inevitable. And now all the newspaper boom has vanished and the tocsin is rung that the Hindu-Muslim unity is in grave danger in the Punjab. It is easy to find once or twice the cause of all this in our enemy's gold or diplomacy but that doesn't help always.

### THE NECESSARY CONDITIONS

The Hindu-Muslim unity cannot rest on chimerical metaphysics only. Unity is possible only among groups that are working harmonically in one plane and whose interests do not conflict. Absence of the conflict of interests creates a prospective ground for it, for absence of such a conflict deadens the feelings of bitterness, which die for want of nourishment in the form of such conflict of interests. And working and living in cooperation creates a positive feeling of unity and promotes it. Wherever these conditions have been guaranteed, the Hindu-Muslim differences have almost disappeared.

And where are such conditions guaranteed? Only amongst the downtrodden proletariat. There the conflict of interests vanishes before that one great conflict, that of bread and living. Whether

Hindu or Mahomedan, the proletarian finds himself ground in the same chakki. When the old traditional and hereditary feelings of fanaticism and religious bitterness are not roused by any exciting external agents, the Hindu and the Muslim proletarian working in cooperation shoulder to shoulder either on the field or in the workshop has a positive attitude of affection towards each other. Their common fight for living acts negatively in cutting down the jungle of old feuds and preparing the ground for the unity and working in cooperation for the profits of one hunter-master, draws them closer and positively unites them as brothers in a common room.

#### THE EVIL GENIUS OF THE HINDU-MUSLIM PROLETARIAT

Imagine for instance a number of proletarians, Hindus and Mahomedans, working together at the wheel or the file. They talk, sing and eat under the same roof and know each other more than even the leaders do about themselves. If by mischief or chance, a Hindu's trumpet is blown near a mashid or a cow is killed, will these brothers in the common room fly at each other's throats without the slightest consideration? Impossible! Knowing, as they do, each other so well, they will first think who did the thing and why, before lifting the lathi to strike the head of the man, who perhaps has been his companion by the wheelside. They will take voluntarily to arbitration than they can be made to do by "deputation leaders" and Congress committees. If these brothers-in-arms are left to themselves, perhaps, the words 'Hindus' and 'Mahomedans' would vanish or signify nothing but a difference of dress and drills before the gods! But they are not. The evil genius of both is there.

Which is that evil genius? It is that which wants to use the people as their tools, exploit them and fatten on their blood. The landholders, big-business bosses, the maulavis and the Hindu priests, with the dead bones of their religious commandments. In these rules the evil genius of the Hindus and Moslems. A Hindu businessman wants to snap competition of a Moslem industrialist. An easy way to it is to start a Hindu-Moslem feud in the latter's factories and workshops; the deluded workers will fight for an interest seemingly their own, but it will be the mischief monger who will have gained. The priests of god, whether Hindu

or Moslem, have the twenty-four hours of the day at their disposal besides the command of the treasures of the temples. To delude their donors and their devotees into the belief that they are serving their religion and spreading god's mission, uninvited they create an "affair", make a stir amongst the people. A nasty brawl is a delight to them, it gives them opportunity to win them the name "the defenders of religion".

Thus works the evil genius of the Hindu-Moslem, peaceloving, drudging, half-starved proletariat. A crafty owner easily sets the Moslem weavers against the Hindu weavers and chuckles over the dodge that gets him weavers at low wages in the bitter competition, which frequently ends in a "breach of Hindu-Moslem unity".

There are a thousand and one subtle underhand tricks by which the ignorance and traditional sentiments of the proletarians, Hindus and Moslems who are the big majority of the nation, are used by crafty, conservative, slave-minded profiteers, big businessmen, pandas and maulavis, fakirs and saints (who are so by the ashes on their face only!!) in their own interests. Hindu-Moslem unity of the downtrodden proletarian classes only can be real unity, which, exactly has been neglected by the Congress leaders. The present Congress is incapable of doing it, because it is not of that class which wants unity and has partially got it, but of the class that knows the word but not the fact, the class that has nothing to loose but cheers and everything to gain.

(*Socialist*, March 1923)

## 2. THE PEOPLE'S PUBLICITY SERVICE

(The People's Publicity Service is a new organisation started in Bombay. In explaining its object, the organisers say :

"The inadequacy and partiality with which foreign news is supplied to the Indian press is apparent to all. No news that is not coloured or distorted by interested parties from various countries is allowed to reach the Indian press. Some of the mischief is counteracted and can be exposed when the foreign mail papers

reach here. But it is not within the reach of everyone to subscribe to these papers, so numerous and varied they are. And moreover the foreign mail is sometimes neglected, the hands of the staff of our press being too full with Indian news. With a view to remedy this grievance the People's Publicity Service has been started. The PP Service will summarise the most important news, articles, book-reviews, etc. in the foreign papers from Europe and America and prepare a weekly letter for the Indian press. The People's Publicity Service has started a foreign service also, through which Indian news about the Congress activities and other movements political or otherwise is supplied, and has arranged with foreign journals to publish it."

We publish below the first despatch sent to us by the PP Service. (Ed.)

#### RUSSIA : NO MUNITIONS FROM RUSSIA

Denial is given by the Russian trade delegation to a statement made by Mr Cosgrave, president of the Irish Free State, on 17 February to the effect that "the guns and ammunition which the irregulars have been trying to buy from Russia may add to the destruction".

"We wish to point out officially", says the delegation, "that the Soviet government does not intervene in the internal affairs of any country, and that there is not the slightest foundation for the implication contained in Mr Cosgrave's letter."

#### *No Ban on Religion in Russia*

"In view of the absurd stories at present being circulated concerning the attitude of the Russian government towards religion, it is as well briefly to state what are its basic principles", says a statement issued by the Russian trade delegation in London.

"The church is entirely separated from and independent of the state", continues the statement. "The churches are open, and religious instruction is permitted at home. No religious instruction is permitted in the schools, and, all other forms of private school like church school or classes are not allowed. Religious processions are permitted."

## ITALY : NATURE OF FASCISM REVEALED

It is supposed that fascism is as much opposed to capitalist imperialism as to socialism. But the latest acts of the Mussolini government reveal the true imperialist nature of fascism. Premier Mussolini has intimated to Poincare his approval of the occupation of the Ruhr and promises Italy's help if necessary. Mussolini's ambassador in Paris addressing the Chamber of Commerce said, "What a great victory for Latin civilisation it would be, if the efforts of Italy and France were combined from African colonies to the coal-fields of Northern France."

This clearly shows the imperialist nature of fascism.

(*Socialist*, March 1923)

## 3. OURSELVES

Six months back we turned the weekly *Socialist* into a monthly for reasons well-known to our readers. While announcing the change we had issued an appeal for a socialist press fund. We are happy to say that we have been successful in making our own printing arrangements with the help of friends and comrades.

## THE LABOUR PRESS

is up to serve the cause of the hungry and the poor. For arrangement of our printing plant we had to delay the publication of the May number. Not to lag behind too much, we have issued the May and June numbers together.

The Labour Press expects every friend of the toilers, manual and intellectual, to keep this plant of their own running in the service of the nation.

The address of the Labour Press : Mahammade Minar, Khetwadi 14th Lane, Bombay-4.

MANAGER,

*The Socialist* and *The Labour Press*

(*Socialist*, Vol. I, No. 5, May-June 1923)

#### 4 NEW POLICY FOR NEW YEAR

With the publication of July number we will have completed the first year of existence. We continued as a weekly for about six months and then assumed the form of a monthly magazine.

We have decided to continue as a monthly until we are satisfied we have done enough of educative work in the field of initiating and acquainting our readers with the basic principles of socialism as propounded by Karl Marx and Engels. We did this during the year gone by, by providing articles, excerpts and comments on all important events in recent history of Europe...

We propose, therefore, to take Indian questions up and express our readings and views of them in the coming year. When mainly this will be done, we are not of course going to shut ourselves out from the outside world. It only means Indian questions will have greater weight with us than extra-Indian.

This means we will have to stop all article service of foreign writers, which will cast heavy responsibility of procuring articles from Indian writers on Indian topics, of whom there is scarcity.

EDITOR

*(Socialist, May-June 1923)*

#### 5. ON ORGANISATION

In this connection we should like to clear some confusion of ideas amongst our socialist and communist workers in India. The confusion is caused by the tactics which the Communist Third International, the only representative body of all the fighting communist parties of the world, has laid down. The tactics are framed by men, whose psychology has been moulded and influenced by the highly-advanced conditions of European capital and proletarian organisation. The Third International tactics presupposes an organised fighting proletariat. In India or in the East, except Japan, this element is absent to a great extent though not entirely. It is quite natural that this discrepancy should be

found in highly-thoughtful and practical policies of the International. But comrades here must act for themselves. The socialists in India have first to create an organised proletariat, through trade-union and other activities. Again here we must mention that our trade-unionism must not be of the type that is being born at present under bourgeois leadership. It must not be a mere negotiating instrument to write letters on behalf of the workers, which they themselves being illiterate cannot do. It must put an ideal before the workers, the ideal of socialist commonwealth. In the present stage of the Indian proletariat, secret propaganda is not at all wanted. We have to speak to the masses openly and to create an ideal and organisation for them. So long as the proletariat is not organised and is not in a fighting mood and so long as the foreign and native bourgeoisie is not actively obstructing this creation of an ideal, what need is there for secret activities? We think all the socialist elements of the country ought to come forth fearlessly, openly and frankly, go to the masses, preach them our ideals, and capture the political lead on the superiority of our strength.

We think this much is sufficient to our energies for the next year or two.

(*Socialist*, May-June 1923)

## 6. THE INVESTOR'S PRAYER

My father, *Capital*, who art on earth, Almighty God who changeth the course of rivers, tunnelleth mountains, separateth contiguous shores, and melteth into distant nations, Creator of Merchandise, and Source of Life, oh, Thou, who ruleth kings and subjects, labourers and employers, may Thy Kingdom be for evermore on earth. Give us plentiful purchasers to take our goods off our hands, without looking closely whether these be genuine or shoddy, pure or adulterated. Give us needy working people who will accept the hardest work and the lowest pay without grumbling. Send us gudgeons who may be allured by the tempting bait of our prospectuses, and ensnared in the

network of our fair promises. Cause our debtors to pay us their debts in full. Lead us not into the penitentiary, but deliver us from bankruptcy and grant us never ceasing dividends. Amen.

## 7. GOVERNMENT AND OURSELVES

### WE SOCIALISTS

### GOVT & CAPITALISTS

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| (1) We want trade unions.                          | (1) The government is introducing the Trade Unions Act. Ahmedabad capitalists recognise the Textile Union there.   |
| (2) We need an eight-hour day.                     | (2) The Washington Convention has recommended it. In Belgium, Germany and Australia eight-hour day is a law.   |
| (3) Recognition of the right to strike and picket. | (3) By the very fact of their existence, strikes are recognised. Picketing partially allowed.  |
| (4) Social ownership of land.                      | (4) Most economists admit that the government of India considers the state as the landlord. When land is required for public utility government acquires it for social good. |
| (5) Social housing.                                | (5) Government takes the responsibility for housing its own servants, i.e. government members. An extension of the same means housing by society of its members.             |

## WE SOCIALISTS

## GOVT &amp; CAPITALISTS

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| (6) Management and ownership of public utilities by the public.                                | (6) The municipal system is an example. Roads, street-lighting, water-supply, hygiene are all being cared for without private ownership of them. |
| (7) Food and clothing is the greatest public utility. So, its public management and ownership. | (7) This ought to be the logical sequence of No 6 but is not.  |
| (8) Education for all.   | (8) Compulsory free education is being introduced.   |

*(Socialist, May-June 1923)*

## 8. THE MASSACRE OF 26 COMMISSARS

When the masses of Russia applied the principle of self-determination to their own conditions and threw away the yoke of czarism, the capitalist democracies of the West attacked this new republic from all sides. One of these cowardly attacks was directed from the south. The country of Georgia was the fighting ground, because the Georgian menshevik government outwardly professing neutrality was directly assisting the British generals with ammunition and troops. In this holy war against "Russian barbarism", the following gallant act is attributed to the British generals. The defenders of justice may well look into it.

A new book by Vadim Chaikin, socialist-revolutionary and member of the constituent assembly, entitled: *A Contribution to the History of the Russian Revolution: The Execution of 26 Baku Commissars*, and published by Grzhin, Moscow. This book, consisting mostly of documents of which the more important ones are reproduced in facsimile, narrates the story of the murder of 26 Baku commissars by order of the British military authorities, without the least pretence of a public trial. The direct prac-

tical organiser of the massacre was the chief of the British military mission at Ashkhabad, Reginald Teague-Jones. General Thompson was cognisant of the whole case, and Teague-Jones, as the evidence shows, acted with the consent of the gallant general. After the consummation of the slaying of 26 unarmed men at an out-of-the-way station, whether they had been taken under the pretence of exiling them to India, General Thompson aided the escape of one of the leading perpetrators of the crime, the hired scoundrel Druzhkin. The appeals of Vadim Chaikin, by no means a bolshevik, but a socialist-revolutionary and a member of the constituent assembly, to the British General Malcolm and to the British General Milne were left unheeded. On the contrary, all these gentlemen demonstrated their solidarity in aiding and abetting the crime and the criminals and in the fabrication of false statements.

This book shows by documentary evidence that Gegechkory, the Georgian minister for the interior, at the insistence of Chaikin, promised to prevent the escape of the criminal scoundrel Druzhkin from Georgia. Yet, in collusion with the British General Thompson, he gave Druzhkin every facility to escape from trial and justice. While the committees of Russian and Georgian socialist-revolutionaries and of the Russian transcaucasian mensheviks, after an investigation of all the facts of the case, signed a declaration testifying to the criminal manner in which the British military authorities had acted, the committee of the Georgian mensheviks, although in common with the other committees arriving at the same conclusion, refused to sign the document for fear of displeasing the British authorities. The telegraph officer of the menshevik Georgian government refused to accept for transmission the telegrams of Vadim Chaikin which exposed the murderous activities of the British authorities. If nothing more were known about the Georgian mensheviks except what is established by indisputable and irrefutable documents in Chaikin's book, it would be quite sufficient to imprint for all time the brand of shame and dishonour upon these gentlemen, upon their "democracy", their protectors and apologists.

We do not entertain the least hope that after the direct, exact and irrefutable evidence furnished by Chaikin's book, either Mr Henderson, or Mr MacDonald, or Mr J. R. Clynes, Mr Jimmy

Sexton, or Mr William Adamson, Mr John Hodge, Mr Frank Rose, Mr C. W. Bowerman, Mr Robert Young, or Mr Benjamin Spoot—as Labour MPs—will deem it now their duty to investigate the case frankly and honestly and make these representatives of Great Britain, who in Transcaucasia were so gloriously defending democracy, civilisation, justice, religion and morality against bolshevik barbarism, answerable for their conduct.

(*Socialist*, May-June 1923)

## 9. MANIFESTO ON THE HINDU-MOSLEM UNITY AND SWARAJ

Hindu-Moslem unity has been justly regarded as the chief pillar on which the future swaraj of India is going to be built. Much enthusiasm was shown on the question and indeed good deal of work was done in this direction during the apparently triumphant march of the noncooperation movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and his lieutenants Ali brothers. Cooperation between Mahatma Gandhi as the leader on one hand and Ali brothers as his followers on the other was regarded as an emblem of unity. But this union was not very desirable to many people. Some revolutionary thinkers believed that the union was artificial. A number of Hindu politicians had the opinion that the Musalmans were exploiting the Mahatma's popularity to further their pan-Islamic plans which were always looked upon by the Hindus with suspicion, while the reactionaries in the Moslem camp held this submission of the Ali brothers as the leaders of Indian Moslems (to the authority of the Mahatma) contrary to Islamic laws. How can a believer follow the lead of an unbeliever? This was the question on the lips of many a maulvi. The apparent triumphal progress of the movement however obliged these maulvis and pundits to keep their tongues in control. But as soon as the popular movement subsided and the Mahatma and his lieutenants were shut up in jails, these reactionary elements came out in the open and by their mischievous propaganda created disturbances among two communities.

The scene of Jallianwala Bagh and other bloody struggles, the Punjab first of all became the scene of civil war between the Hindus and Musalmans. The troubles originated in this unhappy province spread to other provinces of India. Anybody who is in the least interested in the welfare of India must deplore the controversy fanatically carried on in the Indian press over the conversion of certain individuals from one religion to the other. With the solution of the Anglo-Turkish conflict the khilafat press was deprived of the attraction outside India and turned its attention to the home affairs. It declared a holy war as usual on the enemies of Islam. Swami Shradhanand and his sudhi movement were declared to be the enemies at home. Whereas formerly in its columns, Ghazi Mustapha Kemal Pasha had chief place as the protector of Islam, now another "Ghazi" Mehmud Sharnpal (a man whose profession is to go over from one religion to the other for his mean selfish end) appeared as the saviour of Islam in India. His task is to deliver venomous speeches against Hinduism and the Hindus. On the other hand, a part of the Hindu press also especially in the Punjab, formerly devoted to nationalist politics, and organs of the noncooperation movement, now became the militant defenders of Hinduism. This vernacular press reaches the masses of both the communities and pictures any insignificant incident in religious colour and creates great public excitement. This recrudescence of the old communal rivalry and religious antagonism has pushed the national struggle completely in the background.

The root cause of all these troubles occurring in the country after the immediate collapse of the movement is that religion was allowed to play the chief part in the movement. It may be comparatively easy to fire politically backward people with religious fanaticism; but it is impossible, even dangerous, to base a political movement on such unreliable ground. The recent occurrences amply prove this impossibility and dangerousness. If the hostility against the British imperialism is made a religious issue, the hostility thus aroused can at any moment turn into antagonism among the two great Indian communities as they do not profess the same religion. It is precisely what happened now. The propaganda on religious lines could perhaps be safely and successfully carried on if India were inhabited by people of the same

religion. India embodies in its vast dimensions people of different creed and race. It is under the yoke of the most advanced capitalist system which holds India not to please god in heaven, but to make huge profits by exploiting the labour of starving millions in India and other countries. The khilafat demands constituted one of the principal planks of the noncooperation platform. The khilafat movement however was essentially a political movement based on religious principles. The Ahl brothers and other Moslem leaders succeeded in convincing Mahatma that the khilafat problem was to Indian Moslems a question of life and death. Mahatma being himself a religious man assumed the championship of the khilafat movement, and a bargain was struck—Hindus to support the khilafat agitation and Moslems to take active part in swaraj movement and perhaps by and by give up cow-killing to spare the religious sentiments of their Hindu countrymen. This was the basis of the union. It was artificial in that it did not take into account operation of the material forces which alone could bring about a solid and durable national unity. It was built on the unreliable foundation of religious sentimentalism. The present debacle was a foregone conclusion of such an ill-started movement.

Now to improve the situation those causes which had so much grave dangers should be eliminated. In this connection the announcement of Mushir Hussain Kidwai, that the khilafat committees should be dissolved and their activities transferred to the field of Indian politics, is valuable. The proposal has not been accepted by other leaders of the khilafat movement. The suggestion of Mr Kidwai is useful in the way of improving the relations between the Hindus and Moslems. Action taken along the lines of the proposal will make for the growth of homogeneity of the Indian national movement. The just complaint of most of the Hindu patriots that the Musalmans do not take an active part in the Indian affairs would be removed and the religious character of the movement would be replaced by a predominating political character. The Hindu Mahasabha movement which is a reaction to separate Moslem political organisations, especially the khilafat conference—would ultimately die down. Besides there is no need of khilafat propaganda, now that the Turks themselves have made peace with the powers against whose attack khilafat was to be

defended. The mission of the khilafat agitation has been accomplished in so far as it has created some sort of political consciousness among the Musalman masses of India. Whatever service it may have done in the past, the religious movement if carried further with the same zeal is bound to create disastrous results in the political movement of India.

The Indian Moslems should take lesson from the decision of the grand national assembly of Angora which has declared the separating of the khilafat from the sultanate, i.e. separating of religion from politics. No protests from the ulemas of India will induce the progressive elements of the Turkish nation to change their decisions. Turkey has entered a new era of progress by separating religion from politics. The example of nationalist Turkey should help the Indian Moslems to decide in which direction their politics should go. Let them liberate themselves from the yoke of the British before they think of liberating other Musalmans of the world. This cannot be done until and unless they unite heart and soul with their countrymen, Hindu and other communities of India.

How to unite Hindus and Moslems? So far all the attempts for such a union have failed. So long as the political movement in India carried partially or wholly on religious ground the unity will not be realised. The liquidation of the khilafat conference will not solve the problem. National Congress as a political force is practically dead, and a sort of amalgamation with a dead body will not make much difference. Some radical changes are required to create Hindu-Moslem unity and to revive the struggle for the independence.

Have the Hindus and Moslem masses nothing in common in India? Are both of them not suffering equally under the ruthless exploitation of British imperialism? Are they not economically ruined by the British and Indian capitalists and landlords? The union can only be realised when they are told of their common grievances, so that they should be conscious of their common miserable plight. It may be difficult for bourgeois political philosophy to find a common ground to stand upon. The masses—the common workers and peasants—are however as a matter of fact already united by virtue of their common economic interests, only the consciousness of this union is interfered with by large doses

of conflicting religious dogmas administered by interested parties. Religious propaganda is an indigenous method of exploitation of the ignorant masses by the able doctors of divinity. This they have to do in order to preserve feudal rights of the upper classes, without whose support they cannot live and prosper.

The lower-middle-class intellectuals who sincerely desire the freedom of their country should free themselves from these religious and communal disputes which should be denounced as harmful to the national cause. They should at once begin to work among the masses for their economic betterment. Economically they belong to the class of dispossessed proletariat, the working masses—98 per cent of the population of India. They had to replace the religious propaganda and metaphysical abstractions by economic slogans to make the masses conscious and subsequently to lead them to the fight for national independence without which their own economic emancipation is impossible. When the cry of "land to the peasants and bread to the workers" is raised the masses whether Hindus or Moslems will rally to their standard.

The problem of national freedom cannot be solved unless a new programme is adopted and new tactics employed. The battle of national freedom is to be fought by the masses, so let it be fought for their interests. Let us take a lesson from the failure of the gigantic movement of noncooperation. The Indian masses were in a fighting mood because they believed that the coming swaraj would make an end to their misery and starvation. It is true that their enthusiasm to fight was not aroused by any economic programme but they instinctively looked forward for a better economic condition. This belief of theirs was strengthened when the slogan of "nonpayment of taxes" was brought forward. Let us not repeat the past mistakes. Let us have a more revolutionary outlook than hitherto possessed by our leaders. When in future we call for nonpayment of taxes, let us really mean it. The masses this time will be ready to fight more vigorously and more consciously. Let us not call a dead halt on such happening as at Chauri Chaura, for without such happenings we are not going to conquer the battle of swaraj. Our work is to agitate and organise the masses on an economic programme and finally to lead them to a general strike or you may call it civil disobedience. Let us

have no negotiation with the enemy on the eve of civil disobedience, let us carry the fight to the finish. The police and military recruited from poor peasants and workers, who have to sell themselves to the British in order to earn their livelihood, will ultimately be won to our side.

So let our programme be the economic emancipation of the masses, which must have the national freedom as its prerequisite.

One may think that this is a wrong method, as by doing so we will alienate the sympathies of the upper classes—our own capitalists, landlords and religious leaders. We have to choose between two things: (1) Continued economic slavery of the people to British imperialism which will eventually strike a bargain with the native landlords and capitalists. The perpetuation of this slavery requires kindling of religious animosity among the various communities by means of insidious propaganda: i.e. India must continue to be a helpless victim of religious civil war. (2) Political and economic freedom of our people, and a homogeneous Indian nationality free of religious civil war. Some people will say that all Indian landlords and capitalists are not aiding the British, on the contrary, they are participating in the national struggle. So far so good, let us launch the fight on an economic programme in the interest of the masses, and if these landlords and capitalists still fight against the British imperialists the sincerity of their patriotism will be proved. Why sacrifice the interests of 98 per cent in order to please the remaining 2 per cent and especially when we know that no national freedom can be obtained without uniting the masses on economic grounds. If these 2 per cent are honestly fighting for the masses, they will continue to fight even if we adopt more concrete programme and more militant tactics.

The country is in a state of confusion now. The Congress is split into factions engaged in bitter recriminations on petty questions. One is after council entry hoping thereby to obtain perhaps another instalment of precious reforms. The other is in a hopeless bewilderment, not knowing what to do.

Let them sit idle praying for the release of the Mahatma who would come and tell them what to do. The khilafat conference does not know where to go. Nationalist Turkey has compromised with imperialism. It can, therefore, no longer support or approve

of the agitation against England. So the bottom has been knocked off the khilafat agitation in India. How to impose the glory of the khilafat upon the Turks when they themselves have repudiated the very institution? They have solved the question in their own way, separating khalifa from any political powers. But the khalifa of the Indian khilafatists must be an emperor having Arabia and Palestine as his provinces. Those who are fascinated with this wild-goose chase can emigrate to Arabia, deprive King Husain of his throne supported by British guns and found an empire of the khilafat. But such an empire will not include Anatolia, Egypt, Persia and Afghanistan. Because although the Turks would gladly permit Khalifa Abdul Majid to act as emperor-caliph of the Arabian deserts, they would not like their homeland to be ruled by another emperor, and neither would the Egyptians, Persians and Afghans like that. But this is all impossible. The Indian Moslems have already tasted the good fruits of emigration, they are not going to repeat the experiment, they are to live and work in India. Let them try to live honourably and independently. They cannot live as conquerors in India as one of the maulanas had announced at the top of his voice. If they do not condemn such rash thinkers, neither the Moslems nor the Hindus nor any other community will live in India as free people, not to speak of living as conquerors. The third party—the British imperialists will live and prosper on the toil of millions of starving Indian people.

In order to clear off this confusion and to put a new life in the movement a party subordinating all religious and communal questions to the great politicoeconomic question should be organised. The programme of the party should be neither going to the golden age of vedas, nor saving the empire of the khalifa, but to free the Indian people from the political and economic serfdom. The party should speak to the Indian masses in terms of their daily needs—land, bread, housing, clothing etc. Its immediate goal would be to free India from the domination of England. The ultimate goal would be economic emancipation of the people, to create a society having no blood-suckers and wage-slaves—a classless society. Every day of postponement of such a party is to delay the freedom of India for years. Only with the

creation of this party can the problems of Hindu-Moslem unity and swaraj be solved.

Long live the united and free people of India!

1 October 1923.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA

(Vanguard, Vol 3, No 4, 1 October 1923)

## 10. "SPIRITUAL COMMUNISM"

### A CRITICISM

By M. N. Roy

It is a rumour that just before his death Lord Northcliffe had been suffering from an obsession about child-birth. He could not help talking of it in every article he wrote, be it on the "Japanese Menace" or Dutch imperialism in the Pacific or the reparation problem. Laws or freaks of nature determining the decrease or increase of birth-rate appeared to Lord Northcliffe to be the motive-force behind all the international complications of the twentieth century. This mania of the noble lord is said to have grown so ridiculously acute that he was declared to be in an unsteady state of mind, and his articles were subjected to strict censorship by his employees before publication.

What child-birth was to Northcliffe, "spiritualism" is to our political anchonte Aurobindo Ghose. The ailment in both the cases is called in the language of psychoanalysis, mental complex. Of course, the cult of spiritualism is no monopoly of Aurobindo. In India, apostles of this cult are as plentiful as its devotees. But Aurobindo represents the acme of the cult. So much so that he is not content with the quixotic programme of spiritualising politics, but would make sociopolitical progress of the Indian people conditional upon attaining "supramental" state. Poor Indian people! what a price you are called upon to pay for the leadership offered you unsolicited! Not only the limitations of flesh are to be transcended, but even one is required to go out of

mind! Aurobindo Ghose is out to "spiritualise" even the monstrous doctrine of communism. He enunciates his gospel thus: "Spiritual communism is a creative gospel. It aims at the evolution of a new human society founded upon 'spirituality'."

Had this complex of spiritualism been an individual idiosyncrasy, we could leave it alone. But it is not so. Attempt is made to make it the philosophical foundation of Indian nationalism, therefore this doctrine merits refutation. Nor can it be dismissed as a personal mania, because it grows out of the cultural background of the Indian society. The *Standard-Bearer*, an organ of Aurobindoism, prescribes for our national regeneration a spiritual awakening of the masses. The reactionary tendency implied in this doctrine is not understood by the average nationalist who, in the absence of a better programme, must have some illusion to hold on. It is necessary to expose the erroneousness of this pernicious theory.

The object of Sri Aurobindo and his disciples is very laudable. It is so when their sincerity is taken for granted; and we have no reason to question their sincerity. They want to build a new society free from the filth and dirt of the present system. A noble mission, indeed. The present social order is by no means ideal. Further progress of humanity demands a radical change in the existing order. The desire to liberate human society from "conflict of separative egoism" is to be appreciated. But this desire is very vague, and the means suggested for the realisation of this desire are vaguer still. Aurobindo and his followers propose to liberate humanity from the bonds of the present social order by saying a prayer, as it were. Unlike the present human society, that of his imagination "establishes itself on the firm foundation of harmony and unity of being". To imagine a perfectly faultless society, however, does not alter the present which has come into being through a long process of evolution, and as such, cannot be made nonexistent by simply shutting our eyes. A spiritual basis for a new social order is taken for granted. But where is that basis? How is the "foundation of harmony and unity of being" to be laid? Does it not still remain in the imagination of a visionary? Poetries can be written about the gloriousness of this new society which, however, remains unrealisable because

it starts from an abstract conception without any bearing on the realities of life.

"Spiritual communism starts with a new conception and experience of man—the realisation of the supramental and spiritual being." It is indeed a novel conception; but it is a false conception at the same time; this conception is wrong, because it does not take into consideration the realities concerning the evolution of man individually and collectively. If the human society were to start with such a conception, it would never start. But it did start and has gone a long way through hundreds of centuries of experience and progress. Of course, the apostle of spiritualism holds that the humanity is in such a sad plight, because it started with a wrong conception; and he suggests that introduce a new conception and everything will be cured as if by magic. But the question is how to introduce this new conception? Where is the beginning to be made? Furthermore, human society did not start with any conscious conception of its goal at all. It evolved out of a moving mass of matter. We know here lies the point of difference between the realists and the preachers of spiritualism. If we look into the origin of human society, not in the light of mythological doctrines nor through the coloured glasses of mysticism, but with the help of accumulated human knowledge, what is discovered is only a blind struggle for existence. This struggle for existence still continues to be the motive behind all human energy, the difference being that a large element of consciousness has been introduced into it in course of evolution. A radical readjustment of human relations, in other words, a revolutionary transformation of the present social order together with all the economic institutions, legal codes and ethical conceptions on which it is based, is required for further progress and also for the very existence of human society. If the present order is to be replaced by a new one, it is not for any spiritual end, nor for the attainment of a "supramental" state, but to open up the way for further progress of man individually and collectively in every walk of life. This inevitable social revolution will be brought about not by the introduction of a "new conception" which calls for the "realisation of the supramental and spiritual being" as the prerequisite, but under the pressure of material urges. While this is the human nature of the human society, the "spirit-

tual society" of Sri Aurobindo "accepts the present arrangements and order, but accepts only to take up and transform the imperfect system and remould it in the spirit and type of a living spiritual realisation of oneness and soul unity".

Frankly speaking, this is nothing but a meaningless jumble of words uttered by one lost in the labyrinth of his own fantastic imagination. You cannot transform the present order rooted deep on account of its solid material foundation by reciting some aphorism. Your flights into the regions of abstraction will not affect in any way the present order. The Hindu scriptures and philosophical codes are full of records of such flights. But that did not prevent the Indian society from being what it is today; *and in all essentials it is not much different from other human communities.* "It is a balance of different and antagonistic claims." Is it not idle to think that all these animosities and antagonisms inherent in the present order of society can be cured by any other means than to strike radically at the very root cause of all these essential characteristics of it? And the cause of these antagonisms is not ethical and cannot be removed by a breath of spiritual doctrine. Man in course of his development has built the present order of society, and he will build a new one on the ruins of the old as soon as the latter obstructs his further progress. Human history is a continuous process of evolution. You cannot build the future by completely repudiating the past. Both are linked up organically.

The spiritual communism of Aurobindo Ghose is a mixture of Hegelian idealism and Hindu mysticism. Consequently it is incapable of studying the process of human evolution from the right angle of vision. It takes its stand on the assumption of a spiritual existence behind phenomenal. Then it believes that the spiritual essence is all good and the phenomenal is all evil. For it, the human life is a struggle between these two antagonistic principles of good and evil. Or in other words, the human society is reduced to an ethical problem only glorified by a mystic conception of an abstract spiritual, supramental existence. Is it any wonder that those actuated by such philosophy will teach that the national regeneration of the Indian people is to be attained by meditation! And this is what Sri Aurobindo prescribes when

he declares "the soul-being" to be the central and intimate truth of man's life and existence.

Human progress, however, has not been actuated by any eternal, abstract idea, nor by the inspiration of a "soul-being". It has been done, is being done and will be done by material forces. The primitive man did not start his life for spiritual realisation, but for preserving his existence against the overwhelming forces of nature that surrounded him. The mission of man is not soul-realisation, but the conquest of the forces of nature. In the earlier days man was subordinated to the whims of natural forces. If he had taken these forces as the expression of some super-human existence, he would never have reached where he is today. Today he is almost the master of nature. In course of his struggle for existence in the beginning, and subsequently in his efforts to conquer the forces of nature, man was forced to develop into a social being. Community life necessitated ethical laws to determine human relations. The rest of the moral and spiritual concepts gradually evolved out of this background which is primarily and essentially material.

*(To be continued)*

*(Vanguard, Vol 4, No 1, 15 December 1923)*

## 8. On the Eve of the Cocanada Congress

### INTRODUCTION

The last document of the year 1923 was written on the eve of the Cocanada session of the Indian National Congress, which met in the last week of December.<sup>1</sup>

As predicted in this article the Cocanada session was "not an exciting affair". The official history of the Congress says, the session reaffirmed "the noncooperation resolutions adopted at Calcutta, Nagpur, Ahmedabad, Gaya and Delhi". Referring to the permission given to those who believed in the tactics of council entry to contest the general election, the main resolution said "that there has not been any change in the policy of the Congress, this congress reaffirms that the principle and policy of that boycott remain unaltered".<sup>2</sup> Though the elections were contested on behalf of the Swaraj Party, the members of this party continued to be members of the Congress as well. Hence there is apparent contradiction between the resolution and this practice. But the official history resolves the contradiction by stating that the Cocanada congress "made itself memorable too for the interpretation that noncooperation could be effected as much from inside the councils as from outside".<sup>3</sup>

1. *Vanguard*, Vol 3, No 8, 1 December 1923.

2. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the National Congress*, Vol 1, p 261.

3. *Ibid*, p. 262.

The session which was presided over by Mohammad Ali adopted several other decisions. It decided to circulate the draft "National Pact" and the "Bengal Pact" prepared by Deshbandu Das, which were designed to serve as a basis for Hindu-Muslim cooperation and unity in the struggle for swaraj. It decided "to stand by the Sikhs in their 'present' struggle and render all possible assistance, including assistance with men and money".<sup>4</sup> This refers to the Akali movement—which fought for the democratisation of the central administration of the gurdwaras and the removal of the grip over them of corrupt and loyalist mahants. It decided to support the formation of an all-India volunteer organisation, and sanctioned a scheme of Congress departments and a national service of paid workers to run them.<sup>5</sup>

The article makes a sharp criticism of both the swarajists and the no-changers and calls for revolutionary mass action.

## 1. THE COCANADA CONGRESS

The day of reckoning is near. In another month the general staff of the nationalist forces will meet to give an account of its past achievements and to indicate the lines of further advance. The Cocanada congress does not promise to be an exciting affair. It would be idle to expect much from it. In this gathering will not be felt the vigorous palpitation of a healthy national organism; only the memory of a glorious past will cast its melancholy shadow. A divided leadership will face a disillusioned and demoralised following. Bombastic speeches certainly there will be. Resolutions will also be passed. But there will be no life in them. All but the name of revolutionary noncooperation will have disappeared. The demoralised nationalist army will not receive the much-needed new direction. The Cocanada congress will meet in a great confusion and end in making the confusion worse confounded.

Why should such a pessimistic view of the situation be taken? Today we have in our midst practically all the great national heroes with the single exception of the Mahatma. The special session at Delhi has accomplished the great task of reestablishing the unity of the movement. No less a personality than Maulana Mohammad Ali will be in the chair. The wise statesmanship of the Lion of the Punjab will be available. Preparations for civil disobedience are being made under the direction of Dr Kitchlew. And in addition to all this, there will be the electoral success of the Swaraj Party to infuse new vigour into the movement.

It sounds reassuring, but it still remains to be seen if all these factors on the credit side can save the bankruptcy into which the noncooperation movement *voluntarily* went. Much was expected of Mohammad Ali. The rank and file of the Congress, which revolted against the revolt of radicalism, heroically held its own until the second in command of the noncooperation movement came out of jail, in order to rally the scattered forces for new action. The hope has been dashed to the ground. The idol

showed its clay feet in such a hurry that the admirers were staggered. Mohammad Ali has failed to give the leadership which was expected of him. His pronouncements since he came out of jail are full of mere platitudes and hopeless contradictions. No constructive programme, no positive suggestion as to the future of the movement is to be found in them. He authorises the removal of the ban on the councils, but holds up the edict of the ulemas on the question. He professes to be the standard-bearer of pure Gandhism, but sets his face positively against civil disobedience, without which the political programme of noncooperation becomes meaningless. He indulges in fearful threats against the government, but finds the demand for the separation from the British empire "childish and petulant". He deplores the Hindu-Moslem feuds, but still insists on khilafat propaganda, which contributed not a little to the success of the enemies of national freedom in creating communal dissensions, and incidentally to the organisation of the forces of Hindu reaction in the Hindu Sabha, which is sure to aggravate the communal issue. In political questions, he has absolutely no programme to suggest. He harps on the threadbare "constructive programme" which constructs naught but inaction. Such is the record with which Mohammad Ali goes to Cocanada to furnish the nationalist forces with a new direction.

During the last year and a half, the controversy over council entry has been the only activity of the Congress. When the Congress meets at Cocanada, this controversy will have been over. Some new theme must be found to keep up the show. Till now there is no indication as to what will be the new theme. The defeat of the Swaraj Party in the election will certainly give impetus to the cult of pure Gandhism. The "no-changers" can be expected to be very noisy. But the movement today demands something more than noise, created with the sole purpose of vindicating some pet theory or other. Most of the "no-change" leaders have forfeited the trust of their following by their attitude at Delhi. It will be sheer hypocrisy on their part to revert to the "constructive programme". In the Cocanada congress will be revealed the inability of both the factions to provide the required leadership. The fact that the "no-change" stalwarts surrendered to the swarajists signifies the defeat of their cult. The defeat of the swarajists in the election, on the other hand, takes the fire

out of the guns of the latter. This being the case, if one or the other prevailing tendency is to be looked upon as the way out of this impasse, Cocanada will prove to be a dull affair. The two tendencies, which fought over the narrow issue of council entry, have eliminated each other. Neither the one nor the other can supply what is needed. Whence is the new lead to come? The Cocanada congress will have to answer this question. It is not likely that it will be able to do so. Therefore a realist cannot be optimistic about it in spite of the galaxy of factors that can be arrayed on its credit side.

The talk of civil disobedience may be revived. Dr Kitchlew's activities indicate that. But the programme of civil disobedience has also become a dead horse, not because its former sponsors have set their face against it, but because even those who still stand by it ostensibly do not dare or do not want to proceed in the way that alone leads to its realisation. The programme of civil disobedience loses all potentiality if it is made conditional upon the fulfilment of the unrealisable "constructive programme". The necessity of "creating a suitable atmosphere" for the inauguration of civil disobedience is recognised by all. The "no-changers" claim that it can only be done by working the "constructive programme"; while those swarajists, who still profess to be noncooperators, hold that their programme, which hinges on securing a majority in the councils, is the only way. Now both have been proved impossible. The rapid disintegration of the noncooperation movement after Bardoli has demonstrated that the "constructive programme", far from developing the movement, cannot hold it together. The electoral experiences of the Swaraj Party on the other hand show that a revolutionary movement cannot be directed through constitutional channels. Civil disobedience, therefore, cannot be inaugurated if the movement is not freed from these two tendencies both of which have gone off the mark.

Civil disobedience, however, still remains the only feasible programme of action for our movement under the present circumstances. But the realisation, nay, the very adoption of this programme, demands a radical change in the socioeconomic outlook of the Congress. The real significance of the Delhi compromise is the commitment of the Congress to the programme of bourgeois nationalism. It was but the logical evolution of the anti-

revolutionary tendency of the noncooperation movement. The motive of the Delhi compromise, of the "betrayal" of Gandhism by its principal custodian, was latent in the social background of the Calcutta programme. Therefore to revert now to the theories of orthodox noncooperation will be only to describe a vicious circle. Moreover it is highly problematical if this reversion is possible. The way to civil disobedience will be open only in case the Congress can liberate itself from the bonds of bourgeois nationalism. It can hardly be expected that this revolution in the ideology of the Congress will take place at Cocanada, because during the last two years the "no-change" leaders have not shown any less dread and aversion to revolution than the out and out exponents of constitutionalism now constituting the power behind the Swaraj Party.

The nationalist movement stands in need of a revolutionary leadership. We cannot expect it at Cocanada, neither from one faction nor from the other. The revolutionary elements in the programme expounded by Mr Das before his defeat at Gaya have been lost in the anxiety to turn that defeat into a victory; whereas the revolutionary potentiality of the idea of noncooperation has been drowned in the wilderness of the reactionary social philosophy of the "no-changers". What is left, therefore, is impotent neoconstitutionalism on the one hand, and demagogy on the other. Such is the atmosphere in which the Cocanada congress meets. Naturally nothing positive can be expected. The forces of revolutionary nationalism still appear to be too scattered, too bewildered to assert themselves. But sooner or later they must assume the leadership of the Congress. The dull show at Cocanada should give an impetus to the revolutionary forces. They should take independent action and repudiate the nonrevolutionary and impotent leadership.

The only programme of revolutionary nationalism is militant mass action. The masses, who enthusiastically rallied under the banner of the Congress in the earlier stages of noncooperation, are demoralised today. Determined preliminary efforts are necessary to win back their confidence. Propaganda based on vague generalities will not suffice. The consciousness of the masses has to be awakened. Nationalism should be made a concrete issue to them. A clear and vigorous programme of action is needed for

this purpose. On the eve of the Cocanada congress, we remind the revolutionary nationalists of the programme we published before the Gaya congress. Many prejudices, many fond illusions, many suspicions prevented due consideration being given to the programme. Today those illusions are gone; prejudices and suspicions should have been cleared by this time. The bogey of bolshevism drove the patriots of property to the strongholds of constitutionalism. So much so that nationalists of all shades, from Bepin Chandra Pal to Mohammad Ali, would not countenance separation from the British empire. Why? Because "it would harm the cause of Indian swaraj". If this does not open the eyes of the revolutionary nationalists, then the future of the movement is indeed dark. Let the Cocanada congress go down in history as the turningpoint in Indian nationalism. Let a mighty call for revolutionary mass action rise out of the wilderness of reaction, indecision and impotence.

*(Aftermath of Noncooperation* by M. N. Roy,  
London, 1926, Chapter xxiv, pp. 132-36)

# 1924

## I. India Mourns the Death of Lenin

### INTRODUCTION

A fairly detailed documentation of the reflection in the contemporary Indian press and literature of the death of Lenin on 21 January 1924 has been recorded in books which were published in Delhi in the Lenin centenary year.<sup>1</sup>

By 1924 quite a number of books had appeared in the Indian languages and in English on the life of Lenin and on the Russian revolution.<sup>2</sup> The efforts of the British rulers to suppress the truth and paint a lurid picture of the "bolshevik menace" had only the opposite effect.

Even Gandhiji, who had a very prejudiced view of bolshevism and communism as something connected with violence, did not believe in the bolshevik menace. In the course of his talk with Lord Reading in May 1921, Gandhiji is reported to have said, "Today there is certainly no fear of a Russian invasion. I have never believed in the bolshevik menace and why should any Indian government, to use the favourite phrase of the erstwhile

1. See Volume One, p. 275, footnote.

2. Ibid for a list of the books. Several serialised biographies of Lenin had also appeared in Bengali journals: *Satsangi* (1921), *Sankha* (1921-22), *Atma Shakti* (1923) and several pamphlets (see *Lenin in Contemporary Indian Press*, p. 124). See also *Everest Among Men* by L. V. Mitrakhan, Delhi, 1969, for a brief outline of all these early books.

idol of Bengal, 'broadbased on a people's affection', fear Russian, bolshevik, or any menace." Bal Gangadhar Tilak's views on the subject were much clearer. A Scotland Yard intelligence report of 1919 says that while he was in London that year Tilak held that the Russian revolution of 1917 was a fact that would facilitate our struggle for independence.

The number of books on Lenin and the Russian revolution which appeared in various parts of India in the early twenties show that fairly correct information was available to the reader in the north (Punjab and UP), in the east (Bengal), in the west (Bombay—Maharashtra) and in the south (Madras). Considerable information was also available to the Urdu reader through *Inqilab* of Ghulam Hussain, which was a daily, then weekly and monthly in 1922 in Lahore, and through some pamphlets published by him and through the nationalist Urdu dailies like *Zamindar* (Lahore). Similarly in Bengal in the early twenties, the national-revolutionary (terrorist) movement which was re-emerging and spreading was on the one hand supporting C. R. Das and on the other being influenced by the ideas of the Russian revolution and Lenin both directly and through the publications and contacts of M. N. Roy. Thus a number of journals of this movement such as *Atma Shakti*, *Sankha*, *Dhunketu* and others, as well as their pamphlets became the vehicles of spreading revolutionary ideas.

It is not at all surprising therefore that the nationalist and progressive dailies of India should give a wide and good coverage on the life and work of Lenin, when the news of his death became known on 22 January. Two recent books give a fairly representative collection of the comments of the Indian nationalist press.<sup>3</sup> This documentation however is not made directly from the files of these papers and journals but from the confidential press summaries made for the home department and preserved in the national and state archives of India.

The editorials and articles about the death of Lenin, appearing in representative newspapers from all corners of India, show

3. *Lenin in Contemporary Indian Press*, pp 41-50, 130-31; *Lenin: His Image in India*, pp. 57, 77-80, 86-92, 100-10

that at the beginning of 1924 Indian nationalist press was strongly reacting to the British rulers' repressive actions calculated to suppress the truth about Soviet Russia and its thought. By the beginning of 1924, the imperialist blockade against bolshevism was breaking down and more books, pamphlets and magazine articles on bolshevism and Soviet Russia were becoming available to readers in different languages. The Peshawar Conspiracy Cases against those who dared to cross into the Soviet Union illegally and got political education there and the arrests in the Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy Case at the beginning of 1924 had failed to intimidate the patriotic journalists whose articles had won public sympathy for the accused and the jailed. It was getting known in the revolutionary circles in India that some of the old Indian national revolutionaries abroad were getting in touch with Soviet Russia. The new generation of national revolutionaries (terrorists), who had begun to reorganise themselves and spread their influence particularly in Bengal in the early twenties, was to some extent coming in contact with communist groups and with M. N. Roy and this, as we have seen, was reflected in their journals. All these events rendered the British cordon against the land of socialism and its revolutionary experience inoperative.

We are reproducing here obituary articles from the communist and labour press of India paying homage to Lenin. They are from the *Vanguard of Indian Independence* published by M. N. Roy from abroad, from the *Socialist* of S. A. Dange from Bombay and from the *Labour Kisan Gazette* of M. Singaravelu. All the three editors are counted among the pioneer founders of the Communist Party in India. These tributes do not stand alone, they form part of the chorus of mournful homages India paid on the passing away of the great leader of the working class and the toiling masses, the architect of the socialist revolution in Russia and of Soviet Russia. There were discordant notes and reservations in these articles, but India fighting for its independence was unanimous in recognising Lenin and the socialist revolution he led as great friendly factors for our own liberation struggle.

The *Labour Kisan Gazette*, the facsimile of which we have reproduced here, declared itself as "a fortnightly journal of Indian communism" and was started by M. Singaravelu towards the end



of December 1923. Under the heading "Welcome", the *Vanguard of Indian Independence*<sup>4</sup> hailed the birth of this journal thus.

"With very great joy we have received the first numbers of the *Labour Kisan Gazette*, a fortnightly journal of Indian communism, edited by M. Singaravelu. It is the English organ of the Labour and Peasants' Party of India, the vernacular organ being the *Labourer*.

"The creed of the journal is : 'It stands for the freedom of the workers, industrial and agricultural. It stands for the solidarity of the world workers. It stands for the freedom of India. It stands for world communism. It stands for the happiness and welfare of all the workers of all climes and all times.'

"It is a great mission. We accord our hearty welcome to new comrade-in-arms hoping that it will play an important role in the history of the Indian working-class struggle."

The *Labour Kisan Gazette* seems to have continued for 7 or 8 issues until a warrant was issued for the arrest of the editor in connection with the Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy Case. Though Singaravelu was not arrested at the time, because of his illness, and put up for trial in the case, the paper seemed to have stopped in March 1924 or thereabout. We have secured only one copy (No 4) of this journal from the papers of Singaravelu, and that too a badly damaged one. The last para of the article on the life and work of Lenin is not available as the page is torn there.

Among other items in this issue are the text of the speech Singaravelu delivered at the Gaya congress on the labour resolution and a comment on the "spiritual swaraj" of C. R. Das. This latter piece quotes from C. R. Das's programme two items, one, that "private property would be recognised and the growth of individual wealth would be permitted" and two, that representatives to be elected to the assemblies should be such "as have done some good work, should if rural be literate, and if urban should possess high educational qualifications, or should have retired from business". On this editor's comment is : "If this is spiritual swaraj the worker shall say goodbye to it."

There are two interesting items about the labour movement at

4. Vol 4, No 5, 15 February 1924.

the time. One is about labour unions proposing a panel of workers' delegates and technical advisers to be sent to the sixth session of the international labour conference in Geneva that year (1924). This was an imperialist-sponsored show, to which Indian workers' delegates could go only if the British colonial rulers approved of them. The editor has correctly commented on the Geneva show: "We are having these pageants of the world bourgeoisie for six years. Has labour benefited by it? What the organisation has done for the Ruhr workers and for the starving Bombay mill strikers should be enough for Indian labour to realise the importance of these costly burlesques of the bourgeoisie." Concluding he asked the Indian representatives "what they think of achieving in the coming conference?" It is well known that in the late twenties, when militant mass trade unions emerged, they always opposed the sending of workers' delegates to the Geneva ILO conference.

It is interesting to note that the employees' association of Calcutta proposed Joseph Baptista (Bombay) and Singaravelu (Madras) as delegates with Dr M. Manilal (Gaya), N. M. Joshi (Bombay), Tarapada Mukherjee (Calcutta), D. R. Thengdi (Nagpur) and S. C. Ghosh (Calcutta) as technical advisers. V. R. Kalappa, the vicepresident of BN Railway Indian Labour Union, proposed the name of V. V. Giri, the present president of the Indian union, as a delegate. The *Gazette* wrote: "Mr. V. V. Giri, Bar-at-Law, needs no introduction. All those connected with him, at least acquainted with the BNR Indian Labour Union, know him too well to require any mention about his service to the labour movement. He has rendered most valuable service to the wretched poor during recent retrenchment. As a matter of fact he has been known as the champion of khalasis ever since he got through his fight successfully against the scheme of removing khalasis from engines—thus depriving Indians from getting training as engine drivers, who in those days were mostly recruited from Europeans and Anglo-Indians."

The second item is a comment on the three sessions of the AITUC held so far, criticising its leadership which was in those days mostly from the comfortable class. The paper said: "future congresses of labour ought to be organised and conducted by the workers themselves... The programme of the Labour Kisan Party

offers to any selfless worker a clear working method for organising labour of all kinds, under one organisation so as to attain its maximum strength."

Representing the elementary stage of the workers' and peasants' movement as it did, the *Labour Kisan Gazette* was not only shortlived but comparatively a little known paper in India. But in Madras, the paper as well as its editor, M. Singaravelu, were known in patriotic and labour circles particularly because of the personality of the editor. Singaravelu was already known as a prominent Congress leader of Madras in the early twenties. He was a member of Tamilnadu Provincial Congress Committee, a member of the AICC and chief commandant of Madras city Congress volunteers. Apart from the *Labour Kisan Gazette*, he was editing a Tamil weekly and had published Tamil books and pamphlets. Active in the early days of the labour movement in Madras, he was president of the mill workers' labour relief committee. He came under the surveillance of the police as early as 1921. When he suspended his practice to join the noncooperation movement he wrote letters in the *Hindu* advocating communism. In an open letter to Mahatma Gandhi published in the *Hindu* on 24 May 1921 he wrote, "Only communism, that is to say, holding land and vital industries in common for the common use and benefit of all the workers of the country will bring a real measure of contentment and independence to our people." In the same letter, he notes as deeply disappointing the advice given by Mahatma Gandhi to the kisan in his *Young India* and asks, "Why should we not use nonviolent noncooperation against capitalist autocracy as well?" In his letter in the *Hindu* dated 15 February 1922, he warned the viceroy: "To suppress the legitimate aspirations of a thoughtful and brave people by means of repression, force or violence is to attempt the impossible and this has been the verdict of history of all time. in all climes and among all peoples."

In his "case history" as preserved in the confidential documents of the home department of the government of India we find the following :

"He receives copies of all seditious literature published abroad. His country house in [...] was searched for proscribed literature in August 1922 but none was found. Is he the head of

the district communist organisation in Madras, the central Indian office of which is in Bombay? He corresponds with the Berlin Revolutionary Party who directs all operations of the organisation and who consider him a capable organiser. (He) issued a signed pamphlet in which he describes himself as an Indian communist at the Indian National Congress, Gaya, entitled 'New Manifesto to Congressmen' based on M. N. Roy's programme for the Indian National Congress."<sup>5</sup>

There are some exaggerations and inaccuracies in this quotation. There was no "district communist organisation" in Madras nor was there a "central Indian" office in Bombay. As we have seen, there were communist groups in Madras, Bombay, Lahore, UP and Calcutta, the leading comrades of which were in correspondence with each other. Similarly there was no "Berlin Revolutionary Party" in 1922-24 directing "all operations" in India. M. N. Roy, who was then functioning from Berlin in collaboration with the Comintern, was issuing the *Vanguard* which was being sent to all centres, and also sending letters. Despite police vigilance and postal censorship some of these materials were reaching the communist groups and were reflected in their organs like *Socialist* (Bombay), *Inqilab* (Lahore), *Labour Kisan Gazette* (Madras), and journals like *Atma Shakti* in Calcutta.

To return to *Labour Kisan Gazette*, it was very much under close observation of the government and the proimperialist daily *Pioneer* from Allahabad wrote on 22 February 1924 a commentary "exposing" the particular issue of the paper from which we have quoted here. *The Pioneer* wrote :

"A recent issue of a bolshevik paper published in India contains some highly interesting indications of what the communists would like to bring about in this country. The principal article deals with the career of comrade Nicolai Lenin... The communist journal writes contemptuously of Mr C. R. Das's 'spiritual swaraj' which includes a declaration in favour of recognising private property, and of permitting the maintenance and growth of individual wealth."

5. This quotation and other facts about Singaravelu and his articles are from Home-Pol. F 261 KW, 1924.

The comment also draws attention to the text of Singaravelu's speech at the Gaya congress from which the following is quoted. "Beware you rich men, beware you big men, remember all our sorrows and all our toils. While labour has given you all the good things of the world, you have kept them in the background. . . Remember that Indian labour has awakened. They are wide awake and are coming steadily and surely to their rights to save the world."

The purpose of this tendentious comment by *Pioneer*, which was all along supporting the launching of conspiracy cases against communists, is clear; within a month warrants for arrests for the Kanpur Conspiracy Case were issued, one of which was for M. Singaravelu.

## I. THE LOSS OF LENIN TO THE WORLD REVOLUTION

The death of Lenin on 21 January 1924 is the greatest loss that the cause of international communism and the social revolution could have sustained. For if Marx was the exponent of the theory of scientific socialism, Lenin was its most able strategist and tactician; he was the first to put these theories to practical test, and in the successful Russian revolution of November 1917, to point the way to the international proletariat how to convert the imperialist war into a civil war between the working class and the capitalists of each country. During the six years' struggle to maintain the Soviet power, it was Lenin, the supreme head of the Russian Communist Party, as well as the beloved chief and acknowledged leader of the revolutionary Russian masses, who guided the destinies of the first workers' and peasants' republic safely through the storms of revolution and counterrevolution, of civil war, invasion, blockade, famine and economic rehabilitation, into the safe harbour of peace, reconstruction and recognition by the capitalist world of Russia's right to exist as a socialist state.

By the very joy of the bourgeois governments at the news of Lenin's sudden end can be measured the loss to the revolutionary working-class movement in every land, for Lenin was recognised by his enemies, the international bourgeoisie, as their most implacable and dangerous adversary; as the man who had done more than any other person to bring about the overthrow of capitalism as a world force, and put in its place that new social order which he made known to all the world as communism. Lenin, the head of the Russian Communist Party, which in turn was the leader of the Russian social revolution and motive-force behind the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics which has taken the place in modern history of the old, corrupt autocracy of the czar—this Lenin was the herald of a new social order and a new historical epoch for struggling humanity; for the workers and peasants of every land who rightly regarded him as their leader

in the world struggle against exploitation and tyranny, in the fight for the social, economic and political emancipation of oppressed peoples and classes. Lenin had become the figurehead, the symbol and beacon-light of revolution, wherever resistance to despotism, whether of one people over another or of one class over another, raised its head. So long as Lenin lived, so long the motor-force of world revolution throbbed steadily, guided and controlled by the strong hand and the keen brain of the master-craftsman of successful revolt. In the period of black reaction that has descended upon the peoples of Europe, following upon the epoch of chaos and confusion that immediately followed the close of the imperialist war, one rock upheld the citadel of freedom of the peoples—the rock of Soviet Russia, with Lenin as the supreme defender of the beleaguered citadel.

The defender lives no more. Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov Lenin, the commander-in-chief of the forces of the social revolution, has died at his post, in the very prime of life, when under happier circumstances he might have lived another score or more of years to render unending service to the cause he loved. Born on 10 [22] April 1870, in the Russian town of Simbirsk, he began at the age of eighteen to participate in the revolutionary movement of Russia, and out of the fifty-three years of his life, thirty-five were devoted to the service, first of the Russian revolution, later of the international proletarian revolution, which he faithfully worked for, bringing the Russian movement within the orbit of the greater world movement which the social-democratic parties ostensibly followed before the war.

In 1887, the Czar Alexander III caused the execution of Lenin's elder brother, Alexander Ilyich, one of the founders of the "Party of the People's Will", who was hanged together with others for being implicated in a revolutionary plot to overthrow the autocracy. Thenceforward, the young Lenin took up his brother's work, allying himself at first with the famous populist revolutionaries, who engaged in acts of terrorism against the oppressors of the people. Being excluded by a government ordinance as the brother of an executed terrorist from entering the universities of Petersburg or Moscow the young Lenin entered the University of Kazan as a law student, but was expelled at the end of a month for taking part in the student revolutionary societies. He completed his

studies at home and successfully passed the examinations admitting him to the bar four years later. But Lenin did not practice his profession more than a few months. His whole career, from his student days onwards, was devoted to the study of and means of forwarding the revolution, which he very soon came to regard from the standpoint of a scientific socialist. While at Kazan, he first learned something of Marxism, but it was not until he went to live in Petrograd that he was able to gather about him a circle of socialist thinkers, who very soon flung down the challenge to the old revolutionary parties, the populists, whom all revolutionists of that day followed, later the economists who were the predecessors of the social-democratic mensheviks, the "legal Marxists" and the social-revolutionaries. The young Lenin defied them all. He was an ardent student of Plekhanov, the "Father of Russian Socialism", and Lenin did more than anyone else to spread the teachings of Marx and Plekhanov throughout Russia. It was Lenin who organised the first working-class organisation in Petrograd, the "Union of the Struggle for the Emancipation of Labour"; it was Lenin who as head of this organisation conducted the first working-class strikes, and who wrote a series of pamphlets formulating the economic demands of the Petrograd workers. From the very outset of his career, he became the object of police surveillance, of the persecution of the czarist autocracy, and the opposition, often active hostility of the older revolutionary organisations, which regarded his activities at first with disdain, and later with alarm. These early years in Petrograd were passed, in active organisation of the working class, in building up a Marxist group of workers and intellectuals, in the conduct of strikes and the publication of leaflets, articles and a series of brilliant polemics against the leading intellectual thinkers of the day. Towards the end of the 90s, Lenin was exiled to Siberia after a long confinement in prison. It was in exile that he wrote some of his most valuable scientific and literary works, one of them being *Problems of the Russian Social-Democracy*, a treatise on the role of the socialist movement in an economically backward country like Russia, where two movements existed, one the political struggle against the czarist autocracy, and the other the economic struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie. Another book written in exile was *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, which analysed the

economic structure of the country and showed by means of convincing statistics its entry upon the capitalist stage of development, thus disproving the theories of those intellectual schools who declared that Russia would prove an exception to the other countries of the west, and develop on lines peculiar to herself.

Lenin was twice abroad, where he identified himself with and later became the head of the Marxist school of revolutionary exiles, then led by Plekhanov, Axelrod, and Zasulich, the founders of Russian social-democracy. The first period was from 1901-1905 during which time he was the chief editor of the famous Marxist paper *Iskra* (Spark), which together with the theoretical journal *Zarya* (Dawn) became the backbone of the propaganda and organisation activities of the Russian school of Marxist revolutionaries. These papers published from Switzerland, where the band of exiles lived, were smuggled into Russia by dint of endless ingenious devices, and served as the organs of the working-class party which was built up around them, until the foundation of the legal party organ *Pravda* (Truth) in Petrograd in 1912. The wife of Lenin, Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya, who is identified with his life and labours in all their manifold aspects, was the secretary of *Iskra* and of the organisation committee of the party, which by 1903 held its third congress. It was at this famous congress that Lenin and his followers, the "bolsheviks" or majority social-democrats, split away from the "mensheviks" or minority faction, headed by such notables in the theoretical and revolutionary world as Plekhanov, Martov, Axelrod, Zasulich and Deutsch—a split brought about by a fundamental difference in creed made clear in the years of the Russian revolutions of 1905 and of 1917. *One Step Forward and Two Steps Back* was Lenin's characterisation of the mensheviks and, without further ado, he founded the bolshevik organ *Vperyod* (Forward), the *Iskra* having passed into the hands of the mensheviks, together with most of the other machinery of the old united party, including the central committee, the council and the funds. But Lenin was undismayed, and proceeded to the work of reorganisation to such effect that by the year 1905, it was the bolsheviks who took the leading part in the revolution of that year, and who proved themselves to have obtained the undisputed hold upon the working class.

Lenin returned to Russia for the events of 1905, and was the first to realise and to preach the importance and true significance of the revolution as the first working-class revolt against czarism and capitalism. He made a careful study of all its details, and derived from it the lesson of the role of the soviets in the revolution which he applied so successfully in 1917. In the course of the black reaction that followed its defeat, and which drove all active revolutionaries once more into exile, Lenin remained calm and confident of the value of the experience derived from this unsuccessful attempt to seize power, which he always characterised as a "great" revolution. From 1907 to 1910, the darkest period in the history of the Russian revolutionary movement, he spent his time abroad in prodigious work, studying, writing, reorganising his followers and finding means to build up the scattered machinery of party-life that the czar's machine-guns had blown into bits. This period of his life was passed first in Geneva, later in Paris. Though poor, exiled, hunted down by the czarist agents and persecuted, Lenin and his followers managed to find means to publish two illegal papers, the *Proletary* and the *Sotsial-Demokrat*. These held the flag high while all around stagnation, defeat, hopelessness and repression reigned. He heartened his comrades by saying: "Don't be disheartened, this darkness will pass; the muddy wave will ebb away, a few years will pass and we shall be borne on the crest of the wave, and the proletarian revolution will be born again." So did the leader prove his greatness in the face of adversity, and besides the reorganisation of the party, he was able to complete a serious work on Marxian philosophy, which ranks among the greatest of his writings and of contribution to Marxian thought. So passed the years till 1911-12, when a new movement among the workers began to manifest itself, and the revolutionary movement was reborn.

Lenin went from Paris to Galicia, and later moved to Cracow whence he was able to keep a close hold on all the events in Petrograd and to personally conduct the party activities. There was in Petrograd a legal paper *Zvezda* (Star), and *Pravda* as well as a monthly organ called *Mysl* (Thought) at Moscow. There was a small group of labour members in the Duma, who received instructions from Lenin and the Russian bolsheviks. The party quickly gathered great strength and assumed control of the revolu-

tionary working-class movement of the great cities. From the first outbreak of the imperialist war of 1914-18, Lenin's constant idea was to convert it into a civil war by means of proletarian revolutions in all the belligerent countries. Arrested and expelled from Poland, he and a small group went once more to Switzerland, where they were forced to stay until the first revolution of March 1917 permitted their return to Russia. Events since 1917 are too recent to need recapitulating, save to remark that the overwhelming success of the Russian revolution of 7 November 1917 and its maintenance for six years in the face of the most stupendous opposition which a revolutionary state ever had to encounter, is due in large part to the great brain, the unfaltering leadership and beloved personality of Nicolai Lenin. He it was who knew how to draw the peasants together with the proletariat into the mass movement that swept away the rotten structure of the old Russian empire; he it was who set his wits against the machinations of foreign powers to overthrow the Soviet power; he it was who conceived of the solution at every great crisis in the new national life. The force of personality should not be overemphasised by a Marxist, who believes that movements call forth great men, and not great men the movements. Lenin was essentially a product of the Russian movement; but he reacted upon that movement at every stage as only a truly great leader can, never exceeding the limits of reality, always relying upon the strength and power of the revolutionary masses to overcome every obstacle. It was the boundless confidence and tender love which the vast millions of Russian peasantry and proletariat felt for their "beloved Ilyich" which was the final secret of the power he wielded. Lenin was great in his understanding of the needs of his people, and of the exploited peoples everywhere. He will go down in history as the leader, not alone of Russia, but of the world proletarian revolution.

SANTI DEVI

(*Vanguard*, Vol 4, No 5, 15 February 1924)

## 2. COMRADE NIKOLAI LENIN

## IN MEMORIAM

Lenin, the great, has passed away and joined the choir invisible. The world, the worker's world, is today poorer by the passing away of its great teacher and redeemer. Today the vested interests which are taking shelter under ignorance and greed are silent over the great loss which the humble workers of the world have suffered by the death of their great protagonist. It is the worker—the true salt of the earth—that mourns or ought to mourn for him who showed him the path of deliverance from bondage, privation and misery. Teachers and prophets, statesmen and scientists, philosophers and metaphysicians equally great and equally learned have appeared from time to time, and tried to redeem the worker's humanity from its age-long suffering and serfdom, but it was reserved to Nikolai Lenin to apply the only true and correct method of removing the great ills of life which the great capitalist interests of the world have brought upon the once happy human race.

It was his great master Karl Marx who found the great truth of historical materialism trodden underfoot, reviled and ridiculed by the powerful and the ignorant among mankind, but he lived long enough to see the great worker's philosophy understood by the thoughtful and accepted as the method of ridding poverty and misery from this mundane existence. It was for the first time in the history of the world demonstrated with scientific precision and accuracy that most of the misery with which the majority of the world have become affected were due to the selfish aggrandisement of few among the powerful over the toiling many. And he taught further that it was only by rendering the few powerless to continue the evil that the suffering workers will have to get rid of their misery, and attain to the life of knowledge, labour and ease, which today is the monopoly of a very few among mortals. Today Nikolai Lenin stands unrivalled among the sons of men who have tried to alleviate human sufferings and it is now left to the workers to follow his method. While all others were pursuing vague speculations as to the cause of misery and its cessation, and preached charity—dana as the ultima thule of

social justice, Nikolai Lenin found the true hethu or cause of world's sorrows lies in the exploitation of the many by the few and he succeeded in rendering this social wrong impossible in his own country. The Russian worker today can be deemed to be the happiest among the workers of the world and this is due mainly to the indefatigable worker for whose death we, his comrades, are mourning.

The great revolution in political thought and philosophy which Nikolai Lenin wrought in his own country may be destroyed, may even be swept away by the selfish nature of a few among men, but it will revive again and again and ultimately encompass the world, and finally render the life of the worker tolerable and pleasant throughout the world. To him who has done so much and who has given the worker a clear vision of his glorious realm in which every human being shall have the right to labour and to live like all his fellows, we lift up our hands in love, devotion and reverence.

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*(Labour Kisan Gazette, Vol 1, No 4, 31 January 1924)*

### 3. LENIN IS DEAD

The Russian revolution was an accomplished fact in 1917. For four years the capitalist press of the world was overthrowing the bolsheviks and killing Lenin. He could not be killed and they have never succeeded in killing him. Lenin is dead. We are afraid, this time, the wires have flashed a sad truth.

The world of the downtrodden and oppressed wanted him to live, to live for a hundred years, if that could be done. The world of the oppressors wanted him to die, the next minute that he was a Lenin. He heard neither.

Had he a right to die? A man, who claims the right to live in society, must also show that his death is justified. Society that suffers him to live expects from his life time some service in the interest of society. And a man who dies without doing that ser-

vice is a runaway thief. He has stolen social-sufferance and has given back nothing.

Lenin was introduced to the Indians by Reuter and the capitalist press as a monster who revelled in massacres. The present writer tried, with what scanty information he could collect, at that time (April 1921) to present a faithful picture of the Russian revolution, of Marxism and the man, who was fighting for Marxism in Russia. The book *Gandhi vs Lenin* was meant to apprise Indians of the inherent fallacies of pacifism and the certain failure of pacifist methods in accomplishing a revolution in capitalist economy and political structure. But at that time pacifism was at its height of power in India. In 1921, we quoted the hero of pacifism thus, "We shall continue patiently to educate them (the masses) politically till we are ready for safe action... As soon as we feel reasonably confident of nonviolence continuing among them in spite of provoking executions, we shall certainly call upon the sepoy to lay down his arms and the peasantry to suspend payment of taxes. We are hoping that the time may never have to be reached. But we will not flinch when the moment has come and the need has arisen."

The time came and went. And ultrapacifism looked on and waited. When one of the greatest personalities in the world was thus experimenting with fallacies, Lenin with an unerring eye grasped the key of the Russian revolution. He straightaway appealed to the army and the peasantry. With a wave of hand he broke away from the cowardly middle class, the mensheviks, and made common cause with the proletariat. In 1921 we predicted that Indian menshevism would fail at the time of action and only labour could save India from reaction. The heroes of pacifism were too proud to approach the proletariat on its own grounds

Why did pacifism in India fail and why did Lenin succeed? The reason is Indian pacifism could not read the working of the social forces. Everything for them emanated from the subjective ego of man. They wanted to change the human being first and social conditions afterwards. Lenin believed the other way. Trotsky puts it thus: "The utopian and humanitarian-psychological viewpoint is, that the new man must first be formed, and that he will then create the new conditions. We cannot believe

this. We know that man is a product of social conditions. But we know too that between human beings and conditions there exists a complicated and actively working mutual relationship. Man himself is an instrument of this historical development, and not the least. And in this complicated historical reflex action of the conditions experienced by active human beings, we do not create the abstractly harmonious and perfect citizen of the commune, but we form the concrete human beings of our epoch, we have still to fight for the creation of the conditions out of which the harmonious citizen of the commune may emerge."

The Indian pacifist mensheviks did not accept that man is a production of social conditions also. They accepted only one part of the proposition and built upon it. The natural end was failure.

Lenin and his followers possessed that single virtue that alone brings success in social upheavals. That single virtue was lacking in the class and the men that led the Indian movement. The highest spirit of revolution was absent in the class that led India from 1918 to 1923. And what is the spirit of revolution?

"What are the main characteristics of the revolutionist? It must be emphasised that we have no right to separate the revolutionist from the class basis upon which he has evolved, and without which he is nothing. The revolutionist of our epoch, who can only be associated with the working class, possesses his special psychological characteristics of intellect and will. If it is necessary and possible the revolutionist shatters the historical obstructions, resorting to force for the purpose. If this is not possible, then he makes a detour, undermines and crushes, patiently and determinedly. He is a revolutionist because he does not fear to shatter obstacles and relentlessly to employ force; at the same time he knows its historical value. It is his constant endeavour to maintain his destructive and creative work at their highest pitch of activity, i.e., to obtain from the given historical conditions the maximum which they are capable of yielding for the forward movement of the revolutionary class.

"The revolutionist knows only external obstacles to his activity, no internal ones. That is: he has to develop within himself the capacity of estimating the arena of his activity in all its concreteness, with its positive and negative aspects, and to strike a correct political balance. But if he is internally hampered by sub-

jective hindrances to action, if he is lacking in understanding or will power, if he is paralysed by internal discord, be they religious, national or craft prejudices, then he is at best only half a revolutionist. There are too many obstacles in the objective conditions already, and the revolutionist cannot allow himself the luxury of multiplying the objective hindrances and frictions by subjective ones. Therefore the education of the revolutionist must, above all, consist in his emancipation from that residue of ignorance and superstition, which is frequently found in a very sensitive consciousness."

The greatest man of the world is dead. He left writing a book on revolution, to work out a revolution, and he did it successfully. He was the only man who had a right to die.

(*Socialist*, 31 January 1924)

## 2. Political Situation after Cocanada

### INTRODUCTION

The articles by M. N. Roy and S. A. Dange written in the first quarter of 1924 and published in the *Inprecor* issued from abroad and in the *Socialist* from Bombay deal with the political situation soon after Cocanada session of the Indian National Congress. The noncooperation movement was losing tempo and dying of inanition. Thousands were in jail. A campaign was run demanding the release of Mahatma Gandhi in the form of a Gandhi fortnight. The question was also raised in the central assembly. The British government forestalled the agitation and released Gandhiji on 5 February. In England, the labour government had come to power on 22 January 1924 and made statement on India that were no different from those of the previous tory government. This had disappointed the nationalists in India. On 3 March 1924 the Turkish national assembly abolished the khilafat as an institution thus knocking the bottom out of the khilafat movement in India. By the end of 1923 the Akali movement had reached a state when the militant jathas seeking to liberate the gurdwaras by peaceful satyagraha were being beaten up and fired upon by the British government and Gandhiji who was then still in jail was advising them not to send any more jathas.

These are the events which were the subject-matter of comment and analysis in the Indian communist press. In the first

document, an article by M. N. Roy "The New Trend of Indian Nationalism", it is pointed out that the Swaraj Party in the recent election to the assemblies sought a united front with the Liberal Party which had never taken any direct part in the nationalist movement. The conclusion is drawn that both the nationalist parties—the "no-changer" party of Gandhiji and Swaraj Party "having shifted into purely bourgeois grounds, the lower middle class and the masses are left out in the cold". The revolutionary elements among them "have returned to terrorism, which time and again has proven itself futile". "Given a well-oriented political leadership, they are sure to give a better account of themselves."

Among the leftwing congressmen, as seen in the deliberations of the UP provincial conference, the idea of "complete independence" and "alliance with workers and peasants" are being popularised. Within the ranks of the nationalist movement the demarcation between the "constitutional and compromising trend on the one hand and the revolutionary and uncompromising on the other is increasing".

The next document is the comment on the new labour government by the Socialist of S. A. Dange. Dange takes as his text for comment MacDonald's message that he rejects revolutionary movements and stands for progress "...well rooted in constitutional ways", he does not want to "break contact with the past". Dange points out how MacDonald is carrying forward the tory past by rejecting the capital levy and by continuing the diehard policy on India. The point is clinched by the anecdote that MacDonald signed the draft-statement which the tory Curzon had left behind and handed out to the press correspondent as his own! Roy in an article, written more than two weeks later, gives more information and more penetrating analysis. Roy points out that the so-called socialist government of MacDonald has thrown overboard two planks of the labour platform namely "capital levy and nationalisation of mines" as well as two other principles: "disarmament and self-determination". He filled the key posts in his labour government with the agents of the bourgeoisie and even the post of the "Indian Office" was not given to a labour member but to a diehard. Even the mild support given to the Indian national demands by two labour members, Col Wedg-

wood and Ben Spoor who visited India in 1920-21 and attended the Nagpur session of the Congress and the foundation congress of the AITUC in Bombay, was not acceptable to MacDonald. Roy quotes the same notorious message of MacDonald about India which Dange quoted in which he says . "No party in Great Britain will be cowed by threats of force or by policies designed to bring government to a standstill." This is an obvious reference to the noncooperation movement and shows that Labour Party is not a whit behind the Tories in suppressing the same. Roy concludes : "Instead of giving any indication that, true to his profession of self-determination and democracy, he would in any way modify the present unquestionably irresponsible and autocratic government of India, Mr MacDonald pledges the Labour Party to the task of suppressing any attempt of the Indian people to free themselves in a way not liked by MacDonald and his taskmasters the British bourgeoisie... This attitude of the labour government has indirectly helped the cause of Indian freedom while it damned the labour aristocracy and the so-called socialism of the ILP."

The next document is an article by S. A. Dange "What Ill Have I Done". It was a comment on Mahatma Gandhi's advice to the leaders of the Akali movement to suspend the sending of mass shahidi jathas to the gurdwaras in enforcement of the demands of the movement. The central demand of the Akali movement was that the gurdwaras, the Sikh places of worship, should not be administered by mahants—who were self-appointed, corrupt and pro-British, but by a committee elected on the basis of adult suffrage by the congregation of Sikhs covered by the particular gurdwara. The agitation began with the Darbar Sahib key agitation at the end of 1921 and it became successful in January 1922. This was then followed by the Guru-ka-Bagh morcha and the Jaito morcha. Jathas of satyagrahis gathered before the gurdwara—but 2 or 4 satyagrahis attempted to force their way into the gurdwara and got arrested. The British police tried to disperse the jathas by lathi-charge and the satyagrahis suffered the blows without retaliation. The Guru-ka-Bagh morcha was in September 1922, the Jaito morcha in September 1923. There were other minor demands such as removal of restrictions on akhand path. The maharaja of Nabha who sympathised with the Akali agitation

was forced to abdicate by the British government, though the restoration of the maharaja to the gadi was not one of the direct demands of the Akali movement. But the main demand was the handing over the administration of the gurdwaras including the Central Darbar Sahib to the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) and to similar committees for the respective gurdwaras.

The movement reached a climax when at the beginning of 1924 the SGPC and Akali Dal leadership decided to send shahidi jatha of 500 satyagrahis at a time. On 21 February 1924 the first batch arrived at Jaito and was mercilessly fired upon resulting in 300 casualties including 100 killed.<sup>1</sup> Soon after this Gandhiji sent a letter to the Akali leadership, which appeared in the press as well. In this letter Gandhiji asks the Akali leaders "not to send any more jathas without further deliberation and consultation with those leaders outside the Sikh community". He also expressed his doubt as to whether "the march of a large number of men... was or was not justified!"<sup>2</sup> It appears Gandhiji would have liked to advise the recall of the jatha even before it had reached its destination; but he said: "I cannot undertake the responsibility, lying on a sick-bed, of advising the recall." Gandhiji had then been released but was in hospital recouping from an operation. He added, "I fear that the jatha must be allowed to proceed to its destination." "This plan", he said, "is conceived in a most lofty and daring spirit. The bravery of those who conceived it and still greater bravery of those who are expected to carry it out in its entirety cannot be questioned and if the Nabha authorities are so foolish as to fire upon the jatha till every one lies dead at his post, it will certainly stagger humanity, thrill the world and command universal applause for matchless heroism..." But that action according to Gandhiji would not be "civil disobedience"; it "is rowdy and therefore violent". After the jatha was fired upon, Gandhiji advised the suspension of jathas. He wrote: "My recent letter was merely an advice to suspend and not necessarily

1. *Some Confidential Papers of the Akali Movement*—introduction by Ganda Singh, p. xvi.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49. For full text of Mahatma Gandhi's letter dated 25 February 1924 see *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 23, pp. 210-12

to stop altogether the sending of the then impending shahidi jathas till after deliberation with a committee of non-Sikh friends and full introspection and searching of the heart.”<sup>3</sup>

The SGPC and Akali Dal leadership rejected Gandhiji's advice. In a long letter dated 20 April 1924 the SGPC wrote that the first jatha was fired upon. This was followed by second, third and fourth jathas, these were ordered to be arrested and got themselves arrested. Thus the SGPC assured the Mahatma that this was not violence and had to be resorted to under special circumstances.

Dange's comment is in tune with the militant Sikhs fighting for democratic rights against imperialism. This comment, sarcastically critical of Gandhiji's advice to the Akali movement to stop if not altogether give up their militant jathas, speaks for itself. The Akali movement, though it fought for religious demands, had a democratic content, it was supported by the nationalist movement and drew into its orbit the militant struggle of Sikh masses. That is why Mahatma's advice to stop the jathas pleased the imperialist rulers and they wanted the National Congress also to follow the advice of the Mahatma.

The article "The Abolition of the Khilafat" by M. N. Roy written soon after the institution of the spiritual head of the Muslims of the world was abolished by the Turkish national revolution throws interesting light on the anomalous character of the khilafat movement in India. Like the Akali movement which developed later, this movement also grew round a religious demand, and developed in alliance with the national movement in the context of the noncooperation struggle drawing in the broad Muslim masses into the orbit of the national-democratic struggle for swaraj. But its basic demand, viz "restore the khilafat in Turkey", was not a progressive and democratic demand, viewed in the context of the development of the Turkish national-democratic revolution.

The Turkish national revolution was a revolutionary popular struggle against the allies and particularly against British imperialism. Taking advantage of the fact that Turkey as a member of

3. *Ibid.*, p. 58. For full text of the letter dated 9 March 1924 and interview to *Associated Press* see *Collected Works*, op. cit, pp 229-35

the defeated alliance of central powers was a vanquished country, the British proceeded to partition it and enslave its people in order to grab its rich resources. After the armistice was signed at Mudros on 30 October 1918, the allies demobilised the Turkish army, occupied the entire region under the Turkish state and broke its links with the central powers. By November and December 1918, the allies occupied the strait of Dardanelles, and stationed their warships in Istanbul. The British took over the Mosul oil area and the control of Anatolia and the Baghdad railway area. The French, Italians and Greeks occupied its various parts.

This complete submission of the Turkish government to the diktat of the allies led to a strong broadbased national mass movement which began with the outbreak of peasant partisan warfare against the imperialist intruders in January 1919. Mustafa Kemal Pasha (1881-1938), leader of the first bourgeois-democratic revolution of 1908 in Turkey and a general in the first world war, took the initiative to start the national movement in May 1919 and place it on a sound organisational footing at the congress of Sivas which convened a national assembly in Constantinople in January 1920. This assembly having the backing of the entire people adopted a national covenant demanding complete independence.

This did not suit the British imperialists and their troops occupied Constantinople, forcibly dissolved the national assembly and arrested its leaders. The national movement reconvened the great national assembly in Ankara where it met on 23 April 1920 and proclaimed itself the sole representative of the Turkish people. It elected Mustafa Kemal Pasha as its president and a government of the great national assembly was formed. Soon after Kemal wrote to Lenin asking for negotiations to open diplomatic relations between the two countries. The negotiations took place later leading to a treaty of fraternal assistance which became a great factor in securing Turkey its independence.

Meanwhile the British got the decrepit government of the sultan (who was also the khalifa) which existed in Istanbul to sign the peace treaty of Sevres in August 1920. By this treaty Turkey was reduced to Anatolia and Istanbul. The straits, the armed forces and the finances were taken by the imperialist powers under their control. The great national assembly rejected the treaty and on 2 January 1921 adopted a constitution taking over all legis-

lative and executive functions and leaving the sultan as a mere titular head.

But the implementation of these demands required a popular armed struggle against the imperialists and their Turkish agents. To ensure its victory, Kemal proceeded to secure the alliance with the Soviet Union which had recognised Turkey's independence. A treaty of fraternal assistance was signed between the two countries, which ensured support to the Turkish national-liberation struggle in the form of loans, as well as arms for the liberation army. The treaty also solved the outstanding border questions between the two countries. This was on 16 March 1921. In the next two years the British provoked a war between Turkey and Greece and continued intrigues round the sultanate to weaken the Kemal regime.

But the national resistance, backed by the entire people, could not be broken. It grew in strength. On 1 November 1922 the national assembly took the decision to end the sultanate. On 24 July 1923 the allies in the peace treaty of Lausanne were forced to recognise the sovereignty of Turkey. The straits were demilitarised and freed for commercial transport. Turkish territory was restored. The Mosul question, i.e. of the oil-bearing Arab region, was left undecided. On 29 October 1923 Turkey was proclaimed a republic with Kemal Pasha as its president.

On 3 March 1924 the khilafat as an institution was abolished. This was necessary not only to eliminate a possible base of imperialist intrigues but also as a base of social reaction hindering the introduction of a secular bourgeois-democratic social civil law. This was followed on 20 April by a revision of the constitution and the introduction of further reforms. International calendar and modern civil law were introduced. This was followed on 3 November 1928 by the introduction of the Latin alphabet for the Turkish language and by the separation of the church and the state.

With this historical background of the Turkish revolution the formulations and the facts given in M. N. Roy's article should be clear to the reader. Roy pointedly refers to the lament of London Times over "the abolition of an institution so closely interwoven with the bygone greatness of Turkey". European imperialism of

course did not like Turkey plunging into a revolution which enabled it to foil their intrigues to keep it under perpetual domination. After the sultanate was abolished the question arose what to do with the khilafat; is it to be vested in the national assembly and in the president of the republic? But the Ankara government abolished the institution itself and cut the gordian knot. Would not the abolition of the khilafat alienate other Muslim countries whose support Turkey needed in its struggle against imperialism? Ismet Pasha has given the answer; "If Constantinople is today in our hands, it is because we have fought to death the Greeks and the khalif. If other Muslims have shown sympathy for us, this was not because we had the khalif, but because we have been strong."

Indian people, particularly Muslims in the early twenties, wrongly thought that the Turkish national movement was defending the khilafat against British imperialist intrigues to enslave Turkey. Actually that movement was fighting for the independence of Turkey and for the extension and consolidation of its bourgeois-democratic revolution. In this struggle the khilafat and the khalif were against it and with the imperialists. Roy points out how after the abolition of the sultanate, the British were intriguing to put up as a new khalif some one like King Hussein of Hejaz, outside Turkey. Reactionary elements in Egypt were also eager to have the khalif in their country. All these were imperialist intrigues to isolate the Turkish revolution from the rest of the Muslim world. That is why the Turkish leaders took the offensive and abolished the institution itself. Roy aptly sums up the significance of this epoch-making event by quoting the official organ of the Turkish national movement *Ileri*—"Goodbye, Orient". This meant Turkey had finally launched on the road of modernisation, of the separation of church and state, of secular democracy.

## 1. THE NEW TREND OF INDIAN NATIONALISM

M. N. Roy

The outstanding feature of the Indian nationalist movement during the last half year has been a swing to the right. The programme of militant mass action, inseparably involved in the non-cooperation campaign, has been definitely replaced by constitutionalism. Every tendency of a revolutionary nature has been repudiated. The leadership of the National Congress has passed over into the hands of the upper middle class, whose programme is not to boycott the government but to make the way clear for negotiations which will eventually lead to a compromise with imperialism. The object of the Congress, under the new leadership of the Swaraj Party, has been declared frankly to be the realisation of dominion status within the empire. The pseudoparliamentary institutions known as the reform councils, heretofore boycotted by the noncooperators, have been proclaimed by the new leadership to be most potential field for nationalist activities.

Last year, when the Congress was still controlled by the followers of Gandhi, the right wing under the leadership of C. R. Das, brought forward the demand for the repudiation of the council boycott. In the Gaya congress of December 1922, this resolution was defeated. The right wing, which refused to abide by the Congress decision, constituted itself into a new party within the Congress, known as the Swaraj Party, and began the agitation for the removal of the ban upon the councils. The new party was composed of the upper-middle-class elements within the Congress, and therefore counted among its ranks some of the ablest and cleverest politicians in the national movement. The orthodox Gandhists, on the other hand, had nothing concrete to offer which could give new impetus to the movement. They could only repeat the wornout formulas which had been found miserably impotent in the field of practical politics. By roundly repudiating the militant action of the masses, the Gandhists had for-

feited the confidence of the latter. The once-powerful noncooperation movement had become nothing but a dramatic show.

After half a year of bitter recrimination, it was decided to call a special session of the National Congress at Delhi. This met in the middle of September, and gave its verdict in favour of the Swaraj Party. The ban on the councils was raised, and the congressmen were allowed to contest the coming general election. The special congress at Delhi marked a turningpoint in the entire movement. The petty bourgeoisie, which did not find its own interests reflected in the new programme, could not agree with the new leaders, neither could it develop a programme of its own which might command a hearing in the Congress. Had the petty bourgeoisie been bold enough to revive the original noncooperation programme in the full consciousness of its revolutionary significance, they might have recaptured the leadership of the Congress. That is to say, they could have held their own only if they had had courage enough to fall back upon the masses, in order to fight the right wing. But this is too much to expect from the petty bourgeoisie. It however remains a fact that this element, dissatisfied with the Delhi decision, provides a fertile field for the propaganda of revolutionary nationalism.

The two months following upon the Delhi congress were marked by the election campaign to the new reform councils, this campaign being the only sign of nationalist activity. In view of the fact that the six million people constituting the Indian electorate, out of a population of three hundred and twenty million, belong to the propertied upper classes, rich intellectuals and peasant-proprietors closely related to the landlords, those seeking election could not but commit themselves unequivocally to the defence of the interests of these elements. Therefore the election campaign has brought out clearly the true nature of the Swaraj Party, which today controls the leadership of the National Congress. Cleared of all the froth and foam of sentimentality with which Mr C. R. Das originally clothed it, the programme of the Swaraj Party (and therefore of the Congress) has for its main planks: (1) dominion status, (2) parliamentary opposition, with a view to force the government to negotiate with the representatives of the nation, (3) protection of private property and development of native capitalism, (4) defence of the landed aristocracy.

cracy, (5) protection of the native states, (6) decentralised government.

Though the Swaraj Party has failed, in the recent election, to secure anything like a majority, a number of its candidates have gotten seats at the expense of prominent moderate and loyalist leaders. The men at the head of the swarajists could not have had any illusions about the results of the election, they knew quite well that they could not obtain a majority by themselves. Therefore already before the election campaign was fully begun, they sought coalition with the left wing of the Liberal Party, the former leader of the National Congress and representatives of the big bourgeoisie and progressive landlords. Although such a coalition has not been formally accomplished the parliamentary fraction of the Swaraj Party will be strongly diluted by out and out bourgeois members, who have been given the stamp of the party during the election, in spite of the fact that most of these men never took any direct part in the nationalist movement.

This shifting of the nationalist movement into purely bourgeois grounds leaves the lower middle class and the masses out in the cold. But unrest is still acute among these elements, and the cause of this unrest cannot be removed short of a complete revolution. With the shattering of all its illusions, one after another, the petty bourgeoisie is in a pitiable condition, but there is a large, unruly element within its ranks, the element which was the first vehicle of revolutionary expression in the first years of this century. These are the declassed intellectuals, with absolutely nothing to lose but their prejudices. The collapse of the noncooperation movement and the reversion of the Congress to the old methods of constitutionalism have thrown these revolutionary elements back on their own resources which however are not very great. They have returned to terrorism, which time and again has proven itself futile. But the idealism and determination of this element are undeniable. Given a well-oriented political leadership, they are sure to give a better account of themselves.

Along with its contemporary, the noncooperation campaign, the khilafat movement has also died of inanition. The dangerously reactionary tendencies embedded in this movement gradually paralysed its superficial political efficacy and, since last year, led up to the religious and communal conflicts that have of late

assumed such serious proportions in India as to put the nationalist leaders totally at their wits' end. Particularly in the northern provinces, where the Moslem population predominates, communal conflicts have become a veritable civil war, which is backed by the reactionary elements of both communities, and deftly encouraged by the government. This logical development of the extreme fanaticism aroused by the khilafat movement led to the organisation of the All-India Hindu Sabha in which all the reactionary tendencies of the Hindu community are crystallised. The avowed object of this Hindu organisation is the defence of its own community. Many prominent Congress leaders take active part in supporting this reactionary Hindu movement, a fact which has given a handle to the Moslem clergy, landlords and loyalist officials in their attempt to show up to the Moslem masses the "irreconcilable" hostility of the Hindus. A spirit of fanaticism, fomented by intense agitation for the defence of religion and social traditions, such as the khilafat movement called forth, can be easily diverted to any direction from which the attack upon religion is alleged to emanate. The khilafat movement has thus degenerated into a revival of the acute rivalry between the two great Indian communities. The result, so far as the nationalist movement is concerned, has been disastrous.

The leaders of both communities stand dismayed at the turn of events, which anyone with an ounce of foresight might have foreseen. Being unable to find a solution, they evade the issue, while the bitter communal conflict eats into the very vitals of the nationalist movement. The only solution of the present impasse lies in the total abolition of separate communal organisations, such as the khilafat and Hindu Sabha, and placing the agitation among the masses more on a nationalist than on an extranationalist or communal basis—more upon the economic struggle than upon religious fanaticism. It is only by pointing out the identity of their class interests, as distinguished from sectional or communal ones, that a real and permanent unity can be realised by the Indian masses.

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United Provinces this year, defining the Congress objective as being "complete independence from all foreign rule", was adopted by a large majority. A study of the nationalist press makes it clear that the ideology of the Indian movement is undergoing great changes towards the left, no less than towards the right. While until recently, the programme of the National Congress was characterised by vague generalities about "swaraj", today there is no political party in the country, worthy of the name, whose programme does not contain clauses concerning the social and economic welfare of the masses. In every province, large masses of the petty bourgeoisie are looking for a new leadership. The slogan "ally with the workers and peasants" is rapidly gaining ground. A prominent congressman, in moving the resolution on labour organisation in the provincial conference just referred to, came out openly and denounced the National Congress as the organ of the bourgeoisie, and called upon the revolutionary nationalists to throw in their lot with the masses. An ever larger body of opinion in the country holds to the idea that mere political freedom, without a complete social and economic revolution, will be a meaningless and futile phenomenon.

Thus the struggle against imperialism is ever widening and the element of class conflict is being ever more clearly revealed and developed within the framework of the Indian body politic, as the political ideology becomes clarified and the nationalist movement divides itself into two streams, one, "constitutional" and compromising; the other, by dint of economic pressure, ever more revolutionary and uncompromising in its struggle against a two-fold enemy, foreign and Indian capitalism, which tend to unite in the end. Upon the future development of this struggle, and its ultimate outcome, hangs the fate of the three hundred millions of the Indian proletariat and peasantry:

*(Inprecor, Vol 4, No 3,  
17 January 1924)*

## 2. MACDONALD WANTS CONTACT WITH THE PAST

Like an old man who has been guiding the destinies of a nation, like a man who has lived his life successfully and left behind him a brood of youngsters inexperienced and impetuous, the new premier of England talked to the correspondent of the *Hindu*. The talk is christened as a "message" and the style well deserves the name.

"I watch sometimes with no little anxiety the progress of affairs in India. During all my political life I have anchored myself firmly upon the conviction that if the progress is to be well rooted it can only be carried on by political or constitutional ways. We have seen in our own generation all sorts of revolutionary movements, which seemed to be successful and which have broken contact with the past, but (in the end), after much physical suffering and creation of evil tempers and vicious spirit, had to return to pick up the contacts that had been broken and apply the very principles they had rejected."

Mr MacDonalD here has enunciated some propositions, which it will be worthwhile to look into. It seems, according to him, (1) political or constitutional ways can never be called revolutionary; (2) that almost all revolutionary movements have broken contact with the past and have failed; (3) that no political or constitutional movement should break with the past and reject principles upon which the past has been built.

It is very surprising to find the scholar of socialism forget the real meaning of revolution and its full contents. Mr MacDonalD cannot separate revolution from physical suffering, vicious spirit and evil tempers. Neither can he conceive that a revolution can create a superior state from the continuity of the past. After stepping in to the seat of premiership, MacDonalD has given a go-by to his scholarship. Has he forgotten that to the socialist, society is the working of the thesis and the antithesis. Society is a working of positive and its contradiction. Modern society as a manifestation of the forces of capital is the thesis and its contradiction, the proletariat. The development of the contradiction leads to a revolution of a superior kind. But the revolution that comes out of the contradiction annihilates both the thesis and the antithesis and the creation is a synthesis. The synthetical

whole includes in its working the harmonious principles of the thesis as well as the antithesis. It will not be a synthesis, if it will not include them. It cannot then be socialist revolution. The development of the proletariat leads to a breakup with the old system. The development of the proletariat, the antithesis, begins and ends when capital, historically the first to be born, before the proletariat was created, has exhausted its vitality and ceased to contribute new culture to the development of mankind. Then the proletariat comes into power. But when it does so it annihilates itself as a class and also annihilates capital. A new condition has to arise, wherein the annihilation of both is complete and substituted by a synthetic society, without any classes.

The fundamentals of a socialist revolution do not admit of a break with the past; on the contrary it rests on full seizure of the culture of the past, its assimilation and continuity in the company of a newly-created superior culture. The premier has exhibited a lack of memory and faithfulness to his principles, when he reads into "revolution" the perverted sense of degenerate intellectuals and brick-bats.

The premier's new enunciation now thoroughly explains his policy. He does not want "to break contact". He cannot admit of doing away with the House of Lords, for it will be a break with the past. He cannot think of capital levy, for it will be a break with the past and a serious break. Moreover a capital levy means generating evil spirits and vicious tempers and especially in the ranks of those big millionaires, on whose sufferance Mr MacDonald hopes to rule. Mr MacDonald with his socialism was himself a break with the past. Such a person was never found to be a premier in the past. Mr MacDonald after a visit to the gallery of Windsor Palace has perhaps realised this. And so has begun to thoroughly reform himself, his principles and reestablish a contact with the past and rule with the very principles that he had rejected, when he was not in office.

"I see no hope if India becomes an arena of struggle between constitutionalism and revolution. No party in Britain will be cowed down by threats of force or of politics designed to bring government to a standstill; and if any Indian sections are under the delusion that it is not so, events will sadly disappoint them."

There was a funny incident in Downing Street. The cabinet of

MacDonald had met but the premier had not come. At that time Lord Curzon by chance peeped in and finding the premier's chair vacant occupied it. When the *Hindu's* correspondent asked for a message, Lord Curzon wrote it and left it on the table. Mr MacDonald came and signed it and offered it to the bewildered correspondent.

"Er... It is Lord Curzon's... Mr Mac...", quoth the correspondent.

"Tut, tut. It does not matter. It is only a change of name and what is in a name? The spirits are the same. Does not your Vedant say so? Go, boy, and tell your people, Lord Curzon is my under-secretary and Lord Chelmsford, my first lord of the admiralty. No break with the past! Good Evening."

Will our readers accept the story?

(*Socialist*, 6 February 1924)

### 3. "WHAT ILL HAVE I DONE"

When a cry for the release of Mahatma Gandhi arose from every quarter, we examined the elements, which were raising the cry and asked a query "Release the?" We could not conceive of the true character of the power that would be set free from the Yerwada Jail. We could not fathom, whether the power locked up in the human form of the Mahatma would be progressive or reactionary. We were waiting for the revelation.

The Mahatma lay ill in the bed and knew nothing about the outside world. He had heard about the events passing in Upper India and he could only conceive of them in his imagination.

Popular agitation got his release. He comes out and lays his hands on certain papers and individuals, reads and talks, trying to understand the world opened to him.

In Upper India, the Akalis were seething with discontent. With military discipline and order they were fighting their case. Once they had scored a victory. That victory had irritated government who declared the Shiromani Committee unlawful. Yet the members of the committee were not daunted. They were hundred

per cent up in rebellion and the war. The wrath of the government swept away the ruler of the Nabha state from his gadi. The gadi was a support to the Akali struggle. The prince had violated the code of behaviour of the feudal princely slave. He had tried to sing Vahi Guru with the rebellious Akalis. The imperialism of Britain would not tolerate the princely slave to pray for and smile at rebels against imperialism. The gunpowder government bore away the prince on the muzzle of its gun to a safe place and proceeded to deal with the "rabble".

It was a serious blow to the Akali movement. But the Akali's was not a Congress movement. It was a movement of jathas, of organisation and discipline. The jathas did not waver. The seal of the Nabha prison was to be broken. The Akalis must establish their right of paying homage at the shrine of Gangasar.

The jathas moved. Without ultimatums, negotiations and time-limits the religious squadrons began to march. The expected was the result. Frantic, confused militarism shot them down. What else could a frightened government do?

The lathi did not take the Akali. He was too strong for it. The notifications were nothing to him. He had closed his ears to them. The Akali had remained nonviolent throughout the whole movement. He had stood the test of physical suffering. He had not raised his finger, neither had he uttered a word of anger or pain. The next step to this was to get himself shot, to lay down his life for his ideal. The Akali had started for it. The government was getting nervous. The polishing of guns was the sign of it.

The Akali would not turn back. If a hundred were shot, five hundred were coming forth. Fresh from the field of war, the powder had lost its horrors for them.

Of a sudden, comes the letter from a corner in the hospital at Poona: "Stop sending jathas." Who sends it? The Mahatma. We pause to think with a gaping mouth. Why? What on earth is the reason? Is there any violation of nonviolence? Is there an outbreak of Chauri Chaura, a nature's warning? No, nothing of the kind. Then?

"Without full facts before me I am unable to say, whether the morcha of a large number of men in order to pay devotion to the shrine of Gangasar at Jaito was or was not justified. But I would ask the Akali Sikhs not to send any more jathas without further

deliberation with those leaders outside the Sikh community, who have hitherto been giving them advice."

Say, do our readers, now, know the reasons of the Mahatma's order? They are very convincing and powerful. He has not before him the full facts. Still he would persist in advising. He is just out of his sick-bed. He has met a few men and has seen nothing of the political field. But still he would give the command to stop the war.

Stop it for what? To leave Gangasar and pay homage at the shrine of the Poona hospital? The men would have welcomed the change. For him, they would have done it. But fact is not that. They must stop to have consultation with men outside their community, men, who have from time to time said, shaking their heads with a leader's vanity, "Yes, do this. Arrange the expedition and even if government sends the military, do not budge an inch. Goodbye, I have to catch the next train for the working committee's meeting. You can wire there about development, whether the new movement is safe or your heads are cut off.

"Consult and deliberate [with] men, who are not on the scene but who must advise you, have advised you till now. If they are not to be found nearby for advice, wait and watch the developments of the tragedy. Let the blood that has been shed dry out. See how it evaporates. See how the sheared veins shoot up the red blood and splash and redden your comrade's shirt. Watch the developments of the tragedy, till I treat you to a sermon on all implications of nonviolence.

"I know, you fighting Akalis, that the battle is raging fiercely. Government has threatened to shoot you down. I know everyone of you is wanted on the field of Nabha. Persistent action alone can bend the militarism of government. I know you have once succeeded. I am not unaware of the fact that you have remained nonviolent throughout. But hear me, oh, Akalis. Halt in the battle and hear my 25 years experience of nonviolence and what it has taught me. Cease the battle. Never mind if a command like that to halt in the full swing of a ride overthrows you and demoralises your spirits for a time. Did I not do it once at Bardoli? But I am convinced of this halting process. While you fight you must stop and see if you are perspiring. Cleanse yourself first. Wipe off the dirt. Be always conscious that you must halt and

cleans. Meanwhile, it does not matter, if the enemy cuts you off outright. Oh, Akalis, a word of caution is more necessary in your case because you have never flagged. You have been always true, and therefore, you must take advice and consult how to be true of people who are not of your community. Bad people, who have flagged, require no teaching. But you, who are fighting, must be stopped and told over again to be true."

We had prayed, we had hoped that a new light would come to us from the jail. We had hoped to see a mighty surge. But we have met with reaction. Consult, halt, cleanse! Reaction, rank reaction!

To add to this there appears Lalaji. That man fretted and foamed a few days back against the reactionary direction of NCO. The moment he comes under the eyes of the Master, he signs ditto. All his rationalism vanishes and is replaced by hero-slavery, a meek submission that says, "ditto".

The Akalis have been carrying on their movement quietly and without holding congress sessions and have long resolutions, quarrels and compromises. They never asked for any advice. Some unknown, frightened, chicken-hearted soul, who had never seen so much bloodshed and so many dead men except power of action in a critical moment amounted [?] to a call for "help", "help" sends a wire to the Mahatma and the Great Dictator commands, "Stop, consult, hear my twentyfive years experience, cleanse yourselves, because you have always been clean and then—then, I will see."

What more can we say? Worshippers will sign ditto. Reaction will sign ditto. Idlers will sign ditto. Superstitionists, ditto. We cannot. The enemies are glad. The best of the Anglo-Indian papers are now advising the NCO to follow the advice of the Mahatma. We are reminded of what the Mahatma had once quoted: "What ill have I done that this bad man speaks well of me?" The bad men are speaking well of Mahatma. Is not his act ill? Let the god judge.

*(Socialist, 27 February 1924)*

## 4. THE ABOLITION OF THE KHILAFAT

By M. N. Roy

The news of the abolition of the khilafat by the Turkish national assembly has burst upon the world as a bombshell. Ample space has been devoted to this topic in the bourgeois press of Europe. Although the opinion as to the wisdom and result of this momentous step is not unanimous, its gravity is commonly recognised. Countries like Great Britain and France, with large stakes in Turkey are naturally very much concerned with the possible outcome of this event. The *Times* for example laments over "the abolition of an institution so closely interwoven with the bygone greatness of Turkey". It forgets that a nation may not always remain content with the memory of bygone greatness, and a glorious past may not be a guarantee against a brighter future. The *Tempo*, on the other hand, cannot very well disapprove of the measure without turning traitor to the traditions of France which, it claims, have inspired the Turks in this historic action of theirs. But it rebukes the French government by pointing out that when Turkey is following the footprints of France, "French moral influence and material interests are on the decline in the Near East". Every imperialist country is weighing the event in the scale of its own interest. All are visibly disturbed, because it looks as if the days when they all considered Turkey as legitimate prey are over. Nationalist Turkey has plunged herself into a revolution which will transform her so as to make European imperialism, which never gave up the hope of keeping her under perpetual domination, very uncomfortable.

It need not be said that the resolution of the Turkish national assembly is a great revolutionary step. It becomes more so in view of the fact that it is so precipitate. Besides it is extremely radical. The boldness of the step becomes evident when it is remembered that the position of Turkey has been morally fortified by the fact that 240 millions of Moslems in the surrounding countries owed her allegiance as the custodian of the holy see. She has been looked upon as the leader of the Moslem world because of this fact. Her latest struggle for national liberation was interpreted by the Moslems in other lands as the struggle for the

defence of the faith. Turkey was supposed to be defending the khilafat. So it can be easily imagined what a tremendous shock the news that the Turks have abolished the khilafat will be to the Moslem world. Not only the present khalif who was divested of temporal power only a few months ago is deposed, but the time-honoured institution itself is abolished. It is going farther than any other people has gone before. Neither the papacy of the Roman church, nor the patriarchate of the Greek church was ever abolished by any bourgeois revolution. They were only deprived of all influence over the state. Turkey passed through this stage of revolution only a few months ago, when the khalif was divested of the sultanate, whose authority was invested in the people represented in the national assembly. Consequently the theomonarchist state was replaced by a republic. Even this proved to be rather too drastic a measure for a considerable section of the orthodox, both inside and outside Turkey. Troubles began to brew on all sides and the revolutionary "Tribunal of Independence" was created to cope with the situation. The tribunal wielded its powers drastically, though the guillotine did not appear as yet.

At least superficially the Moslem world reconciled itself to republican Turkey. The khilafat was still in existence, and the national assembly declared its determination to defend its integrity. So Turkey still continued to be the defender of Islam. Some complications arose about the personality of the khalif; suggestions were made that a delegation from other Moslem lands should be invited to decide the question of the election of future khalifs. But the Turks would not countenance any such suggestion. It was declared authoritatively that no intervention in the matter would be tolerated. Then two alternatives loomed up: *the khilafat to be vested either in the national assembly or in the president of the republic...* But the possibility of the abolition of the institution itself was hardly conceived of outside the circle which is guiding the destinies of Turkey. Then all on a sudden the Angora government came out with the momentous decision, which not only surprised the western countries, but is sure to have incalculable effects upon the Moslem world. At first it looks as if the Turkish government has acted rashly—as if its action has been ill-advised. Will

not the repudiation of the khilafat alienate the moral sympathy of the Moslem world from Turkey?

But looked at closely, a different picture is revealed. The Angora government has not acted thus by choice. The situation was forced upon it. It had to take a bold stand or run the risk of being swallowed up by the *intrigues of reaction* which was rearing its pretentious head all around—not only in Turkey, but in the surrounding Moslem lands also. If the abolition of the khilafat threatens to create difficulties for Turkey, its retention was no less dangerous, if not more so. Firstly, a large body of Moslems still adhere to theocratic principles, and as such were hostile to the separation of the state from the church. Inside Turkey, these reactionary elements could be suppressed; but the adjoining Moslem countries provided a fertile field for the growth of a movement against republican Turkey. The reactionary elements of the Moslem world were fast crystallising into a dangerous form, under the patronage of British imperialism. The movement for the creation of a new khilafat with one of the British proteges at its head was becoming ripe. From some quarters even the cry was raised that the Turks have usurped the khilafat. So the Turkish nationalists saw that if their struggle against imperialism would be based upon the slogan of the khilafat, they must eventually accept the supremacy of the counterrevolutionary court-clique and the reactionary clergy, behind whom stood the foreign powers. A crystallisation of the reactionary opinion abroad would strengthen the enemies of revolution at home, and the victories of the last five years would be forfeited. It would be a stupid policy to subordinate one's actions to opinion which cannot be controlled. It would be more advisable to take up the challenge of reaction, both national and international, and face the Moslem world with an accomplished fact. So far the Moslem opinion behind nationalist Turkey has been of an ambiguous character. It was not always dependable. For example an army of moral force, which included such divergent elements as the Indian Ali brothers, on the one hand, and the pillars of British imperialism, the Aga Khan and Ameer Ali, on the other, is hardly dependable. The nationalist leaders of Turkey have never counted much upon this extraterritorial army. Now they propose to put this army to an acid test of revolution. In addition to its

great significance at home, the action of the Angora assembly will clarify the entire anti-British movement in other Moslem countries, particularly of the Indian Moslems. It will split the entire Moslem world into two parts. The sheep will be separated from the goats.

Turkey today sends a new message to the Moslems of other countries. Her message is that the struggle for national liberation cannot be fought within the bounds of theocratic tradition and the social institutions that accompany it: that nationalism cannot be circumvented by religion. The revolutionary significance of this message is incalculable. This message has been given a graphic form in these words of Ismet Pasha: "If Constantinople is today in our hand, it is because we have fought to the death the Greeks and the khalif. If other Moslems have shown sympathy for us, this was not because we had the khalif, but because we have been strong." The implication of these words is clear. Turkey now bids for the leadership of the Moslem world, not on the ground of a religious mission, but as a secularised state which has not only warded off foreign attack, but has successfully grappled with reaction at home. She faces the Islamic world, not in the supposed role of the defender of the khilafat, but as the grave-digger of that antiquated institution which for a long time has become the instrument of foreign imperialism.

As a matter of fact, the so-called khilafat movement, which has been more evident in India than in any other country, becomes an anomaly in consequence of the action of nationalist Turkey. Although they somehow managed to reconcile themselves with a republican Turkey liberated from theocratic control, the Indian khilafatists will find it hard to swallow the wholesome words of Ismet Pasha. How can a movement, whose expressed purpose is the vindication of the khilafat, own allegiance to a power which frankly admits that its object was the destruction of the khilafat and that it has not realised its object? A deputation of Indian Moslems is expected to visit Turkey soon, with the object of assisting in the discussion concerning the future of the khilafat. Will not the deputation find itself in a queer position? Therefore the revolutionary action of the Turkish nationalists is sure to rebound upon the Indian political horizon. There must be much searching of hearts among the Indian Moslems. There too

the days of religious nationalism and extraterritorial patriotism must come to an end.

If the Indian Moslems still persist in their notion of a religious confederation, they will surely land in the camp of reaction and all their anti-British talk will ridicule them in the face. But the real grievance of the Moslem masses of India was not concerning the khilafat, it was not of a religious character. The grievance lies much nearer home and is essentially mundane by nature. Therefore the only way to prevent the Indian Moslems from falling into the snares of scheming reaction will be to abandon the treacherous ground of extraterritorial religious patriotism in favour of a healthy nationalism more concerned with material well-being than the spiritual salvation of the people.

It will not be long before the Islamic world will be provided with a khalif. Forces are already moving in that direction. Since the separation of the sultanate from the khilafat of Constantinople, the candidature of King Hussein of Hejaz has been advanced under British patronage. Now the matter can be expedited. A khilafat installed at the holy place of Mecca will command all theological authority and will prove to be a suitable rallying ground of all the reactionary elements in the Moslem world. A new claim has come from rather unexpected quarters. It is reported that Egypt wants to receive the khilafat back. Zaghulist organs have begun the agitation. It is demanded that the king of Egypt should be the khalif. In the Egyptian government and clerical circles, the necessity of maintaining the khilafat is generally recognised. So "independent Egypt" may be pitted against nationalist Turkey. The scheme is to isolate the young republic by providing a shepherd to the faithful.

This situation would have arisen anyhow. Therefore the Turkish leaders thought it wise to take the offensive. The very drastic nature of the action proves that the situation was becoming very acute. A fatal blow has been dealt at the roots of all religious institutions. The protestations of the nationalist leaders preclude any charge of intellectual atheism on their party. In practice it has been found out that theological institutions and religious bodies not only constitute a passive obstacle to progress, but in critical moments become active danger by rallying around them all the black forces of reaction. Since Turkey as well as other

oriental countries have been held back in a social condition wherein religion predominates, the liberating movements there will be naturally more drastic, because the time lost has to be made up. The social policy adopted together with the abolition of the khilafat is so revolutionary and so far-reaching that it is hard to believe that it will be earnestly carried out. But when the circumstances which forced that policy upon the Turkish nationalists are remembered and properly understood, it becomes clear that the policy must be resolutely put into action if the republic is to be saved. And the Turkish leaders have spoken in no equivocal language.

The liberation of the premier Moslem country from the age-long traditions of religion opens up a new era in the history of the entire east as far as the Indian archipelago; this concerns particularly the Islamic people. The fond belief of the orthodox Indian nationalists, both Hindu and Musalman, that their country is immune from the so-called western civilisation is going to be shattered. In the course of normal progress the social and political institutions of every human community must be secularised. Civilisation is a stage of human progress which makes for the dissipation of ignorance upon which religion is based. It does not assume a different form at different points of the compass. The epoch-making character of the event with which the Turkish national assembly entered upon its fifth year of existence is graphically brought home by an editorial article in the official organ *Ileri*. The article, published the day after the memorable resolution was taken, was entitled, "Goodbye, Orient".

(*Inprecor*, Vol 4, No 19,  
13 March 1924)

### 3. Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy Case

#### INTRODUCTION

The first arrests of communists, who were later to figure in the Kanpur Conspiracy Case, began as early as in May 1923, just at the time when the main Peshawar conspiracy cases were concluding. These arrests were in fact a continuation of the campaign of anticommunist repression started by the Peshawar cases. This is clear from what Usmani says in his unpublished memoirs. Here he quotes from the London *Times* of 14 May 1923 a correspondent's despatch datelined Allahabad, 13 May: "He (Usmani) was arrested at the National Muslim School at Kanpur on a warrant from Peshawar. Usmani will be sent to Peshawar for trial on a charge of conspiracy."<sup>1</sup>

Usmani was arrested on 8 May;<sup>2</sup> Muzaffar Ahmad in Calcutta on 19 May 1923. That is what Muzaffar says in his *Kazi Nazrul Islam Smritikatha* (Bengali).<sup>3</sup> Ghulam Hussain was arrested in Lahore about the same time. When the arrests were ordered, the government was not clear whether they were going to try them in the Peshawar conspiracy cases or a new case was going to be instituted.

1. Autobiography (MS), p. 128

2. Ibid.

3. NBA, Calcutta, 3rd ed., October 1969, p. 324. In his *Myself and the CPI*, Muzaffar gives the date of arrest of Usmani as 9 May and his own 17 May (pp. 330-31).

The strategy of the British imperialists in their attempt to destroy the rising communist movement was to discredit the patriotism of the communists, show them as agents of a foreign power and drive a wedge between them and the militant left-wing in the Congress and the national movement. For instance, J. Crerar, secretary of the governor-general, in his note dated 2 June 1923 drawn up for discussion with the governor-general says :

*"The immediate and potential dangers of the communist movement in India even as an isolated factor are sufficiently obvious. But there is evidence of what is still more dangerous development in the establishment of contacts between the bolshevik and communist agencies and other foci of disorder. On the one hand, there have been communications with the representatives of the old Bengal revolutionaries, many of whom are personal friends of M. N. Roy, and who since the failure of the noncooperation movement have been moving towards the resumption of their former activities. On the other hand, C. R. Das and the extreme left of the Congress Party have not concealed their intention to 'organise the proletariat' and (as stated in a speech made a few days ago by Das in Madras) to resort to 'direct action'. Between these two groups, Roy's communists occupy a dangerously convenient tactical position. Action which will have the effect of discrediting Roy and putting some of his active agents out of action in the most important centres would, therefore, be particularly opportune and well directed. It could be additionally opportune, as corroborating the recent expose by his majesty's government of the anti-British activities of the Soviet Republic."*

The same note suggested immediate action against (1) Usmani, (2) Muzaffar Ahmad and (3) Ghulam Hussain and asked provincial governments to take similar actions against Dange and Singaravelu, "under their respective regulation". The order-in-council to take action against Shaukat Usmani, Ghulam Hussain and Muzaffar Ahmad was issued on 8 June 1923 and it was executed, i.e. it was served on the first two in Peshawar and Lahore jails respectively on 12 June 1923. The order was served on Muzaffar Ahmad about the same time.

At this time, the government referred the case to their legal advisers, M. Shafi and others. M. Shafi wrote on 6 June 1923 :

Reviewing the results of the Peshawar conspiracy cases and the remarks made by the session judge on the admissibility of copies of intercepted letters being produced, Shafi said it would be "absolutely futile" to stage a trial against these five under section 121-A, at Bombay, Calcutta or Madras. So regulation 3 of 1818 was the only remedy.

The meaning is quite clear. The case against the five under section 121-A, i.e. "conspiracy to overthrow the king-emperor", would not stand in places where there was a jury and so detention without trial was the only remedy, till "conspiracy" was properly cooked and held in a place where there was no jury.

Meanwhile Ghulam Hussain showed weakness and sent an application to the viceroy from jail on 14 June 1923 stating that he wanted to "give an entirely satisfactory and absorbing explanation". The recording of Ghulam Hussain's statement took place from 11 to 14 July before a magistrate in jail.

In August 1923, the secretary of the home department of the government of India was of the view that neither Dange's book *Gandhi vs Lenin* nor the pages of the *Socialist* contained objectionable matter; so no prosecution could be launched on that basis. At the same time, the Bombay government "deprecated the use of Bombay regulation 25 of 1827 against Dange". They seem to have come to the same conclusion about M. Singaravelu. Therefore they postponed action against both.

The government of India did not get much out of Ghulam Hussain's statement except the confirmation of his and other communists' contact with the *Communist International* and M. N. Roy. Besides, as we have stated, the government had the legal opinion that a conspiracy case with the evidence in hand and in a place with jury had not much chance of success.

What made it change its mind? What more evidence did it get later? Perhaps it was the arrest of Nalini Gupta on 20 December 1923 in Calcutta and the detailed statement he made on 21 December 1923 and on subsequent eight days that speeded up the decision.

Even at the time when Nalini Gupta was arrested, i.e. towards the end of December 1923, the government of India and its intelligence department had quite a mass of material in their hand. From the confidential files of the home department, now avail-

able in the National Archives, we know both the Scotland Yard in London and the intelligence department of the government of India were intercepting all the correspondence that was passing between M. N. Roy and the Indian revolutionaries abroad in touch with the Communist International and communists and revolutionaries in India. We also know from the confidential documents of Masood Ali Shah that British embassies in Moscow and Berlin had intelligence officers specially deputed to gather all information about Indian revolutionaries and their contacts with the Communist International. By the time Nalini Gupta was arrested, the intelligence department of the government of India had some 64 letters—mainly from M. N. Roy and some to him. Almost all of them were passed on to the addressees, keeping copies so that the correspondence continued and could be tapped all the time.

With all this correspondence in its hand—which it could use as evidence against the communist accused in the Kanpur Conspiracy Case, the government did not take the decision to launch the case till some two months after Nalini Gupta's arrest. Nalini Gupta's statement to the police covers 23 printed pages.<sup>4</sup> It is our view that such a detailed statement, apart from his willingness to give it, was possible because the police had already in their hand a detailed documentary and intelligence information. Muzaffar Ahmad, who also made a statement to the police on his arrest,<sup>5</sup> says in his book that he made the statement when he found that the police know everything about the movement and they placed before him the whole file of intercepted correspondence.<sup>6</sup>

4. *Peasants' and Workers' Movement in India, 1905-1929* by Sukhbir Choudhary, Delhi, 1971, pp. 291-313.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 286-88.

6. This is what Muzaffar Ahmad says in his *Myself and the CPI*, p. 333, on his statement to the police on 23 May 1923, after his arrest.

"During the period I was in the lock-up after my arrest, I was taken almost every day to Elysum Row and showered with questions. In order to find out what and how much the police knew, I said nothing for a few days. Then one day a bundle of letters was opened and shown to me. I found there many copies of letters exchanged between M. N. Roy and me. Then I thought of changing my practice. I said I wrote to M. N. Roy and also followed the Communist International and I was acquainted

Did Nalini Gupta's statement give the police additional information? Perhaps not very much more. But they had now someone in hand who was the main physical link between the Communist International and the emerging communist groups here and who was able to confirm all the information they had and add some more.<sup>7</sup>

The main worry of the government of India was that it may have to reveal the sources of its information about the activities of the communists and revolutionaries, which it wanted to keep secret for obvious reasons. With Nalini Gupta in its hands, this difficulty was solved.

After his arrest Nalini Gupta was acting as an informer. This was at that time unknown to his coaccused. The government kept his statement—and for that matter, Muzaffar Ahmad's also—completely secret. Probably these were not even included among the papers supplied to the prosecution counsel for the preparation of the case. They became known only after independence through the reorganised National Archives. But it is quite clear that it is after getting hold of Nalini Gupta and evaluating his detailed statement that the decision to launch the conspiracy case was taken. The recording of his statement started on 21 Decem-

with Nalini Gupta. I said further that Nalini was not a communist but had leanings towards terrorist revolutionaries. (After very thorough investigations many years later, I found out that Nalini was not a member of either Anushilan or Jugantar. He was a daring vagabond.) The copy of the statement I made can be had from the National Archives of India . . . ”

After stating that he did not know any of the communists of NWF province and those arrested in the Peshawar conspiracy cases, Muzaffar says further:

“I knew Shaukat Usmani only. He was arrested before me. He also made a statement. I have neither read his statement nor taken a copy of it. Of the three state prisoners, I was arrested last.”

7. Nearly 6 months before Nalini Gupta was arrested, Muzaffar Ahmad through his statement had confirmed the fact that Nalini Gupta was giving himself out as a representative of the Communist International and was establishing the link between the Indian communist groups and the Comintern. Muzaffar Ahmad wrote later: “I am grateful to Nalini for building the bridge between the Communist International and me at a time when I had just begun political work” (*Myself and the CPI*, p. 100).

ber 1923 and continued on 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 29 December 1923 and 5 and 8 January 1924.<sup>8</sup>

The decision to institute a conspiracy case against the four already arrested, viz Shaukat Usmani, Ghulam Hussain and Muzaffar Ahmed (all arrested in May 1923) and Nalini Gupta (arrested on 20 December 1923) was taken on 20 February 1924. S. A. Dange and M. Singaravelu, who were not yet arrested, were included in the list of "conspirators". From the confidential government documents,<sup>9</sup> from which most of the information given in this introduction is culled, emerge the following :

On 20 February 1924, the government of India sent a telegram to the secretary of state for India, London, which ran thus : "Decided to institute proceedings under sections 121-A and 124-A, IPC, against Muzaffar Ahmad, Shaukat Usmani, S. A. Dange, Singaravelu and Ghulam Hussain." The despatch also stated that Ghulam Hussain was told that the case against him will be withdrawn if he is ready to make a complete disclosure as a witness in the case against M. Shafiq and admit his own complicity in the conspiracy. Ghulam Hussain wrote to the government of India from jail on 15 January 1924, "offering unconditional surrender and to make further statement". This further statement was not recorded by the police till 17 March 1924, the day on which the case started. Muzaffar Ahmad says that Ghulam Hussain's "statement was a regular Mahabharat" and that he did give evidence against Muhammad Shafiq in the Peshawar Conspiracy Case. Ghulam Hussain's statement did not give the authorities anything more than his contact in Kabul with Muhammad Ali who was a representative of Roy there, his activities in Lahore and his links with Roy and the communists in India. But it gave them confirmation of all the facts they knew from the intercepted correspondence and from the intelligence reports. The authorities knew that he was issuing *Inqilab* (Urdu), first a daily, then a monthly, which continued only for a few months in 1922-

8. His statement that "I am ready to give any undertaking for my future, good behaviour if I am set free and I shall help government even at the sacrifice of my life" looks like an offer to be "an agent of intelligence" but may also be a manoeuvre to get released and escape abroad.

9. Home-Pol. F 261 KW, 1924

They knew that he had published in Urdu Roy's *What Do We Want?, India's Problem and Its Solution* and was preparing to publish *India in Transition*.<sup>10</sup>

Government's assessment of Ghulam Hussain's statement, which was first recorded from 11 to 14 July 1923,<sup>11</sup> was as follows :

"This is not a confession... He makes a respectful appeal to government... He has realised the impropriety of his writings... If he gave up politics he would be discredited. But he would issue a manifesto if he is released saying his health has broken down and he would not take part in politics" Ghulam Hussain was released some time after the Kanpur case opened. He was never brought to Kanpur. A telegram of the government of India to the secretary of state for India, London, dated 29 March 1924, states : "Ghulam Hussain<sup>12</sup> has fulfilled stipulations mentioned. The prosecution against him has accordingly been withdrawn and warrants under regulation 3 of 1818 cancelled."<sup>13</sup>

The government had a strong case against both Dange and Singaravelu but were postponing their arrest and prosecution for tactical reason. In the appendix I to notes in the abovementioned file where a case is made out "for the use of regulation 3 of 1818 against Usmani, M. Singaravelu, Ghulam Hussain, Dange, Muzaffar, communist agents in India", it is stated that these five "are now working in India as Roy's agents" and are building up "revolutionary communist organisation according to his directions". The same document gives detailed charges against Singaravelu and Dange.<sup>14</sup>

10. Ibid. See his letter to Dange.

11. Ibid, pp. 16-33.

12. The case against Ghulam Hussain when he was arrested and imprisoned under regulation 3 of 1818 was given as follows :

"He started *Inqilab* daily (Urdu) after July 1922 from Lahore. Shortly after it was converted into biweekly and then monthly. He was in touch with communists in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. He has now decided to join Singaravelu's Labour Kisan Party. He formed a provincial centre in the Punjab with M. A. Khan (well-known railway leader) and Shamsuddin Hassan.

"As a result of inquiries, it was established that 'Siddiqui' was the nom-de-plume of Ghulam Hussain" (Ibid, pp 46-47).

13. Ibid, pp 124-27.

14 Ibid, pp. 46-47.

J. Crerar's note dated 11 February 1924 in the same file stated the case against Dange thus :

"The evidence collected clearly shows that Dange has been an important figure in the conspiracy as constant references to his name would be unavoidable in any event in the prosecution to be instituted against other members of the conspiracy at Allahabad. The GOI has come to the conclusion the best course is to prosecute Dange."

As we stated earlier, the actual decision to launch the case was taken on 20 February 1924, after the full assessment of the statement made to the police for nine days by Nalini Gupta after his arrest in December 1923. Cecil Kaye, director of central intelligence, in his confidential report<sup>15</sup> says that the papers sent to the counsel to prepare the conspiracy case contained 13 names and these were : (1) Manabendra Nath Roy, (2) Muzaffar Ahmad, (3) Shaikat Usmani, (4) Ghulam Hussain, (5) Shripad Amrit Dange, (6) Mylapuram Singaravelu Chettiyar, (7) Ramcharanlal Sharma, (8) Nalini Gupta (Nalinbhuslan Dasgupta), (9) Shamsuddin Hassan, (10) M. P. S. Velayudhan, (11) Doctor Manilal (Shah), (12) Sampurnanand and (13) Satyabhakta. The counsel after going through the documents dropped from the list five names : (1) Shamsuddin Hassan, (2) M. P. S. Velayudhan, (3) Doctor Manilal, (4) Sampurnanand and (5) Satyabhakta, and reported in favour of proceedings against the remaining eight persons under section 121-A and this was approved by the governor-general of India. He sanctioned the launching of the case on 27 February 1924.<sup>16</sup> It appears from the same file that the petition of complaint under section 121-A was filed before the district magistrate, Kanpur, against the eight on 3 March 1924, i.e. three days before S. A. Dange was actually arrested and the warrant of arrest on M. Singaravelu was issued on 6 March 1924.

Complaint was filed against "eight well-known bolsheviks, including M. N. Roy".<sup>17</sup> They were (1) M. N. Roy, (2) Muzaffar Ahmad, (3) Shaikat Usmani, (4) S. A. Dange, (5) Ghulam Hussain, (6) Nalini Gupta, (7) M. Singaravelu and (8) R. C.

15. *Communism in India, 1919-1924*, p. 123.

16. Text of committal order in the Kanpur Conspiracy Case

17. Home-Pol F 261 KW, 1924.

L. Sharma. Of these, M. N. Roy was in Germany and R. C. L. Sharma in Pondicherry, out of the reach of the government. Ghulam Hussain was never brought to Kanpur.<sup>18</sup> M. Singaravelu, who was arrested on 6 March 1924, was released on bail on 7 March and allowed to remain in his house.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the magisterial inquiry in the trial which the official documents insist on calling "bolshevik" conspiracy began on 17 March 1924 against four, viz Muzaffar Ahmad, Shaukat Usmani, S. A. Dange and Nalini Gupta.

*The main points of the petition of complaint filed before the magistrate are as follows :*

"A revolutionary organisation exists in Europe known as the Communist International and that a section thereof is determined to establish a branch in this country to be placed under the control of M. N. Roy, one of the objects of the same being to deprive the king-emperor of his sovereignty in India.

"That in pursuance thereof Roy and others communicated with each other and with others. They also attempted to make use of an association of workers and peasants or a 'People's Party' under the leadership of the abovenamed accused and others.

"That the said association was to be under the guidance and support of the said revolutionary organisation, the Communist International, so that the same might be used as an instrument for securing 'the complete separation of India from imperialistic Britain', by 'a violent revolution' and so to deprive the king-emperor of the sovereignty of British India.

"That to gain the ultimate cooperation of the said association of workers and peasants, of the 'People's Party' in carrying out the aforesaid object, an economic programme of such a character as to attract both peasants and workers was to be advocated; thus effecting what the said M. N. Roy described as an organisation which would have a legal as well as an illegal object.

"That as a further means of ultimately attaining the same object, it was also decided to make an attempt to secure the control of the Indian National Congress."

Further Roy and other accused as well as others introduced

18. *Ibid.*, see p. 279 above for details.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 131, for Singaravelu's petition dated 21 January 1924

and circulated in British India newspapers, circulars and pamphlets of a revolutionary character.

Finally, agreement constituting conspiracy arrived at by means, inter alia, of letters written by the accused to each other and to Roy from different places in the country.

These relevant points of the petition of complaint are mostly taken from the telegram of the government of India to the secretary of state, London, dated 29 March 1924.<sup>20</sup> This magisterial inquiry continued for two weeks and ended on 1 April 1924, on which the committal order was signed by the district magistrate W. Christie. The committal order framed the charge against the four accused, committing them to the court of session to stand their trial under section 121-A.

The committal order, which is strictly based on the petition of complaint, frames the charge thus :

The executive committee of the Communist International decided in 1921 to form a branch organisation (i.e. Communist Party) in India under the control and guidance of Manabendra Nath Roy, the object of which was, with the help of the Communist International, to deprive the king-emperor of his sovereignty of British India. In order to achieve this object an association of workers and peasants or a People's Party was to be formed and used. "The prosecution evidence consists chiefly of documents which are said to have passed between the various accused and which lay down the principles and objects of the organisation."

It would be useful to briefly refer to the main documents cited in the committal order, which prosecution described as "sufficient to prove that a conspiracy existed which had as its object the depriving of the king-emperor of his sovereignty of British India".

Exhibit 1 is a letter from M. N. Roy to S. A. Dange dated 2 November 1922, in which Roy welcomes the formation of the Socialist Labour Party of India, as proposed by Dange.<sup>21</sup>

Then we have letters from Roy to Ghulam Hussain, Dange and

20. *Ibid.*

21. See Volume One, pp 509, 523-24 also introduction to section v of 1923—"On the Genesis of Workers' and Peasants' Party"—in this volume for excerpts from this letter.

Singaravelu<sup>22</sup> in which the relation between this party and the Communist Party is clearly shown and its own field of activity indicated. In these letters, Roy says: "We have to work both in legal and illegal ways. A revolutionary mass party must be organised as a part of the Congress, but this party must be under the control and direction of our own (communist) party, which cannot but be illegal."<sup>23</sup> There was also the letter addressed to the Gaya session of the Indian National Congress by the Communist International.<sup>24</sup>

The same idea is explained at length in letter from M. N. Roy to Muzaffar written some time in February 1923.<sup>25</sup> Roy says: "At present things ought to be done secretly. But at the same time, an open party will also have to be organised. The leadership of this party will be in the hands of us (Communist Party) but will not openly preach the communist programme. The principal work of the present moment is to organise such a party. This party will be named the 'People's Party' or 'Workers' and Peasants' Party'."

To implement this plan, Roy in a letter to Usmani<sup>26</sup> written some time at the beginning of 1923 proposed the following measures: "(1) A preliminary conference of the pioneers of all provinces here with the Comintern representative; (2) calling a national conference on the return of the delegates to the preliminary conference; and (3) meanwhile, form nuclei and groups all over the country." These measures proposed were communicated not only to Usmani, but also to Muzaffar Ahmad, S. A. Dange, M. Singaravelu and Ghulam Hussain. Muzaffar Ahmad was specially invited by Roy to come over in the beginning of 1923. He made some attempt at preparations in that direction but before anything could mature, he was arrested. Dange and Singaravelu rejected the idea of holding a conference abroad.<sup>27</sup> So nobody went abroad.

22 Exhibits 5, 6 and 7—all dated 12 December 1922. See Volume One, pp 524, 564-65, 592-93.

23. Committal order.

24. See Volume One, pp. 573-77.

25. Exhibit 35 in Kanpur Case.

26. Exhibit 29d in Kanpur Case quoted in committal order.

27. See introduction to section v of 1923 in this volume.

Then at the insistence of Roy, Ghulam Hussain issued a circular dated 27 April 1923 to a large number of comrades in various parts of India, asking them to come to a conference in Lucknow to be held in June 1923, to launch a new party on the basis of "Manilal manifesto"<sup>28</sup> When this circular reached Roy, he immediately prepared a long "Memorandum on Organising a Working-class Party in India" and the executive committee of the CI sent "A Message to the First Conference of the Workers' and Peasants' Party of India." Both these documents are dated 5 June 1923<sup>29</sup> The conference never took place and a party based on this memorandum was not formed. All the same this memorandum is produced as evidence against the accused!<sup>30</sup>

The committal order quotes from it, among other things, the following

"It is ridiculous to say that we are 'nonviolent revolutionaries', such a breed cannot grow, even on the soil of India. The expropriators will never give in without resistance nor will the British leave India out of respect for our ability to suffer." From this the committal order draws the conclusion: "This last remark shows clearly that the object of the conspiracy is to deprive the king-emperor of his sovereignty of British India." While the memorandum rightly says that the term "nonviolence" should be dropped from the programme, but by doing so they should not commit themselves to acts of "premature violence", the committal order concludes: "This shows the ultimate idea was to use violence to attain their object."

The party actually established in 1923 was the one by M. Singaravelu and his comrades in Madras on the basis of a revised version of Manilal manifesto. It was the Labour Kisan Party of Hindustan,<sup>31</sup> Dange himself associated with this party by publishing in the Socialist of May-June 1923 his own activities as part of the party's activity in Bombay and by publishing

28 See section v of 1923 of this volume for text

29. *loc cit.*

30. Exhibit 37 in Kanpur Case

31. Full text given in section v of 1923 in this volume

the pledge which anyone who wishes to join the party has to take.

The point we want to make here is that the party actually formed in India, viz the Labour Kisan Party of Hindustan, and its documents were not made the main evidence against the accused. It was the memorandum sent by M. N. Roy to the proposed conference in Lucknow, which never took place, and the intercepted letters of Muzaffar Ahmad, Dange and Usmani to Roy as well as the fact that Nalini Gupta was the direct link between the emerging communist groups in India and Roy and the Comintern—these were the main evidence to prove the alleged conspiracy. The programme and manifesto of the Labour Kisan Party, which was also an exhibit in the case, was drafted for open and legal publication. So it left many things vague and implied. Further it dissociated itself from the bolsheviks and did not say anything about the link with the Comintern. This did not suit the prosecution. Roy's memorandum for the organisation of a working-class party which was prepared for illegal transmission made these points absolutely clear. Though this was more suitable for the prosecution to prove the so-called conspiracy, the fact remains that the organisation it proposed—viz the Workers' and Peasants' Party—was actually never formed. This however did not bother the British prosecutors and judges of those days. The mere intention to form such an organisation with the object of obtaining complete independence and setting up a workers' and peasants' republic and correspondence—between the "accused" in relation to the same were enough to "prove" the conspiracy under section 121-A and sentence them to any number of years up to 14 (transportation for life).

A Soviet writer, in a recent article on "The Kanpur Anti-communist Trial" has taken note of this point. He says: "Even if one could speak, on the basis of M. N. Roy's letters about his intention to contribute to setting up an illegal revolutionary organisation ('conspiracy' in the terminology of authorities), this still did not prove the existence of such an organisation. Meanwhile it was on this last point that the prosecution rested. Further the prosecution did not have enough evidence of the approving attitude of M. N. Roy's correspondents to his plans. Thus it appeared not proved whether 'conspiracy' existed, even in this

sense of the word in which the British authorities tried to use it."<sup>32</sup>

The session trial began in Kanpur on 22 April 1924 before the notorious British judge H. E. Holme, who had the year before tried the Chauri Chaura case and sentenced 172 peasants to death by hanging. Soon after the trial began, on 26 April 1924, the accused made a petition to the governor-in-council for the transfer of the case. The text of this petition, which appears to be the draft of S. A. Dange, is interesting enough to be quoted here in part :

"(1) No definite criminal act is alleged to have been performed by any of the accused within Kanpur.

"(2) Most of the prosecution evidence comes from Bombay and Calcutta.

"(3) The session court has no jury here in Kanpur... The government should appreciate our desire to be tried by jury instead of by assessors, and should grant our request for transfer.

"(4) Legal psychology in courts of advanced centres of knowledge and social life is more tolerant and more impartially inclined to theories, principles and methods of putting them in practice. Our case involves many such principles and theories, which are better known and understood in advanced cities like Bombay and Calcutta and hence our desire to be tried in such a culturally touchable atmosphere.

"(5) We would like to refer here to Chauri Chaura case in which 172 accused were sentenced to death by Mr H. E. Holme, ICS, the session judge, who is to try us now. The prosecution has put in as an exhibit, and as a part of their substantial evidence, a strong criticism of the verdict. This criticism is alleged to have been issued by or under instruction from one of the accused, M. N. Roy. We are afraid this piece of evidence, when brought before the same judge, would create an unfavourable and prejudiced atmosphere for trial."

This request for transfer of the trial to Bombay or Calcutta was, of course, summarily rejected. The trial continued for four weeks and on 20 May 1924 the judgment was pronounced sen-

32. *Peoples of Asia & Africa, History, Economy & Culture*, No. 5, 26 October 1971.

tencing the four accused to four years' RI. The government of India sent a telegram to the secretary of state on 23 May 1924 as follows :

"Bolshevik Conspiracy... Session judge Cawnpore sentenced Muzaffar Ahmad, Shaukat Usmani, Dange, Nalini Gupta to four years' rigorous imprisonment each. As reported in telegram of 29 March, the prosecution against Ghulam Hussain has been withdrawn. Owing to ill-health of Singaravelu Chettiyar, the proceedings against him have been suspended. His petition to be tried either at Madras or Bombay is being considered by us."<sup>33</sup>

Later on 19 June 1924, Cecil Kaye, forwarding a copy of session court judgment to the under-secretary of state for India, London, said in the covering letter : "The object of the government of India has been attained by the successful prosecution of the four members of the conspiracy who were convicted at Cawnpore and I do not think any advantage would be gained by the GOI prosecuting Singaravelu separately."

Here it is necessary to put the record about Singaravelu straight as some interested persons sometimes circulate the slander that the case against him was withdrawn because he apologised.<sup>34</sup> Actually Singaravelu was on bail in Madras while the case was proceeding in Kanpur without him. As soon as the session trial was over, Dr Manilal, who acted as the defence lawyer for the four accused at Kanpur and who was acting as counsel for Singaravelu, sent a petition to the governor-general-in-council on 9 June 1924 asking for "the transfer of Singaravelu's trial to Bombay or Madras where he will get jury".<sup>35</sup>

Dr Manilal received a reply (dated 27 June 1924) from the government to his petition : "Re. transfer of the case against your client Singaravelu... to Madras or Bombay, I am directed to say that the government of India have decided to withdraw proceedings against him at Cawnpore."<sup>36</sup>

The chief secretary, home department, however, made it clear in a letter dated 24 June 1924, addressed to the government of

33. Home-Pol. F 261 KW, 1924, p. 135.

34. Cf. Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and the Communist Party of India*, p. 408.

35. Home-Pol F 261 KW, 1924, p. 138.

36. *loc. cit.*

Madras that this will not preclude the institution of proceedings against him by the government of Madras, if it deems the course expedient. In that case the government of India would be pleased to place at the disposal of the government of Madras all the documents and evidence in its possession.<sup>37</sup>

In spite of all this, a message datelined Madras, 20 June 1924, appeared in the *Pioneer*:<sup>38</sup> "The government having accepted an unqualified apology tendered by Singaravelu . . . passed orders for the withdrawal of the charge against him. . ." It also stated that Singaravelu had left Madras "only a few days ago to stand his trial at Cawnpore". As soon as this appeared, the GOI which knew of no such apology wired to the government of Madras for information. The telegram of the Madras government in reply dated 3 July 1924 stated. "Madras government have no information"

This, as well as the Cecil Kaye's telegram quoted above, conclusively proves that *Pioneer's* report was totally false. It was later contradicted by Singaravelu himself.<sup>39</sup>

The trial of Indian communists at Kanpur attracted a great deal of attention both abroad, particularly in Great Britain, and in India. Such was not the case in the earlier Peshawar conspiracy cases. In the beginning of 1924, a labour government had come to power in England for the first time in history and the trial of Indian communists began in its regime. The leftwing labour circles in Britain and their newspapers naturally asked the question: How does the Labour Party, which has come to power on the strength of the organisation of the working class, sanction the prosecution of citizens of India whose only "crime" is that they were attempting to organise a working-class party. For instance, the *New Leader*, organ of the Independent Labour Party

37. loc. cit.

38. This also appeared in the *Madras Mail* at the same time.

39. The *Bangalee*, a Calcutta daily, dated 3 July 1924 published a message datelined Kanpur, 1 July, which gives the text of Singaravelu's contradiction: "I have tendered no apology nor have government asked for one. The statement of *Madras Mail* is absolutely incorrect and untrue. I had appealed to his excellency, the viceroy, for the transfer of the case from Kanpur either to Madras or Bombay. . . Fortunately, the government has withdrawn charges against me, though reserving the right to proceed against me whenever it so desires."

wrote on 26 March 1924 that the setting up of the Communist Party of India was as legitimate as in England and if the labour government wanted to prevent the growth of the influence of communism in India, repression was not the method for the same. The *Workers' Weekly*, organ of the Communist Party of Great Britain, gave a prominent place to the trial in all its issues from March to May 1924. The communists in Great Britain and its dominions are legally affiliated to the Comintern, it said, but in India, similar actions are prosecuted by the authorities as a criminal conspiracy. And all this happens during the rule of the labour government in Britain, which had come to power only because the British working class made use of its elementary rights.<sup>40</sup>

The same paper reported that a number of local labour and trade-union organisations in Britain passed resolutions condemning the trial of Indian communists. A committee for the collection of funds for the defence of the accused was set up in Britain. It was headed by J. Lansbury, J. Maxton, Shapurji Saklatvala and A. MacManus. Working-class organisations from Britain, as well as from other countries, sent donations. The Communist Party of France sent 500 francs. This committee sent a telegram to the government of India on 28 March 1924, just on the eve of the opening of the session trial: "Regarding communist trial, Kanpur, will your excellency grant fair postponement as some...labour members parliament contemplate supplying defence counsel, carefully establish legal point that apart actual breaches law Indians have same legal right forming workers' communist parties as British subjects have in all dominions."<sup>41</sup>

Just when the session trial was about to conclude, Earl Winterton, a labour member, put a question about the Kanpur trial in the British parliament, to which the government spokesman replied as follows on 19 May 1924:

"The trial is being held in the court of sessions at Kanpur. I would like to make it clear that the accused persons are not being prosecuted merely for holding communist views or carrying on communist propaganda. They are charged with having conspired to secure by violent revolution the complete separation

40. *Workers' Weekly*, 4 April and 6 June 1924.

41. Home-Pol. F 261 KW, 1924.

of India from imperialistic Britain and in that endeavour they formed and attempted to make use of a workers' and peasants' association in India. . .

"Earl Winterton : Can the hon gentleman say when the enquiry is likely to be concluded?"

"Mr Richards : I understand the trial has already concluded. I expected the verdict on Friday last."<sup>42</sup>

In the Indian press too the trial received considerable publicity. The government itself was interested in this publicity for its own reasons—of isolating the emerging communist movement from the nationalist opinion, and the Associated Press of India gave fairly detailed day-to-day proceedings of "the Bolshevik Conspiracy Case". For instance the *Bengalee*, a Calcutta daily, reproduced the API messages about the case right from the arrest of Shaukat Usmani and Muzaffar Ahmad on 9 May and 18 May 1923 respectively to the conclusion of the session trial at the end of June 1924. Looking through the excerpts from the despatches in the *Bengalee*<sup>43</sup> supplied to the editor by Gautam Chattopadhyay, we note the following additional facts :

(1) In the lower court all the accused were undefended. In the session court they were defended by three lawyers—Dr Manilal of Gaya appeared on behalf of Shaukat Usmani and Muzaffar Ahmad, while the other two (Dange and Nalini Gupta—C.A.) were defended by Pandit Kapildeo Malaviya of Allahabad assisted by Mussadilal Rahtagi of Kanpur.

(2) On 10 May 1924, i.e. after the arguments in the session trial were concluded and before the judgment was pronounced, "Cecil Kaye with Ross Alston requested the district magistrate to issue a warrant for the arrest of M. N. Roy. . . A warrant was issued and made over to Col Kaye. It is presumed that it will be sent to England for execution."

The question arises, why was the warrant for the arrest of Roy issued on this date, long after the trial had started and was nearing conclusion? We get the answer when we find that the Scotland Yard in London got the information some time in late March 1924 that Roy was planning to go to London<sup>44</sup> from a

42 Ibid, p. 136.

43. *Bengalee*, 23 April and 11 May 1924.

44. Home-Pol. F 176, 1924, "Prosecution of 'M. N. Roy if he enters UK'".

letter by R. P. Dutt, written on *Labour Monthly* letterhead and dated 6 March 1924, in which he writes :

"At present I think that the position is that your best course will be to come over here first for a time in order to meet people and establish yourself here and that will be your best safeguard for your going on to India... Newbold will be seeing Richards<sup>45</sup> next week and if that does not result in a satisfactory assurance we shall try other methods."

With this information in hand, the under-secretary of state wrote on 23 March 1924: "Roy is a British subject. So he could not be excluded from Britain. But if the Indian government obtains the necessary warrant, action can be taken against him now under the Fugitive Offenders Act of 1881."

On this the India Office in a letter dated 2 April 1924 wrote: As at present the Kanpur Case is proceeding in India "it would be possible for the court in India to issue a warrant against M. N. Roy and to take action to secure his arrest (if he visited this country) and despatch him to India under the Fugitive Offenders Act of 1881 on charges under sections mentioned". Police were instructed to be on the look out.<sup>46</sup>

This shows that the so-called labour government of Britain not merely inherited the Kanpur Case from its predecessor Tory government, but vigorously carried it on as shown by the meticulous zeal with which it was trying to lay its hands upon Roy, one of the chief accused in the case.

Returning to the extracts about the Kanpur Case in the file of the *Bengalee*, we find another interesting fact. We see to what ridiculous length the intelligence bureau chief Cecil Kaye could go in his zeal for slandering the communist and labour parties: in the *Bengalee* dated 27 May 1924, we have its London correspondent's despatch of 22 May:

"Regarding the Kanpur conspiracy trial, Mr George Lansbury's attention has been drawn to an *Associated Press* telegram dated Kanpur, 26 April, referring to Col Kaye's evidence that he had recollection of a sum of seventy thousand pounds being

45. Cabinet minister in the labour government—referred to in the proceedings.

46. Home-Pol. F 176, 1924.

received from the Russian communists by Mr Lansbury as a subsidy to the *Daily Herald* three years ago. Mr Lansbury authorises me to contradict in the strongest terms that there is no truth whatever in the statement."

Thus we see that though the labour government was doing its best to prove by deeds that it is as good as the tories in prosecuting the communists, they were not missing a single opportunity to brand the labour government as being in the pay of "Russian communists" in their efforts to bring it down. Actually before 1924 ended the labour government was replaced by a tory one. Of course, Cecil Kaye's attack on Labour Party's organ *Daily Herald*, which Lansbury promptly contradicted, was only a small part in the tory campaign.

The session trial proceedings concluded on 9 May.

The assessors, who was a sort of farce of a jury, were not unanimous: one of them declared all the accused not guilty. The session court judgment was delivered on 20 May, sentencing all the four accused to four years' rigorous imprisonment under section 121-A. Lengthy extracts from the judgment appeared in the *Bengalee* dated 23 May and also in all the main daily papers of India.

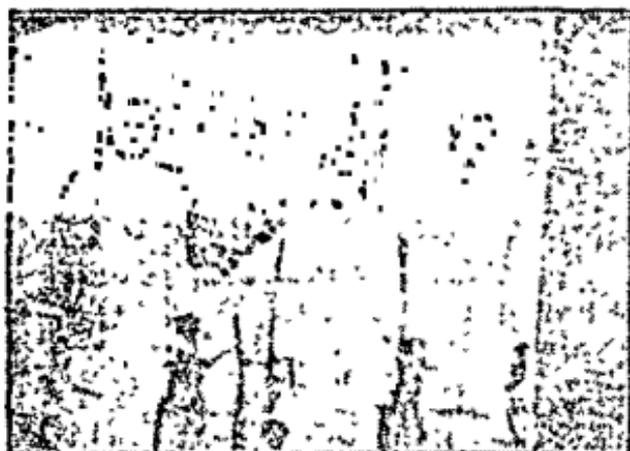
The appeal against this judgment came up before the high court in November 1924 before Sir Grimwood Meers, chief justice, and T. C. Piggott, judge. They delivered their judgment on 10 November 1924, dismissing the appeal, expressing their entire agreement with the session's judgment.

In order to fight the appeal in the high court, an "Indian Communist Defence Committee" was formed by V. H. Joshi, T. V. Parvate and K. N. Joglekar and its appeal for funds was published in the *Socialist* of 2 July 1924. The full text has been given in the following pages.

The defence committee also made an appeal to the Communist Party of Great Britain to send "some able man to argue the case in the appellate court..." or "send money which you may have succeeded to collect, as soon as possible as we require it badly today for the appeal and for the printing of case papers" etc. This appeal is also published in the same issue of the *Socialist* and is signed by V. H. Joshi, secretary of the defence

# Indian Communist Defence Committee.

## Appeal for Funds.



Members: D. D. Gupta, Chairman, P. V. Rao, Secretary, M. S. R. Rao, Treasurer.

[In connection with the so-called Bolshevik Conspiracy case, Kanpur & the proposed Indian Communist Party.]

To,

Every Member of  
The Indian Public,

Sir,

The Kanpur Communist case was the first of its kind that was set up within the British Empire. For your consideration we put the following facts before you:

(i) There is a Communist Party in Great Britain itself. It works through the Communist Review (a fortnightly), the Worker's Weekly & occasionally through the Daily Herald & the Labour Monthly.

(ii) There is an independent Labour Party of Great Britain, which works through "The Socialist Review".

(iii) There is a Young Communist League in Great Britain, which works through "The Young Worker".

(iv) In 1934 the Communist Party of Great Britain was expelled from the Labour Party and set up a separate party, the Communist Party of Great Britain.

committee. The money was collected—a modest sum which did not go beyond a couple of thousand rupees, and the defence committee did its best to see that the appeal was fought.

As against this, it is interesting to record here the total amount of money spent by the government of India in launching and prosecuting the case.<sup>47</sup> “With reference to a question put in the legislative assembly regarding the expenses in the Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy Case, a statement of total amount spent was prepared .

Ross Alston's fees	
(Public prosecutor in the case)	Rs 39,690
Jurors' fees (assessors)	Rs 2,450
Travelling expenses to witnesses	Rs 6,463
	<hr/>
	Rs 48,603”
	<hr/>

The appeal of the Indian Communist Defence Committee made an interesting political point—that the idea of forming a legal communist party has to be given a trial.

We have not seen the text of the speech of the prosecution counsel but he must have made the statement that this was not a prosecution against communism as such. We have already quoted the reply given by the British government in the parliament to a question by Earl Winterton. There was no reason to read anything more in this hypocritical statement, which the British government as well as its subordinate India government was making to hoodwink the people, to cover up the contrast that while in Britain a communist party could function legally, an attempt to form a labour kisan party in India was punishable by a severe jail sentence. That contrast was inherent in the reality that while bourgeois-democratic rights existed in imperialist Britain, in India the right of self-determination as well as all democratic rights for the people were crushed under the iron heel of imperialism. It was quite clear that imperialism would not allow the Communist Party or any other revolutionary party to function legally in its colony and there was no ques-

47. Home-Pol. F 261 KW, 1924, p 80

tion of "testing its attitude" on this point. In the same issue of the *Socialist* in which this appeal of the Indian Communist Defence Committee appears, there is a second editorial entitled : "Communism—Is it a Crime?", where the same legalist idea is put forward. The concluding para of this article reads thus :

"Legally it cannot be held illegal to hold communist views and, therefore, the right of association for the propagation of such views cannot also be illegal. Mr Dange was openly attempting to form such an association. This open attempt has been interpreted as a secret organisation to challenge the sovereignty of the king-emperor and the four stand convicted today in the session court. The right of association has remained untested. And as the defence committee has stated in its appeal, to exercise this right and to test the attitude of the government here becomes unavoidable duty of all those who hold communist or socialist views."

The legalist illusion is more strongly expressed here, perhaps deliberately. In conclusion the editorial says "It is to be seen whether this right can be established in appeal court. The decision will be a direct answer to the query." This answer is contained, impliedly we think, in the concluding para of the high court judgment in which the judges sum up the findings and "prove" the conspiracy in terms of section 121-A. As the reader will see it is a most tendentious and malicious summary of the political programme, writings and activities of the pioneers of the communist movement in India. The aim of this slanderous distortion was to raise the bolshevik bogey, to attempt to drive a wedge between the rising workers' and peasants' and communist movement on the one hand and the national movement on the other. This attempt failed miserably. The reader will have seen that all the documents of the communists of this period were within the framework of the programme put forward by the communists at the Gaya congress. The reader has also seen how the howl the imperialist press raised about the Gaya programme in December 1922 completely misfired and how generally healthy was the reaction of the nationalist press to the same. The sympathy and support which the communists prosecuted at Kanpur obtained from the general nationalist public in India is further proof that the attempt misfired.

The relevant para from the high court judgment is as follows .

"Whilst the conspiracy had for its principal object the overthrow of British rule in this country, the conspirators looked even beyond this. Exhibits 9, 9A, 11, 12, the pamphlet *What Do We Want?* and many other documents set out clearly what they aimed at achieving and how they hoped to achieve it. British rule, government by upper and middle class Indians alike, were to be swept away, the confiscation of property was to be wholesale. A 'people's party' was to be the initial step, having a public programme designed for their betterment which in no way offended against the law. Within that apparently harmless body 'illegal' activities were to be prosecuted by an inner party consisting of 'all the revolutionary nationalists'. Violence and destruction of property were to be encouraged and conflicts to be precipitated. At the propitious moment, resources and armed help were to come from the 'universal revolutionary party', i.e. the Communist International. Throughout the whole of this fantastic scheme no calculation is made of, no thought apparently given to, the forces which British and Indians alike would array against an enemy bent on their common destruction. In the event of the overthrow by force of arms of the British government, the revolutionaries proposed to sweep away all Indian political groups and labour organisations which did not come into line. The power of upper and middle class Indians was to be destroyed by taking from them all that they possessed."

The judgment has given a clearcut answer—though an implied one—to the question raised by the writer in the *Socialist* quoted above. The formation of a communist party, or for that matter a workers' and peasants' party, striving to unite and organising the workers and peasants and all nationalists and democratic forces in the country to fight for complete independence through revolution and bringing to its aid the fraternal solidarity of the world communist movement, represented by the Communist International, is ipso facto illegal. Such is the implication of the judgment. All the same the British government did not immediately impose a ban on the Communist Party or on the Workers' and Peasants' Party. In the latter part of the twenties, the workers' and peasants' parties actually arose as mass organisa-

tions, organising militant class-conscious trade unions and peasant demonstrations, putting forward a militant plan of fight for complete independence with a socioeconomic programme both inside the National Congress and outside. Against this, the British government launched the Meerut Conspiracy Case against 31 communist and trade-union leaders (1929-33). When even after this the campaign for militant strikes and popularisation of communist and revolutionary ideas continued to spread, the British government banned the Communist Party of India and all its branches, as well as a number of militant trade unions and many other organisations alleged to be led by communists in July 1934. This was accompanied by the mass arrests of communists, militant trade unionists and their detention without trial under the infamous Preventive Detention Act.

The articles and documents produced in this section speak for themselves. However, a brief introduction to each of them, highlighting the main points in each, would not be out of place.

The first document is an open letter from the Communist Party of India signed by M. N. Roy and addressed to the labour prime minister of Great Britain, Ramsay MacDonald and to the labour government and the British working class. This is dated 21 March 1924, i.e. four days after the first stage of the trial opened before the magistrate in Kanpur. The question raised here is : if communist and socialist propaganda, the formation of communist and workers' parties affiliated to the Communist International exist freely in Great Britain and in other parts of the British empire, why in India are these acts prosecuted as a "seditious conspiracy"?

It condemns the labour government for denying this right and makes a pointed reference to the strike and lockout of 150,000 textile workers of Bombay then proceeding despite firing on workers by the armed forces of the state. It asks : "Under such circumstance is there no need in India for a political party of the working class to defend its own rights and interests. . . ?"

The second document is "Will the British Labour Government Stand for This" dated 17 April 1924 written after the preliminary magisterial inquiry is concluded. Written by Evelyn Roy, it gives brief life-sketches of M. N. Roy, M. Singaravelu, S. A. Dange, Muzaffar Ahmad and Nalini Gupta. Pinpointing

the meaning of the trial, it gives three reasons: firstly, "to crush" the steadily-growing mass movement in India; secondly, "to terrorise" those who are seeking to study the ideas of "Russia's mighty social revolution" and of "national revolutions of other eastern countries"; and thirdly, "to prejudice the impending Anglo-Russian conference" on trade.

The third document is "Labour Justice", written after the session court had pronounced the sentences on the four accused on 22 May 1924. Roy points out that "the charge of 'attempting to overthrow the sovereignty of the king-emperor' could not be substantiated by the evidence produced even if the veracity and authenticity of the latter was taken for granted". Therefore, he adds, the programme of the Communist International was hauled in and the accused charged of forming a branch of that revolutionary organisation in India. Roy concludes: "The MacDonald government and for that matter the Second International are responsible for this action. The new policy of British imperialism is to come to some agreement with the Indian bourgeoisie. The corollary of this is to crush the labour movement. Mr MacDonald has been ordered to do this dirty job."

The next document—extracts from the defence speech of Dr Manilal, who conducted the case in the session court for the accused—appeared in the *Socialist* dated 2 July 1924 then being edited by K. N. Joglekar indicates the common defence line adopted by the prisoners and their lawyers in the court. Even according to Muzaffar Ahmad, Dr Manilal "was engaged to defend all the four accused" and he was the senior counsel.<sup>48</sup> Whatever Muzaffar Ahmad may say now, they all agreed to the line of defence adopted by the lawyers, Dr Manilal and Kapildeo Malaviya, which was frankly legal and not dominantly political as in the later Meerut Case. The shortcomings in Dr Manilal's arguments arose because of the faulty line of defence adopted. In such cases the proper thing to do was combining whatever legal defence is possible with full defence of the political stand and its popularisation from the dock as was done in the Meerut Conspiracy Case.

Then there is "Communism and the National Struggle"—a

48. *Myself and the Communist Party of India*, pp. 358, 360.

comment on the conviction of the four communist leaders to four years' rigorous imprisonment. It made two points. Firstly that the government is determined to crush every attempt to organise a mass party in India under the slogan of "full social, economic and political emancipation to the workers and peasants". Secondly, the article regrets that there was no public expression of protest against these unjust and barbarous sentences. It points out that against the arrest of Mahatma Gandhi in 1922, and against the conviction and hanging of Gopinath Saha in the beginning of 1924, there were also no very strong and organised mass protests. The article concludes: "There is... no organised force which comes forward to take up the fight in the Indian labour, saying 'Injustice has been done, it is for us to carry on the struggle.'" Actually, the struggle was carried forward. Kanpur Conspiracy Case arrests and convictions postponed the process of building the mass party of workers and peasants, but only for a couple of years. By the end of 1926 the process of building such a mass party began and in 1927 and 1928 workers' and peasants' parties appeared in Bengal, UP, Punjab and Bombay, with militant mass trade unions capable of staging big political actions.

The last document "Condemned" was written after the appeal of the four communists convicted by the session court at Kanpur was rejected by the Allahabad high court. Making a pointed reference to the earlier Peshawar Conspiracy Case it says :

"Seven youths were heavily sentenced at Peshawar; four others were more heavily sentenced at Kanpur and Allahabad. These eleven prisoners constitute the vanguard of the Indian working-class movement for the right of political organisation in its own defence."

Against this repression to crush the rising organisations of Indian labour, the article suggests, apart from forming defence committees and giving legal aid to fight their case, "The effective organisation of the Indian workers and peasants under efficient leadership to respond to the call for a general strike whenever their rights to agitation and organisation in the economic and political fields are violated..."

## 1. OPEN LETTER FROM THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA

To the Prime Minister of Great Britain, Mr Ramsay MacDonald,  
To the Secretary of State for India, Lord Olivier,  
To the Labour Government and the British Working Class,  
On behalf of the Workers and Peasants of India.

Right Honourable Sir, My Lord, Right Honourable Sirs and Comrades !

A trial is proceeding in India upon the outcome of which hangs, for the time being, the right of political agitation and association for economic ends of the three hundred million members of the Indian working class. A charge has been lodged in an Indian court by the chief of the secret service department, on behalf of the Indian government, against eight persons, including myself, for alleged "conspiracy" against the "sovereignty of the king-emperor", on the grounds that political agitation has been made among the Indian working class, and that a programme was issued for the organisation of the Indian working class into a political party of their own.

Six out of the eight accused, myself among them, are unable, even did time permit, to present themselves before the Indian court to defend themselves, four of these six being already interned without due accusation or trial, and the other two being banned from entering the territories of the British empire. The most arbitrary allegations have been made, without a foundation of proof, and the trial is proceeding to its close without any chance being given to show its true purpose nor the real issues at stake.

Gentlemen of the labour government and fellow-workers of Great Britain, it is not we eight accused who are on trial in Kanpur. It is the entire Indian working class and the idea of political agitation and organisation of the working class which awaits the verdict of the august court. The time-honoured

charge of "conspiracy" has been brought against eight individuals, in order to damn the growing working-class movement in India for social, economic and political emancipation as illegal. I therefore take the only means which is open to me to address you as the head, not only of the government of Great Britain but as the acknowledged leader of the British working class which has placed you in this high office to defend their interests and that of their class in other countries. On behalf of the toiling masses of India, I call your attention to this flagrant attempt to throttle the constitutional right of agitation, organisation and association which exists unchallenged in every other part of the British empire, and throughout the world. Many attempts have been made to abrogate this legitimate right of political propaganda and organisation among the workers of all countries, but everywhere it has been proven that such a right cannot be separated from the fundamental constitutional rights of freedom of press, speech and association which form the bedrock of every democratic bill of rights. Without such a recognition of this right of the working class to organise politically in its own defence, you, right-honourable gentlemen, would not sit where you are today. The struggles of chartism were in their time branded as seditious conspiracy but you are reaping today the fruits of the chartist victory.

Such a struggle is proceeding in India, not only on political but on economic and social lines as well. The movement is all-embracing and is revolutionary in the truest sense of the word, for in its course the entire outlook and condition of the people are destined to be changed. You cannot, even if you would, limit this great revolution to the upper nor even to the middle classes, it has already spread to the wide masses of the working population as well. The strike and lockout of 150,000 textile workers now proceeding in Bombay, in defiance of the bombs and machine-guns of British imperialism brought to defend the interests of Indian capitalism, proves this fact. To call such a movement, broadbased on fundamental human needs and aspirations, a "conspiracy" artificially fostered by a handful of agitators with foreign gold is to fly in the face of reality. The trial and conviction of dozens, nay of hundreds of individuals,

may delay, but it cannot prevent the steady growth of this movement of the Indian working class towards emancipation from the most unbearable and heartless exploitation it has ever been the lot of any working class to endure. Dozens of young men have already been arrested and imprisoned, others have been interned without trial, for the crime of having attempted to give leadership and direction to these growing aspirations of the Indian working class. A new term has been invented in India, not found in the penal code, for depriving these people of their liberty. The familiar but false and obnoxious epithet of "bolshevik agent". People have been found guilty and sentenced to punishment on this charge, without a shadow of proof or legality. We demand that you protest, as do we, against the allegation that in working for the freedom of the Indian proletariat and peasantry, we are working for anything but the interests of our class. Only the other day Bombay workers were shot down by the armed forces of the state, which combine with the capitalist class to prolong their starvation and misery, and to force them back to work on the terms which the employers dictate, at the point of the bayonet and by means of the machine-guns! Under such circumstance is there no need in India for a political party of the working class to defend its own rights and interests not less than for a party of the middle class, which claims for itself a larger stake in the country? Yesterday it was this claim of the Indian bourgeoisie that was persecuted and condemned as "seditious conspiracy". Today it is the claim of the Indian proletariat that meets with tyrannous suppression.

Were another party in power in England now, we could expect it to sit idly by, while the weapons of the bomb and the Star Chamber proceed unchecked in India. But you are a government of the working class, pledged to support the interests and welfare of your class wherever these are jeopardised. As a party, you have always proclaimed the international solidarity and brotherhood of the workers. As a government, you are bound to protect the rights of the Indian workers to freedom of political association for economic ends. Under cover of a trial of a few individuals charged with "conspiracy" for the crime of having preached wholeheartedly for the organisation of the Indian work-

ers and peasants into a political party of their own, a whole creed, an entire principle and the long history of working-class struggle for betterment is at stake, the creed and principle and tradition upon which you yourselves as a party and as a government stand.

Therefore, right-honourable and honourable gentlemen and fellow-workers of Great Britain, I call upon you in the name of the Indian working class and in the name of the Communist Party of India, whose right to exist as a legitimate organ of working-class opinion and aspirations is on trial in India today, along with the right of the Indian workers in general to organise themselves into a political party of their own—I call upon you as the elected representatives of the British workers, and upon these workers themselves to see that justice to the Indian working class prevails in India, no less than in other parts of the British empire. Has socialist and communist propaganda—that is to say working-class propaganda—been declared illegal in Great Britain and the dominions? Then why should it be illegal in British India? Have socialist and communist parties, that is to say working-class parties, been denied the right to exist in any other part of the British empire? Then why should Indians be denied that right? Does affiliation to the Third International constitute a crime on the part of the Communist Party of Great Britain, of Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa? Then why does such affiliation on the part of the Communist Party of India constitute “seditious conspiracy”?

The toiling masses of India will record the verdict of the British labour government upon this chapter in the history of their struggle for emancipation.

*On behalf of the Communist Party of India*  
MANABENDRA NATH ROY

21 March (1924)

(*Inprecor*, Vol 4, No 22,  
27 March 1924)

## 2. WILL THE BRITISH LABOUR GOVERNMENT STAND FOR THIS?

BY EVELYN ROY

The British government of India is perpetuating the best traditions of the late czarist despotism. And it is backed up in its exercise of unlimited autocracy by the strength and power of the labour government in Britain, which through parliament and the secretary of state for India exercises ultimate control over the lives and destinies of the 320,000,000 politically-disabled subjects of his majesty's great dependency. The latest example of governmental persecution in India (always excepting the chronic arrests, convictions and imprisonments, or imprisonments without conviction, which has become a matter of course in the daily governance of the country) is the trial now proceeding at Kanpur against eight Indians, arrested under section 121-A of the Indian Penal Code, which reads as follows:

Section 121. "Whoever wages war against the queen, or attempts to wage such war or abet the waging of such war, shall be punished with death or transportation for life, and shall forfeit all his property."

Section 121-A: "Whoever, within or without British India, conspires to commit any of the offences punishable by section 121, or to deprive the queen of the sovereignty of British India or of any part thereof, or conspires to overawe, by means of criminal force or show of criminal force, the government or any local government shall be punished with transportation for life or any shorter term, or with imprisonment of either description which may extend to ten years."

The charge, as may be seen, is a serious one, usually reserved for offenders of the first rank who have been implicated in acts of terrorism or concrete attempts to overthrow the government by force of arms. In the case of the eight persons now under trial in Kanpur, the application of this charge is unique in that it is based, not upon any terroristic act nor plot to use armed force, but upon the attempts of certain individuals to organise the Indian workers and peasants into a political party of their own for the improvement of their economic condition.

In other words, the charge of "conspiracy against the sovereignty of the king-emperor" is brought against eight persons who openly profess to be socialists or communists, and who have openly advanced the programme of socialism for the projected emancipation of the Indian working class.

It is precisely as though a magistrate's warrant were to be served upon the leading members of the Labour Party, the ILP, and the Communist Party for conspiracy to bring about the social revolution, which is included in all of their programmes. The only difference lies in the fact that these organisations happen to flourish in Great Britain, while the eight accused were born under the laws of India. For these eight individuals have done nothing which lays them open to conviction except to advocate the organisation of a political mass party of the Indian working class under a programme calling for their social, economic and political emancipation, in conjunction with the workers of other countries.

The preliminary hearings have been concluded, and the accused are committed for trial at the sessions on 22 April. In this preliminary hearing, the following accusations were lodged on behalf of the crown by the prosecution, with the director of the intelligence department as chief witness :

"The accused are charged under section 121-A with conspiracy to establish a branch organisation of the Communist International throughout British India with object to deprive the king-emperor of the sovereignty of British India. It is alleged on behalf of the prosecution that they decided to make use of the association of workers and peasants or people's party under the leadership of the accused, for securing complete separation of India from imperialistic Britain by violent revolution, with an economic programme of such character as to attract both workers and peasants. It is further alleged that the organisation was to have both a legal and an illegal basis, and attempt was to be made to secure control of the Indian National Congress. The conspiracy (it is further alleged) was to be financed by the revolutionary organisation in Russia, and an agreement constituting a conspiracy was arrived at by means of letters written by the accused to one another from various places, one of which

was Kanpur. It is also alleged that the accused introduced and circulated into British India proscribed newspapers, pamphlets and circulars of a revolutionary character."

As proof of these allegations, sixty out of eighty intercepted letters alleged to have been signed by Manabendra Nath Roy were presented, either in manuscript or photographed, by the chief witness for the prosecution (the head of the Indian secret service), who on cross-examination submitted the following :

"Information was received by the government that some persons whom the latter considered as Indian revolutionaries called a conference in 1921 at Moscow with a view to making arrangements for the furtherance of bolshevik propaganda. Finally one M. N. Roy was elected as the leader of the organisation. As a result of this information, government authorised the stoppage, interception and examination of postal letters addressed to certain persons. List of such persons was added to from time to time. The government of India ordered prohibition of certain newspapers and pamphlets under the Sea Customs Act. In course of time a number of letters, newspapers and circulars were obtained, some originals, some copies and some photographs of originals which were produced as exhibits."

So much for the charge and the evidence, which speaks for itself as to the nature of British rule in India. What proof exists for the allegations that a conference was called in Moscow for the object stated? On whose authority is the statement made that M. N. Roy was "elected chief of such an organisation"? Without the establishment of such facts in a court of law, by what right were the letters of certain individuals intercepted in the Indian mails? What was the nature of the newspapers, pamphlets and circulars, captured by the government, which caused them to be prohibited in India, when the same newspapers, pamphlets and circulars were permitted free and unrestricted circulation throughout other parts of the British empire? Granted, as alleged to be the case, that there existed an idea of "establishing a branch organisation of the Communist International in India"—wherein does such an object fall within the purview of the Indian Penal Code, when branch organisations of this same Communist International exist in Great Britain and

all the self-governing dominions, if by "branch" we mean to imply communist parties?

It is only in British India such a trial can be held on such a charge; that the organisation of a working-class party for political and economic ends, and the international affiliation of such a party to the international proletarian movement can be made to constitute "conspiracy". The question that arises instantaneously to the mind is this: "Will the British labour government, itself a working-class party organised for political and economic ends, with the object of changing the present order, and affiliated to an international working-class movement, stand for this? Will the various working-class parties and organisations of the British empire, whether labour, socialist or communist, permit this attempt to crush the Indian movement?"

What are the facts of the case, so carefully veiled in the censorship which permits only the barest outlines of this trial to be published outside of India?

M. N. Roy is one of the founders of the Communist Party of India, established in October 1920, as an open organisation with a programme which has been given to the world, and which embodies the main clauses of the minimum programme of socialism adapted to Indian conditions. It was this programme which was presented before the 37th session of the Indian National Congress at Gaya in 1922, and which, through the agency of Reuter, was cabled out to India and published in the Indian press, with the object of terrorising the Congress and preventing it from discussing any of the measures it proposed. He is the founder and chief editor of the *Vanguard*, the organ of the Communist Party of India, which circulates freely in all parts of the civilised world, India excepted. He is the author of several books and pamphlets, equally prohibited in India and equally permissible elsewhere, and of widely-read articles in the European press, in which his views, his programme and his tactics are openly expressed.

M. Singaravelu Chettiar is a venerable lawyer, native of Madras, who gave up his legal practice in response to the noncooperation campaign. He is a prominent congressman, held in highest respect and esteem by his countrymen, and active in the cause of

labour since the First All-India Trade Union Congress of 1920. In the Gaya session of the Indian National Congress, he proclaimed himself as a communist, and urged the organisation of labour under the nationalist movement. He was appointed member of a committee to organise labour on behalf of the National Congress. Since that time, he has been occupied with the publication of a weekly journal, the *Labour and Kisan Gazette*, the organ of the "Labour and Kisan Party of Hindustan", which calls for the organisation of a political party of workers and peasants under an economic programme, on the principle of nonviolent noncooperation. He holds various other prominent public posts.

S. A. Dange of Bombay is a young man under thirty, editor of the *Socialist*, a weekly paper devoted to propagation of Marxism and various radical ideas such as birth-control. He is one of the organisers of the Social-Democratic Club of Bombay and author of several books and pamphlets, among them a brochure entitled: *Gandhi vs Lenin*. He too is a congressman, known and respected in his province for his ability, intelligence and integrity to principle.

Of the other accused, R. C. L. Sharma is a political refugee from British persecution in French India, whither he sought refuge fourteen years ago on account of his political convictions; Muzaffar Ahmad and Nalin Dasgupta are educated college students who were suddenly seized and imprisoned without trial or charge last year, and kept so until present proceedings; while Maula Bakhsh and Professor Ghulam Hussain were each condemned to longterm sentences after a hasty trial on the indefinite charge of being "bolshhevik agents"<sup>1</sup>—the former is a college graduate, the latter a respected professor of Lahore, author of several books and ex-editor of a socialist journal.

This in brief is the character of the accused, whose efforts on behalf of the Indian working class it is sought to terminate on the vulgar charge of "conspiracy". For the crime of having studied, thought and written about the conditions of the Indian

<sup>1</sup> This is incorrect. Maula Bakhsh, i.e. Shaikat Usmani, and Ghulam Hussain were arrested on 10-11 May 1923 and detained under regulation 3 of 1818—C.A.

masses and for having advocated a means for their emancipation from political and economic exploitation, these eight individuals stand in danger of receiving the maximum penalty of the law. Their case is undefended ; no lawyer has come forward to defend them—the first case of magnitude brought in an Indian court against the leaders of the Indian working class, which will serve as a precedent for future cases. So little is the true nature and gravity of the issue comprehended in India as to allow such a case to go by default on evidence and charges that could not be substantiated in a court of law in any other part of the empire.

What is the real meaning of this trial at Kanpur, so suddenly sprung at this moment on evidence that was allowed to accumulate for several years ? Why has it been reserved for a labour government to bear the stigma of persecution of working-class organisation and propaganda in India ?

The answer is very simple. First of all, it was desired to crush the steadily-growing mass movement that manifests itself in every part of India today spontaneously and in response to imperative material conditions, and which the accused leaders but sought to guide and assist. Secondly, it is aimed to terrorise all those who—in response to the spirit of the age, as expressed in Russia's mighty social revolution and in the national revolutions of other eastern countries—seek to study the ideas which made them possible and to apply the lessons to India. Thirdly, it is designed to prejudice the impending Anglo-Russian conference by attempting to prove the existence of Russian propaganda and intrigue in British India.

Such tricks have been tried before and have failed in their despicable purpose. The Indian struggle for freedom, which owes so much and is destined to owe more to the moral and spiritual example of the mighty Russian revolution, does not depend on the latter for its steady and inevitable growth. The true impetus is supplied by the nature of British rule itself, with the unbelievable poverty, misery and exploitation which provides a fertile soil for the growth of a revolutionary mass movement. Nor will the effort to identify this movement with the futile and sporadic terrorism of the young revolutionary nationalists—an effort openly made by the authorities—be of use. The Communist

Party of India has always repudiated and continues to do so the use of such futile methods as bomb and the revolver against the all-powerful force of British imperialism. The one and only path to the true emancipation of the Indian masses lies in the international social revolution. Till that day comes, they must learn to organise in their own defence to win such material improvements of their lot as may be open to them through the use of those tactics employed by the working class everywhere against exploitation and oppression: Will the British labour government and British working class permit this struggle to be erased in blood and tears?

*(Inprecor, Vol 4, No 25,  
17 April 1924)*

### 3. LABOUR JUSTICE

M. N. Roy

The trial of the Indian communists at Kanpur has ended. Four of the accused present before the court have each been condemned to four years' rigorous imprisonment.

The history of this is more or less known, although the capitalist press and newsagencies maintained a strict conspiracy of silence. It was a trial of the Communist International. The act of accusation is a remarkable document. The charge against the men on trial was that they had relation with the Communist International, that they stood for the liberation of the Indian people from the yoke of British imperialism, that they proposed to organise the workers and peasants into a political party with the purpose of fighting for this liberation, and that in the programme of the projected party due consideration was given to the economic needs of the working masses. It would be interesting to quote the whole act of accusation, which is a rather lengthy document; but space does not permit.

The charge of "attempting to overthrow the sovereignty of the king-emperor" could not be substantiated by the evidence pro-

duced even if the veracity and authenticity of the latter were taken for granted. Therefore the programme of the Communist International was hauled in to prove the guilt of the men on trial. The act of accusation runs thus : the Communist International is a revolutionary organisation; it proposes to organise sections in the eastern countries, the object of the Indian section being to deprive the king-emperor of his sovereignty of British India.

Of course, there would be nothing extraordinary in this accusation, had not the trial been undertaken just at the moment when a "labour government" stood at the helm of the British empire.

It would be useless for Mr MacDonald and his colleagues to argue that they were not responsible for this outrageous action of the Indian government. Granted that the trial was undertaken without the consent of the labour government, there has been enough time for the latter to intervene if it wanted to. Even the *Daily Herald* and the *New Leader* raised the voice of protest against this persecution of the Indian working class. The government collectively and severally have been memorialised on the question. But Mr MacDonald kept quiet. What does it mean? It means that he approved of this persecution, which is not only a violation of the principle of democracy, but of the right of the working class to political and industrial organisation. Evidently, Mr MacDonald desires to carry his warfare against the Communist International into every corner of the globe.

There were three issues involved, in this trial, namely constitutional, political and legal. On each of these three points the case was against the prosecution. If anything was proved by the prosecution evidence, it was that propaganda was made by the accused for the organisation of a working-class party. But counsel for the prosecution himself admitted that to hold communist views and preach those views did not in themselves constitute a crime. Organisation of a communist party and to have relation with the Communist International cannot be unconstitutional in India if it is not so in other parts of the empire. Politically, the case was equally untenable. Self-determination of peoples is the order of the day. The leaders of the British Labour Party and the Second International are the incorrigible

champions of this doctrine of democracy. Therefore it cannot be a crime on the part of certain sections of the Indian people to express their desire to liberate their country from the yoke of foreign domination. The labour government might find all sorts of excuses to justify its failure to put its doctrine into practice; but to declare one's desire to break away from the empire can certainly not be punishable as a crime. Legally the case was altogether hopeless. No attempt was made to prove the veracity of the letters supposed to be written by me. Then, to have received letters written by someone does not by any code of law constitute a criminal offence. It was not proved that the accused before the court had any complicity with writing those letters, which were the only evidence on which they have been convicted. Letters supposed to be written by only two of the accused were produced, but the cross-examination by the counsel for the defence made it evident that those letters were not beyond the suspicion of forgery. With one exception, all the witnesses who testified in favour of the prosecution were police officers; and this one solitary exception was challenged by the defence as being a police spy. This challenge was not taken up by the prosecution. Much was made of the money received from the Communist International. But the government lawyer admitted that he could not prove his assertions, which the court took for granted.

Now leaving aside the broad constitutional and political issues, the condemnation of the four men cannot even be justified on the ground of legal technicality. It is therefore clear that these men have been sentenced to long terms of rigorous imprisonment simply because they are suspected of being in favour of organising a working-class party, with the object of securing the economic and political freedom of the people of India.

The MacDonald government and for that matter the Second International are responsible for this action. The new policy of British imperialism is to come to some agreement with the Indian bourgeoisie. The corollary of this policy is to crush the labour movement. Mr MacDonald has been ordered to do this dirty job. He is hobnobbing with the Indian bourgeoisie to convince them of the utility of British protection and on the other

hand rendering valuable services to the empire by stamping out the working-class movement, which is bound to be a menace to the policy of buying over the Indian bourgeoisie.

(*Inprecor*, Vol 4, No 32,  
5 June 1924)

#### 4. AN EXTRACT FROM THE DEFENCE SPEECH OF DR MANILAL

Dr Manilal in course of his defence referred to the contents of the bolshevik literature alleged to have been received by his clients and argued that there was no harm in holding communist views. Imperialism, he contended, did not mean sovereignty of his majesty over India. It was simply a black aspect of capitalism. If, therefore, M. N. Roy in one of his journals cried, "Down with Imperialism", there was nothing objectionable in it. Nor was there any remote hint of depriving his majesty of the sovereignty of India. Communism was nothing but an attempt to bridge the wide gulf that exists between the capitalists and the labourers in the matter of wealth and power and nobody should take any objection to this laudable aim of the communists nor to their attempts to bring about solidarity among themselves. International solidarity of the proletariat was nothing to be afraid of, anything more than a motor car or a steam engine. That, in fact, the object of various international labour conferences at Geneva was nothing else than solidarity of the labouring classes.

Some people might have wanted complete separation of India from imperialist Britain. But they had no quarrel with the king-emperor over his sovereignty of India. Dr Manilal asked: "Where was mentioned in any correspondence produced in court of depriving his majesty of the sovereignty of India?" It is not his majesty who is opening shops in India, running mills in Kanpur or Bombay, or coming to administer the civil services. Even if all the British traders in India and all civil and military offi-

cers became communists, his majesty has survived the revolutions in England since the time of William the Conqueror, notwithstanding that the gradual acquisition of power first by the barons, then by the commons and now as the first step by the people. Surely Communist Party in Great Britain does not mean to deprive his majesty of his sovereignty, but the Indian bureaucracy and those who exploit labour are pleased to see the use of section 121-A against those who appear to them to upset their scheme of money-getting. If the accused in court are conspirators and must be punished then the East India Company which conspired to deprive the Indian princes of their country ought to have been prosecuted. Surely the East India Company did not come to India out of spiritual or religious motives. But there is a great deal of prejudice against communism. It is here in India—why the very house where I stay at Kanpur was described by some as the rendezvous of communists.

*Judge to Counsel*: You are going too far. Come to the point.

*Dr Manilal*: I am only emphasising the fact that Roy knew that the word communism would be objected to in India and therefore wanted the party should be a secret body. To have a secret organisation is no crime. Why, the civil service men have a secret body. M. N. Roy also refers to illegal apparatus. But I challenge my friend Mr Alston to show anywhere in the documents one word where M. N. Roy speaks of this illegal apparatus as the one that was going to manufacture bombs or import ammunitions or to commit murders as you find in other conspiracy cases. It was not illegal to have a secret body.

Mr Alston intervening explained that the Communist Party was to have been a political direction of the masses.

Dr Manilal pointed out that to have a political direction of the masses is no crime. In Bombay and Calcutta there were bodies of industries who wanted to have a political direction of the masses. The civil service too have political control of India.

Proceeding Dr Manilal emphasised that in none of the letters put in as exhibits was there any agreement of any kind among the accused to conspire against the king-emperor. If an attempt to spread communism was to be treated as an offence of conspiracy

to overthrow the British then the spread of Hinduism or Mohammadanism was also an attempt to deprive the king-emperor of his sovereignty.

(*Socialist*, Vol 2, No 26,  
2 July 1924)

## 5. COMMUNISM AND THE NATIONAL STRUGGLE

The outcome of the Kanpur trial and the conviction of the four accused to four years' imprisonment revealed two facts : one, the relentless determination of the government to crush every attempt to organise a mass party in India under the slogan of "full social, economic and political emancipation to the workers and peasants"; second, the despicable cowardice of the nationalist press, which allowed this mockery of a trial and the travesty of justice which concluded it, to pass without comment. Was this notable omission due to fear of the bureaucracy, or fear for their own vested interests, on the part of nationalist politicians and publicists? Everyone knows the real issue at stake in this trial: the right of the Indian working class to organise politically for the defence of its economic interests, a right which has been illegally challenged under the false and misleading charge of a "conspiracy against the sovereignty of the king-emperor". The ignorance of the Indian masses of the true significance of this prosecution does not exonerate the Indian intelligentsia of its responsibility to defend the interests of those masses when challenged by an arrogant ruling class. The very proletariat of Britain rose in revolt at this attempt to rob the Indian working class of its rights, limited though its knowledge was of the facts of the case. An effective and vigorous agitation on the part of the Indian public would have forced the issue to quite a different conclusion. But no action was taken; instead, a pusillanimous eye was kept on Britain, and "Mr Lansbury's Defence Committee". If Indians cannot defend the rights of their working class at home, why should Mr Lansbury, at seven thousand miles distance, be expected to do so? A sense of honest shame

fills one's breast at sight of such rank inaction. It was similar inaction which permitted the arrest and conviction of Mr Gandhi, the idol of the Indian people, whom organised action and a call for a general strike would have very soon released. It was similar inaction which permitted the conviction and hanging of Gopinath Saha who, now that he is safely dead, is being held up to patriotic Indians as a martyr to the national cause. Similar agitation and the mobilising of public opinion before his execution, instead of waiting on his ashes to bewail him, might have saved his ardent life for future service to the cause of national freedom.

So it is with the four accused in Kanpur, victims of the fierce persecution which the Indian government reserves for all those who earnestly seek the true road to the emancipation of the masses. There is no voice in India capable of raising itself on behalf of the condemned: no organised force which comes forward to take up the fight in the cause of Indian labour, saying, "*Injustice has been done, it is for us to carry on the struggle.*" Instead of that, a whispered paragraph here and there, "The trial is finished; the accused condemned. we shall await with interest what action Mr Lansbury will take."

*(Vanguard, Vol 5, No 1,  
15 July 1924)*

## 6 INDIAN COMMUNIST DEFENCE COMMITTEE : APPEAL FOR FUNDS

*(In connection with the so-called Bolshevik Conspiracy Case,  
Kanpur, and the proposed Indian Communist Party)*

To Every Member of the Indian Public

Sir,

The Kanpur Communist Case was the first of its kind that was got up within the British empire. For your consideration we place the following facts before you.

(a) There is a Communist Party in Great Britain itself and

it speaks through the *Communist Review* (a monthly) and the *Workers' Weekly* and occasionally through the *Daily Herald* and the *Labour Monthly*.

(b) There is an Independent Labour Party of Great Britain which speaks through the *Socialist Review*.

(c) There is a Young Communist League in Great Britain which speaks through the *Young Worker*.

(d) In Australia there is a Labour Council (head-office Sydney); this council sent delegates to the Communist International.

(e) There is a Communist Party,

(f) A Labour Party and

(g) A Republican Party, in the Union of South Africa led by General Hertzog. They even demand secession from the British parliament.

(h) New Zealand has a Socialist Party just now challenging the government of the country.

(i) Egypt has a Communist Party led by M. Maroun.

(j) Ireland called the Free State has a Republican Party and

(k) A Communist Party.

(l) The government of Queensland is a socialist government which restricted the private rights of landlord over the produce of the soil by passing Pastoral Leases Act.

The existence of all these parties demanding the overthrow of imperialism whether British or otherwise proves that the constitutions granted by the king-emperor to these dominions do not find it an offence directed against king's sovereignty. As royal proclamations and the representatives of sovereign have recognised India's right to dominion status and moreover as the Indian colonies committee is given the right to negotiate directly with dominion representatives, which right is considered to be an attribute of dominion status, and, further, as India has been given a seat on the League of Nations, and is allowed to send a representative to the International Labour Conference, we have as much right to agitate against imperialism as the dominion subjects have.

In the proceedings of the case the prosecution counsel tried once or twice to state it openly that the prosecution was not

at all instituted against communism itself, but the court stopped the counsel and observed that it was not bound by the prosecution remarks and that it could sentence the accused even for their holding communist views if it thought it just. The court in the end seem to have studiously avoided to refer to the right of Indians of forming a communist party and holding communist views.

It therefore becomes an unavoidable duty of all those Indians who hold communist views to form themselves into an Indian communist party and to test thereby the attitude of the government towards this right of theirs.

The Communist Party of Great Britain have showed their friendly attitude towards the Indian communists from the very beginning. We on our part must do the needful propoganda and bring into existence a communist party in India so that no considerable part of the British empire be left without a communist party. We are the last nation within the British empire to do so and today is the time most suited for it.'

For these reasons :

Please help to defend the pioneers of this movement and to form the party for which they are vindictively convicted.

Taking it for granted that the British Communist Party is going to do nothing for us for the present and as we do not want the application for the appeal to transgress the 60 days' limit laid down by law, and

As by now we have exhausted all our powers along with the powers of the Labour Press, where Mr Dange's paper the *Socialist* was being printed, monetarily to arrange for the defence of the above four accused in the socalled Bolshevik Conspiracy Case at Kanpur, in the session court, Kanpur, we have no other alternative but to appeal to the goodwill of the public for funds required for their case in the high court at Allahabad.

Our needs amount to Rs 1100 for the pleader's fees and other court expenses with an additional amount of about Rs 400 for printing the case in English in book form; i.e. our need is Rs 1100 in the minimum and Rs 1500 maximum. The accused shall be at ease when the collection reaches Rs 1100 and we shall stop collecting this fund when it reaches Rs 1500.

I, with the kind collaboration of the undermentioned people, friends and colleagues of Mr Dange, have formed ourselves into the Indian Communist Defence Committee:

- (1) Trimbak Vishnu Parvate (B.A. Nath)  
Asst Editor, Lokamanya, Bombay.
- (2) Keshav Nilkanth Joglekar, B.A.

Manager, The Labour Press, Bombay.

I do not expect all subscribers to hold our views. I am also alive to the uselessness that comes out through unintelligent following. I am also conscious of the fact that those who have actually understood our political culture to such a level as will enable them to form their independent views about it are very few in number. Following, however, will come after propaganda and understanding. This will take time. Today I implore all, on behalf of the accused, to help us only with a view to enable us to get justice and nothing more. Intending sympathisers should therefore send their subscription to

VASUDEO HARI JOSHI,  
Private Secretary to Mr S. A. Dange,  
The Secretary,  
Indian Communist Defence Committee.  
c/o The Labour Press,  
388 Girgaum Road,  
Bombay No. 2.

(Socialist, Vol 2, No 26,  
2 July 1924)

## 7. CONDEMNED

The appeal on behalf of the four prisoners convicted at Kanpur to four years' rigorous imprisonment for their alleged activity in behalf of the Indian working class has been dismissed. The Allahabad court of appeals has upheld the judgment of the Kanpur district court, as indeed was foregone conclusion, and after a week's rehearing of the case for the accused, conducted

by Mr Kapildeo Malaviya, the proceedings were brought to an end by the judge, who confirmed the verdict already given of "guilty", and sent the prisoners back to jail to serve out their four years' sentence.

So ends the first attempt to affirm the right of the Indian working class to freedom of political association and organisation. Communism and communist parties have been officially declared to be legal, as indeed they must be, so long as similar rights exist unchallenged in other parts of the empire. But the attempt to organise the Indian working class into "political party, based upon the defence of its economic interests" will be henceforward punishable as "seditious conspiracy against the sovereignty of the king-emperor". The logic is obscure, but the facts are real. Communism as an academic study is legally allowed; applied to Indian conditions, it becomes "conspiracy". Such is the true meaning of the Kanpur judgment and the reaffirmation by the appellate court of Allahabad.

It is not generally known, even in India, that the Kanpur communist trial, grown suddenly famous thanks to the unexpected publicity given to it in Britain and the outside world under the regime of the labour government, had a more obscure predecessor. Two years before eight individuals returning via Russia from their fruitless khilafat crusade were arrested on the Indian frontier and cast into jail in Peshawar, where they languished for several months before being brought to trial. The trial as finally held, proved nothing but a farce. It was rushed through the court of a distant and backward province, far removed from the centre of Indian life and civilisation, and a sentence of two years' rigorous imprisonment was passed on all but one of the accused, on the charge of "bolshevik conspiracy". No facts were brought to prove this allegation, except the admitted fact that all the accused had passed through Russia on their way to Anatolia, whither they had wished to go to fight under the flag of Mustapha Kemal Pasha, in response to the appeal of the Indian Khilafat Committee. Forced by circumstances over which they had no control to spend some time in Soviet Russia, and thus to acquire a knowledge of the great revolution which was taking place round about them, these lads, for they were all in

their early twenties, turned their steps homeward after two years' wanderings and untold hardships, in the hope of applying to India the lessons they had learned on their travels.

This hope proved vain. Arrested on the frontier and cast into jail before they could even reach their homes, they were charged with bewildering crimes not listed in the Indian penal code, and railroaded into jail on the testimony of false witnesses and paid government spies. Their sole crime was to have been eye-witnesses to the stirring events of the Russian revolution, and to have seen perhaps the truth that underlay the thick coating of falsehoods spread by a malicious bourgeois press with the object of destroying the effects which such a mighty upheaval must inevitably have upon its eastern neighbours. Had they been left free on their return, perhaps these seven convicted lads might have raised their voices to proclaim the truth as they had seen it, and to denounce the falsehoods of the imperialist press. All of them were educated, of middle-class families, sufficiently intelligent to have exercised some influence upon Indian contemporary thought and politics. Therefore they were incarcerated, therefore they were tried and convicted on a trumped-up charge, sufficient to put them out of the way for a sufficient length of time to render their knowledge and abilities useless to the Indian body politic. This Peshawar trial, too little known to the general public in India or outside, was the first real communist trial in India; the Kanpur trial which followed it two years later, was the second. Seven youths were heavily sentenced at Peshawar; four others were more heavily sentenced at Kanpur and Allahabad. These eleven prisoners constitute the vanguard of the Indian working-class movement for the right of political organisation in its own defence. Shut off from all useful activity for the next several years, they must rot in jail awaiting the day of their deliverance, forgotten by the world, and by the very nationalists in whose cause, as well as the larger cause of the Indian workers and peasants, they laboured. Even the day of their release from prison will not mean for them the right to pursue unhampered those activities to which their knowledge and abilities call them. They will be watched, spied upon, hindered in a thousand ways known to a cunning bureaucracy, and

their first attempts to translate ideas into action will be instantly suppressed by renewed trials and convictions on equally *puerile charges and suborned evidence*.

What is the remedy for this state of affairs? The Indian working-class movement is still in its infancy, but it possesses sufficient inherent strength to defend its leaders, if guided aright. A general and widespread agitation on behalf of all those convicted or accused of activities in behalf of Indian labour; the organisation of defence committees to conduct propaganda within and outside the country, to raise funds, hire lawyers, issue appeals to the country on behalf of class-war prisoners, is the first step. The effective organisation of the Indian workers and peasants under efficient leadership to respond to the call for a general strike whenever their rights to agitation and organisation in the economic or political fields are violated—this is the second step in the resistance to imperialist oppression, whose object is to stamp out the germs of a militant labour movement in India.

Where are the leaders to replace those rendered silent and impotent by governmental tyranny? Let them come forward in their hundreds to perform the vast and fruitful work that lies waiting to their hands. The effective alliance of labour fighting under its own class-programme with the nationalist cause will spell death to imperialist domination and early freedom to the Indian nation.

(*Vanguard*, Vol 5, No 6,  
15 October 1924)

## 4. Strike Struggles and Fourth Session of the AITUC

### INTRODUCTION

The Labour Gazette of April 1930 in the course of an article on the statistics of industrial disputes in India for 1921-28, wrote about the year 1924 as follows :

“There was a marked diminution of industrial unrest in India, the number of disputes reported being 133 as compared with 213 in the preceding year, but these disputes were of greater magnitude. The general strike in the cotton mills of Bombay city, which occurred during the year accounting for the loss of about 7½ million working days, was greater in its proportion than any previous strike in the country. The dispute arose over the decisions of the Bombay Millowners' Association to withhold the payment of annual bonus for the year 1923 owing to trade depression. The strike lasted for over two months and involved over 160,000 workers. The local government appointed a committee of inquiry to investigate the matter in dispute and the findings of the committee were in favour of the millowners. The other important strikes during the year were in the Kanpur cotton mills and among the dock workers at Rangoon.”

The articles reproduced in this section, either from the Vanguard or from the Inprecor are mostly from the pen of

M. N. Roy and deal with the Bombay textile strike referred to above. The article referring to the fourth session of the AITUC, which took place in Calcutta in March 1924 and the question of international affiliation, will be taken up separately.

During the war and the immediately following postwar years, the industrialists in India, mostly those with capital in the cotton textile industry, made huge profits. Towards the end of early years of the twenties, their profits began to decline. In these years there were widespread strikes, and trade-union activities in Madras, Bombay and Punjab. The workers were striving to unite and struggle to improve their wretched and hard living and working conditions in the mills, factories and on the railways. Certain gains were made; hours of work were reduced, but the living and wage conditions of the vast majority of workers remained below subsistence level.

It was in these conditions that the Bombay textile owners, complaining of trade depression, took the decision not to pay the annual bonus for the year 1923. During the past five years, the owners had paid an annual bonus to their workers and were thus making some addition—not at all adequate—to the workers' miserable wages, while they themselves were continuing to make huge profits. The decision about the bonus was taken by the millowners already in 1923. Joseph Baptista, known as Baptista Kaka among the Bombay textile workers, was taking interest in the strike. He and N. M. Joshi in Bombay, B. P. Wadia in Madras, Miller, M. A. Khan and Dewan Chamanlal who were active among railway workers in the Punjab and Qutbuddin Ahmad, Mukundlal Sarkar and others in Calcutta were liberal and humanist leaders active in the early Indian trade-union movement. Militant trade-union leaders who based their work on class struggle were yet to take the field. S. A. Dange and K. N. Joglekar in Bombay, M. Singaravelu and his colleagues in Madras, Muzaffar Ahmad and the circle round him in Calcutta and Siddiqi and Ghulam Hussain in the Punjab were moving and writing on these lines in the journals run by them. But the Kanpur Conspiracy Case intervened before they could take actively to the field.

Baptista waited on the governor and wanted his intervention

towards the end of December when the millowners' decision became known. Nothing happened and the Bombay textile strike began on 15 January 1924 and soon 81 mills were closed. The mass meeting of strikers referred to in the second article in the *Vanguard* took place on 30 January. Baptista again called upon the government, from this meeting, to appoint an arbitration committee. On the same day the millowners declared a lockout. They refused to pay the bonus on the plea that their profits were declining. As pointed out in the article there was a diminution of profit from the abnormal figure of 200 per cent of the postwar boom to 70 per cent in 1921 and 40 per cent in 1923. But that was no reason to cut the already scandalously low wages by withholding bonus.

In the beginning of February one and a half lakh workers were on strike. On 4 February, the millowners gave an ultimatum to the workers that they either return to work or face unemployment. But the millowners could not get blacklegs to break the strike. The workers carried on the struggle, facing starvation and suffering. As the articles point out, the striking workers had no strike fund, proper leadership or experience. Only with "an instinctive sense of class solidarity and a small partially developed vanguard", they carried on their struggle and elected their own leadership from the ranks to present their demands before the employers.

On 11 February the committee of the Millowners' Association met to consider the strike situation. Apart from not paying the bonus for 1923, the question of wage-cut also came before the committee. There was division on this second question among the millowners. The resolution to maintain the wages for one year was defeated; but so was the move to cut wages and thus there was no decision on a future wage-cut. But there was unanimity on the refusal to pay the bonus. The result was that the strike continued. On 18 February the millowners extended their lockout by another two weeks. Many workers had gone back to their villages. The strike and lockout had gone on for some 30 days. Those who remained in Bombay were firm. They refused to go back till bonus was paid. But the condition of the workers was getting serious. The extension of the lockout was

meant to starve them into submission. To add to this, the millowners refused to pay the workers the wages that were due to them in January, before the strike commenced. Baptista as well as whatever organisation the workers had was not able to organise any relief for workers. According to the articles, the National Congress refused money for relief of the strikers.

At the end of February the government appointed an inquiry committee. This was due to the firmness of the strikers who stood united in one of the longest and biggest strikes in India so far. Now the millowners came out with a move to split the workers. On 7 March they put up notices opening the mills, asking the workers to return to work. At the same time Joseph Baptista who headed a strike settlement committee appointed on behalf of the workers advised the workers to go back to work in view of the appointment of the inquiry committee. A large number of workers, embittered by the starvation of long-drawn strike were in no mood to heed the call to surrender and they resisted the attempt of the millowners to get the workers back to work on 7 March by opening the mills. The police opened fire on the militant mass of workers who were resisting the opening of the mills at the gates. Five workers were killed and 13 were arrested on the framed-up charge of looting shops.

The long-drawn-out Bombay textile strike of 1924 reached its climax with the events of 7 March. The Bombay government in its statement in the Bombay legislative council had nothing to offer the victims of their brutal firing except "their sympathy". The government posted military patrols before the mills though they had to admit that "there was no serious damage to any of the mills". On 12 March the findings of the government inquiry committee were published. It upheld the millowners' contention that there was no "legal or equitable claim to the payment annually of a bonus" and that the profits for the year 1923 "do not admit of the payment of a bonus".

But the governor of Bombay thereafter intervened and informed the Millowners' Association that "January wages should be paid at once without affecting the question of bonus and irrespective of resumption of work by men..." When the last article on the strike in the *Inprecor* was written by Evelyn Roy,

the news of the end of the strike had not reached the writer. By the middle of March, the strike began to fizzle out after having lasted for over two months. That it was the biggest and most bitterly fought strike of the Bombay textile workers so far is shown by the fact that the largest number of workdays were lost in the strike, viz 7½ million. The total workdays lost in 1924 in all the textile strikes of the year throughout India were 6,711,407, which means that 7½ths of the total workdays lost were on account of the Bombay textile workers' strike affecting 51 mills and involving 160,000 workers. The workers lost. They were not paid the bonus for the year 1923; but the wage cut was postponed for another year. The general strike of the Bombay textile workers in the year 1925 was on that issue and the battle went on till the great general strike of 1928, which was led by a joint strike committee in which N. M. Joshi, S. A. Dange, S. S. Mirajkar, K. N. Joglekar, R. S. Nimbkar, A. A. Alwe and G. R. Karse came prominently forward as workers' leaders and which led to the formation of the militant Gimi Kamgar Union (Red Flag).

The article on "International Affiliation" was written with the forthcoming fourth session in Calcutta of the AITUC in view. The session actually met on 30 and 31 March 1924, but seems to have ended without transacting any business, according to a report in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* dated 1 April 1924. This article in the *Vanguard* points out that there are two international trade-union centres. The International Federation of Trade Unions of Amsterdam, to which the national trade unions of the western capitalist countries of Europe were affiliated, stood near the reformist Second International, i.e. Labour Socialist International. The second was the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU) with its headquarters in Moscow to which were affiliated many militant unions in western Europe as well as those from Turkey, Egypt, Dutch Indies, China and Japan. M. N. Roy points out that N. M. Joshi, the general secretary of the AITUC, had put forward the suggestion that the AITUC be affiliated to the IFTU. Roy points out that Indian labour leaders do not know "the intricacies of the international labour movement" and hence Joshi's proposal "will be carried without examination or opposition": As two inter-

national centres exist, Roy suggested that the question "should not be decided light-heartedly".

The interests of the British and Indian workers are inter-linked, Roy pointed out, especially those of lascars working on ships and of cotton mill workers and jute mill workers. Bad wages and working conditions of Indian workers in these branches would affect those of the British workers also. So they—the British workers—should stand for improving these conditions of Indian workers. But what is the stand of the British Trades Union Congress or the Amsterdam International on such issues? For instance, British marine workers want to exclude "coloured men" out of British ships. The labour government had put an excise duty on Indian textile industry, and the Indian millowners, instead of paying it out of their profits, were making it an excuse for proposing a cut in workers' wages. Condition of Indian workers in cotton and jute industries is miserable in comparison to that of their counterparts in British industry. Instead of raising their voice to improve Indian labour conditions, we have a British labour leader making the amazing suggestion that "the work time of the Asiatic children must be two hours longer than that of the west"! Roy rightly asks how can Indian labour "find the much-needed international protection and cooperation from the International which stands for such violation of the first principles of proletarian unity"?

Roy raises another question: "...the political question of national liberation ever remains the first concern of the Indian working class" and points out that the Amsterdam International and its political counterpart the Second International are not for granting dependent countries like India freedom and independence. This is well-known and on this point "labour" government dittoed the policy of the tory government. Thus we see that the Amsterdam International supports the policy of imperialism vis-a-vis the demands of the Indian workers and the demand of India for independence; while the RILU has gone on record fully supporting the militant fight of Indian workers for improving their living and working conditions and fully supports India's demand for independence.

Of course, the issue of affiliation was not taken up at the fourth session of the AITUC which as we have said even did

not transact any business. The issue came up in the succeeding sessions of the AITUC in the late twenties and the militant trade-unionists who came in the AITUC with the rise of the fighting trade-union movement prevented the affiliation to Amsterdam.

As for the fourth session of the AITUC, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* dated 1 April 1924 records that this session "which met in Calcutta University Hall broke up in disorder on the question of the constitution of the subjects committee". To begin with there was dispute whether the session convened by the reception committee constituted under the presidency of Mrs Santosh Kumari Gupta was in order or not. But as leaders and delegates from different parts had arrived, the question was settled in a meeting of leaders in which N. M. Joshi, Baptista and C. R. Das, the president of the session, participated and the session began. It appears that after the president of the reception committee had welcomed the delegates, there was a general speech by Qutbuddin Ahmad. Thereafter differences arose on the constitution of the subjects committee. There was pandemonium and the president adjourned the meeting.

Evelyn Roy, writing in the *Inprecor* of 17 April 1924 about the textile strike, says "When it (the session) finally met on 14 March<sup>1</sup> it broke up in a rain of abuse and all-round fisticuffs, without so much as giving one thought to the cause of the 150,000 striking millhands of Bombay, nor of identifying the All India Trade Union Congress with the greatest industrial struggle that has ever been waged in India."

1. This date is incorrect—C.A.

## 1. BOMBAY STRIKES

The capitalist offensive is in full swing in India. On the pretext of trade depression, which is a depression only in comparison with the abnormal profits made in previous years, the mill-owners of Bombay are determined to reduce the starvation wages of the workers. The persistent struggle of the Ahmedabad millhands may be renewed in Bombay. But the "labour leaders" are already in the field and are doing their level best to sabotage the resistance of the workers.

Mr Ginwala vacated his chair on the Tariff Board, on which he stoutly defends the cause of Indian capital, to rebuke the locked-out workers of the Matunga GIP railway workshop. The little disturbance there, which caused such a nervousness on part of the government and the railway company, was the result of the highhanded behaviour of some officials. Mr Ginwala, who is curiously the president of the Railwaymen's Union, declared in his speech to the locked-out men: "this lockout has alienated his sympathy with the workers of the Matunga workshop". Why? Because they "had no business to take the law in their own hand" even if assaulted brutally. The labour leader evidently believes that the law is too sacred a commodity to be touched by the low people. it should be administered only by and for the propertied classes. The champion of the proletariat was indignant because "certain damage is done to railway property", and admonished his flock to stop "hooliganism and prevent damage to person and property". He went further and laid down that the "duty of the union was to hand over the culprit to the police". He thought that the workshop was closed for proper reasons and declared that he would have done the same thing, if the workshop belonged to him. Fine labour leader!

If the mill-workers fail to put up a resistance to the offensive of capital, they will gradually lose the little ground they gained by their own strenuous efforts in 1920. Partial strikes at this

moment, when the owners are only too glad to close down, will of course be useless, and even harmful to the workers. But the situation is such that powerful direct action can be organised. The leaders, however, are against it. Every attempt is being made to dampen the zeal of the workers who are in a mood to fight for their rights. When partial strikes are useless, it is not necessary to suspend all action; but, on the contrary, it becomes necessary to adopt more revolutionary weapons, namely mass demonstrations, to be in the shops without working, etc. Besides, political character can be given to strikes. For example, the workers can demand the immediate removal of the armed forces and refuse to go to the factories unless the demand is complied with; meanwhile they can hold mass demonstrations in the streets. Then the railwaymen have expressed their readiness to come out on sympathetic strike. So there is an opportunity for a big revolutionary strike. So there is an opportunity for a big revolutionary movement. It will, however, not take place, because of the bourgeois leadership which is more interested in the maintenance of peace and order, safety of property, etc., than in the defence of proletarian interests. The pernicious character of pacifism is again exposed. While the owners are using all means of violence and coercion with the aid of the state, the labour leaders are preaching nonviolence and constitutional action.

(*Vanguard*, Vol 4, Nos 3-4,  
15 January & 1 February 1924)

## 2. BOMBAY STRIKE

(FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT)

BOMBAY, Feb. 2: The strike in the cotton industry is completely general. 81 out of the 83 mills are closed down. The number of workers involved is over 150,000. The attitude of the owners is defiant. The circular issued by the Millowners' Association says that if the workers do not resume work unconditionally within 24 hours, the period of lockout will be extended another two weeks. It is evidently expected that the resistance

of the strikers will be broken down by that time and they will accept the terms dictated. But the workers are no less firm in their demand. They are determined to hold out until the employers agree to continue the payment of the yearly bonus, which amounts to a month's wages. In spite of their splendid spirit and paralysing of the entire industry, the workers are not the masters of the situation. Unfortunately this fight, which exclusively concerns them, will not be conducted strictly according to their interests and desire. The labour leaders in this country do not necessarily adjust their action to the interest and will of the working class. They do not consider what the workers do want, but what they should want and how they should proceed.

Nevertheless the attitude of the owners in this case is so obviously outrageous that the locked-out men have the sympathy of the public. The nationalist press, which is usually very moderate in its criticism of the capitalist during strikes, is on this occasion tuned to a stronger tone. The discontent among the workers is so acute that the leaders also find it necessary to be careful in choosing their words in addressing strike meetings. The tone of rebuke and sermon so usual to our labour leaders is not to be heard this time. They did their best to prevent the strike. Of course they told the workers that they were advising them not to strike considering their (the workers') interest. The protestation, however, did not work. Batches of workers began to down tools in one mill after another until a large number of the mills were affected, and the owners replied by a general lockout.

The owners refuse to pay the annual bonus on the plea that the industry has been going through a period of serious depression for more than a year. This is, of course, not true, although it is a fact that the rate of profit has been steadily going down from the abnormal over hundred per cent level of the postwar boom period. It was 70 per cent net in 1921 and 40 per cent in 1923. Granted that the decrease has gone on in some proportions, the reports of the last year will not corroborate the contention that the industry is losing money. On the other hand, the real value of the wages has gone up by 12 per cent over the prewar level; and it should be remembered that the workers in

the Bombay cotton industry were scandalously underpaid before the war.

In short, there could not be a clearer issue on which the workers' fight could be resolutely fought. But already the leaders are summoning up their courage and have taken the first step to break up this splendid fight, which otherwise would end in certain victory. It is nonsense to argue that the employers wanted the men to strike so that they could close down the industry. The employers cannot continue indefinitely in this insane policy. An idle mill costs them dearly every day. The stock accumulated in godowns is after all not so much as to last more than a few weeks if the production is suspended. Then there is the fear of leaving the market open to the invasion of additional imported goods. All these considerations are very weighty, and the owners will not be unmindful of them. The consideration, on the other hand, is the power of resistance of the workers. Given their economic bankruptcy and absence of union fund, there must be apprehension on this score; but here we have the undaunted zeal of the workers which is not only expressed in words, but has been proved in fact on previous occasions. In the mass meeting held day before yesterday, a number of strikers spoke. Their comrades responded to them with the promise to hold out even for months if necessary.

But the intervention of the leaders has already begun. They are telling the workers that their cause will be harmed if they continued the strike. Their exaggerated concern for the welfare of the workers makes one remember the proverb—she is a witch who is more affectionate than mother. Day before yesterday the leaders attended the meeting in full force and coaxed the men to pass a resolution praying the governor to appoint an arbitration board and declaring that the work will be resumed as soon as this board is appointed. So it is not premature to declare that the strike is killed by the leaders, whose faith in deputations seems to be inordinate. Mr Baptista, who sponsored the resolution, had waited upon the governor at the head of a deputation but a month ago and was sent back with a homily on trade-unionism. But his zeal is boundless when a strike is to be brought to a speedy termination. The workers will return to their posts leaving their demands to be discussed. We know

what such a resolution ends in. There is the experience of Ahmedabad on the same bonus question, and of Jamshedpur. Mr Baptista gently rebuked the workers for having gone on strike without appealing to him for advice. He informed them that in that case he could help them get the bonus without the resort to strike. But it was in July last year that the employers declared their decision to suspend the payment of bonus. Why did not Mr Baptista take action and make it unnecessary for the workers to bear the burden of a strike by securing them the bonus constitutionally?

(*Vanguard*, Vol 4, No 6,  
1 March 1924)

### 3. INTERNATIONAL AFFILIATION

By M. N. Roy

In the coming session of the All India Trade Union Congress the very important question of international affiliation will be raised. The nationalist movement can remain content with its isolated character; in fact its very nature and philosophy does not very well permit it to have a healthy international connection. It may seek to create "public opinion" in this or that country or it may talk of an impossible Asiatic federation; but it is obviously against entering into any organic or political relation with a revolutionary international body. The cause of this attitude is simple; the Indian nationalist movement, as any other nationalist movement, being essentially a bourgeois movement naturally seeks the sympathy and alliance of the corresponding class in the international sphere. But in the present epoch of history the bourgeoisie of all countries, whose sympathy or support counts for anything, are decidedly imperialistic, therefore hostile to the aims and aspirations of the subject peoples. To an average nationalist, international relations mean (in the absence of the possibility of diplomatic relation) the amorphous sympathy of the upper classes of other countries, or the questionable patronage of some government or other, which at a given moment happens to be in open con-

flict with the British. The bourgeoisie of a dependent country cannot have the coveted place in the so-called comity of nations; that is, they are not looked upon as equals by the bourgeoisie that rule the world. Therefore a nationalist movement, which is bourgeois par excellence, does not and cannot have organic and political international relations.

This however cannot be so with the Indian working class, in spite of the undeniable fact that, being the most vital part of the Indian people, the question of national freedom is its first preoccupation. The Indian working class must participate in the struggle for national liberation; indeed this historic struggle will be brought to its final victory not only by the energy and sacrifice of the working class, but under its revolutionary leadership. But the working class is not engaged in this struggle only for national independence as such. It participates and will eventually lead this movement, actuated by its class interest. This being the case, the Indian working class is engaged in a fight which objectively transcends national boundaries and which must be fought on an international scale. Its alliance with the bourgeoisie of its own country is but temporary, while its relation with the working class of other countries is organic, being based on permanent interests.

Apart from this far-reaching consideration, there are more immediate reasons why the Indian working class must have international affiliation. These reasons lie in the very vital questions of wages, hours of labour, working conditions and general welfare of the working class. Capitalism today operates on a worldwide scale. It reduces the standard of living of the entire working class by cleverly playing one section off against the other. The protection of working class interests therefore demands an international working class organisation. Indian workers being practically helpless victims of native and foreign capitalist exploitation must join some such international organisation. Therefore the question of international affiliation is one of the most vital questions before the Indian working-class movement. It should have been raised and decided before; but the immaturity of the movement did not permit it. But the interest of the movement does not allow any further delay.

This very important question, however, should not be

decided lightheartedly. There is no use of adhering to an international body just for the sake of adhering. Before adhering to an international body, it should be examined whether it stands faithfully by the principles of internationalism; it should be investigated whether the history of that particular body proves that it has defended the interests of the working class under all circumstances or it has betrayed the working class in critical moments. Because if it is seen that even the European proletariat with its powerful organisation has been betrayed, the helplessness of the weak and badly-organised Indian labour will be evident.

Now it seems almost certain that the Trade Union Congress will declare for its adhesion to the International Federation of Trade Unions, commonly known as the Amsterdam International. It will do so because the suggestion to this effect has come from Mr N. M. Joshi, who has the reputation of being the oldest and sincerest labour leader of India. Mr Joshi's knowledge of the condition of Indian labour is vast, and he is somewhat acquainted with the international labour movement. It is more reasonable, therefore, that he should think twice before he commits the Trade Union Congress to a certain line of policy. Given the general ignorance of the intricacies of the international labour movement prevailing among the Indian labour leaders, Mr Joshi's proposition will be carried without examination or opposition. The responsibility of the move, therefore, solely rests upon him. But is it wise to determine the international affiliation of the Indian working class so lightheartedly?

An appreciation of the importance of international affiliation seems to be lacking among the leaders of the Trade Union Congress. As we understand from a bulletin issued by the secretary, the attractiveness of the Amsterdam International consists only of the fact that on its executive board there is a seat reserved for an Asiatic delegate, and that affiliation will result in the occupation of that seat by an Indian. No question of programme and principle is raised. It is not at all enquired if the interests of Indian labour will be protected by this particular international. It is not considered whether the policy of that particular body has been friendly or hostile to the in-

terests of Indian labour. It is not examined if the aims and aspirations of the Indian working class are compatible with the tradition and policy of the Amsterdam International. Besides these questions, which touch the Indian labour movement directly, there are greater questions of programme and principle involved—questions which should be carefully examined before affiliation, if affiliation will not be only an act of formality or of fashion. But here we may leave aside these questions and deal with those immediately concerning Indian labour.

Before adhering to it, one must know something of the constitution and policy of the Amsterdam International. Although its headquarters are in Holland, it is controlled by the British Trades Union Congress. Politically it is guided by the recently patched up Second International (renamed at Hamburg Socialist and Labour International) which again is dominated by the British Labour Party. This fact by itself certainly does not speak against the Amsterdam International, because, looked at from the workers' point of view, there cannot be any serious quarrel between Indian and British labour. But unfortunately it is also a fact that the attitude of both the British Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party has so far been anything but friendly, not only to Indian national interests, but to the class interest of the Indian labour as well. The incidents that bear out this statement are innumerable and are quite well known to Indian labour leaders, particularly Mr Joshi. There are three sets of Indian workers whose interests demand an immediate international settlement. They are the lascars, cotton mill workers and jute mill hands. The interests of the British and Indian workers engaged in these three branches of industry are so closely interlinked that the welfare of both demands international cooperation and organisation. What has been the attitude of the British Trades Union Congress, and for that matter of the Amsterdam International on this question? The anxiety of the leaders of British marine workers to keep the coloured man out of British ships is notorious; the attitude taken by them after the "SS Egypt" incident is not yet forgotten; and H. Gosling and Havelock Wilson exercise great influence in Amsterdam. The leader of the Lan-

cashire Textile Union, Tom Shaw, now the labour minister in MacDonald's cabinet, is a stout champion of the excise duty on the Indian cotton industry, a duty which is not paid out of the profit of the millowners, but deducted from the wage bill. No British labour leader has paid any attention to the inhuman exploitation of Indian workers in Calcutta jute mills, an exploitation which undercuts the workers of Dundee. It was Miss Margaret Bondfield, president of the general council of British Trades Unions, who in the Washington Conference (1920) insisted that the work-time of the Asiatic children must be two hours longer than that of the west. Is it not placing inordinate faith in human sense of justice and charity to expect that Indian labour will find the much-needed international protection and cooperation from an international which stands for such violation of the first principles of proletarian unity?

There is another aspect of the case. It is political. The Indian labour movement can never dissociate itself from the struggle for national freedom unless it desires to become a handmaid of imperialism. Therefore, without in the least minimising the importance of immediate economic issues, it must be admitted that the political question of national liberation ever remains the first concern of the Indian working class. This being the case, it must know what attitude the international it proposes to join takes on this all-absorbing issue. Here the Amsterdam International is put to the acid test and found woefully unsuitable to our purpose. Both the Amsterdam International and its political counterpart, the Second International, are pledged to the policy of keeping the "backward peoples in civilising subjugation". They fully and unconditionally subscribe to the Versailles treaty and the covenant of the League of Nations—the infamous instruments of imperialism. Even a large section of the bourgeoisie has revolted against these notorious documents; but to the Amsterdam leaders they have become articles of faith. The attitude of the British labour government at last graphically demonstrates what can Indian labour expect from such pseudointernationals.

We do not propose to recommend an alternative just at this moment. What we do suggest, however, is that the question of affiliation should be extensively discussed before any decision

is arrived at. Sufficient information about the international labour movement should be made available to Indian labour so that the very important step can be taken intelligently. It should be made known that besides the official labour bureau of Geneva and the Amsterdam Federation, there is still a third international working-class organisation which embraces that very numerous section of the European proletariat which is too revolutionary to conform with the policy of the Amsterdammers. It is the Red International of Labour Unions, with headquarters in Moscow and international bureaus in central Europe and in Britain, besides sections in practically all countries with an advanced labour movement. Large bodies of workers in Turkey, Egypt, Dutch Indies, China and Japan have declared their adherence to it. While the policy of the Amsterdam Federation is determined by a few leaders, often in consultation with the employing class, in their closed conferences, the Red International holds annual congresses which are attended by delegates sent by the workers themselves, and it is in these congresses that the programme and policy of the international movement are settled after a free and frank debate. Politically, the Red International frankly stands for the freedom of subject nationalities, and all its national sections are strictly bound to give every form of assistance in carrying out this policy. Industrially it has taken up the task of organising an International Transport Workers' Union, which will include all workers irrespective of colour. The demand is equal pay for equal work. It carries on an incessant fight against not only the capitalist class, but also against the labour aristocracy which has turned the international into a farce, which stands for white supremacy even among the proletariat, and which uses all means, fair and foul, to prevent the proletariat from rebelling against the present system.

These few words are by way of information. The concrete suggestion we make is this. In its coming session, the Trade Union Congress should discuss the question of affiliation tentatively. No decision should be taken. An expert committee should be elected to collect materials concerning the various international organisations for the information of the unions. The materials collected from all available sources should be given wide publi-

city in several vernaculars. The second thing to be done will be to send a small delegation to Europe with the purpose of attending international congresses and conferences. In doing so, the delegation will be able to see for itself to which body the Indian labour movement can affiliate itself profitably. The delegation can also visit individual countries and acquire firsthand knowledge of the state of affairs in the international proletarian movement. The question of affiliation will be finally settled after the efforts of the expert committee have enlightened the rank and file on the matter, with the help of material information and after the delegation has submitted its report and the report has been widely circulated. We consider our proposition to be quite careful and democratic and thus worthy of acceptance.

(*Vanguard*, Vol 4, No 6,  
1 March 1924)

#### 4. SOME FACTS ABOUT THE BOMBAY STRIKE

By EVELYN ROY

150,000 mill-operatives, including 30,000 women and children, have been on strike and locked-out of the textile mills of Bombay for nearly three months. All the mills of the district, 83 in number, are closed down. The question at issue is the payment of the annual bonus to the operatives, in addition to their usual wages. In July of last year, the owners put up a notice that the usual bonus, received by the operatives during the last five years and regarded by them as a form of supplementary wages, would not be paid. The men did not heed the notice, most of them being illiterate, and it was not until the end of the year when the bonus became payable, that they realised the issue at stake. A strike was declared in the middle of January, followed immediately by a lockout on the part of the owners, with the idea of forcing the men back to work unconditionally.

The monthly wages of Bombay mill-operatives are Rs. 35 for

men and Rs 17 for women, for a ten-hour day. This sum is insufficient to maintain their bodily health and strength, or to provide them with the most elementary necessities. For this reason, during the height of the postwar boom-period, when mill profits scored to several hundred per cent, the annual bonus was granted as a form of supplementary wages. The cost of living has risen (according to official figures) 58 per cent since 1914; profits have risen from Rs 674 lakhs in 1917 to Rs 1559 lakhs in 1921, with a slight falling-off in 1922-23. The cotton-mill workers are proverbially underpaid and overworked, with the result that they are always heavily in debt to the moneylender. Their right to organise into trade unions is not legally recognised; they have no regular labour organisations and no union fund. Their leaders, up to the time of the present strike, were drawn from the ranks of the bourgeoisie—lawyers, politicians, philanthropists and professional labour leaders, who were closer in interest and sympathies to the employing class than to the workers. They sabotaged every attempt to strike on the part of the latter; they took the part of the employers in every decisive issue; they used their influence to keep the men at work and satisfied with the old conditions instead of attempting to better themselves. The government, which affects to remain neutral in labour disputes, has never hesitated to call out armed police and military to aid the employers in guarding their property and crushing a strike.

Thus every institution and condition was against the success of the present strike, as has been the case of previous ones. Yet the textile workers of Bombay have maintained their struggle for three months in the face of all odds; they have remained peaceful and nonviolent in the teeth of the most open provocation; they have repudiated their old leaders and elected new ones from their own ranks to present their demands before the government and the employers; they have endured with marvellous fortitude the sufferings of hunger and privation throughout the whole of the strike period. They have never wavered in their demand for the payment of the bonus as a prerequisite for returning to work; they have maintained their solid front against the efforts of the employers to entice a part of them back to work, and against the sabotage of the government and

the public, which has refrained from giving them any concrete help during the long and bitter dispute.

The textile workers of Bombay are dying in the streets from starvation. Their January wages, already earned before the declaration of the strike and lockout, have been illegally withheld by the owners. The grain dealers and provision shops have long ago refused them credit. They are unable to pay their rent for the miserable rooms in which they huddle by tens and dozens in the infamous Bombay chawls (tenements). The workers have never possessed any material resources to carry them from one day to the next, nor any central fund to maintain them in time of strike. They are sticking to their demands in the face of slow starvation. Appeals to the public for material help, and to the government have met with no response. The charitable associations of Bombay are all controlled by the Millowners' Association and have refused to give aid to the strikers. The legislative councils, both national and provincial, have made no move to come to the assistance of the sufferers. The Indian National Congress, which at each of its annual sessions since 1916 has pledged its support to the cause of Indian labour, refused to sanction the granting of a sum for supplying grain or credits to the starving strikers. The All-India Trade Union Congress, which presumes to lead the struggle of the Indian workers against the employing class, has never so much as mentioned the *Bombay strike*, nor sent one of its office-holders to the scene of the struggle to investigate and guide it, nor issued a single appeal on behalf of the starving strikers. The fourth annual session of the All-India Trade Union Congress which was scheduled to be held on 7 March, the very day on which the workers of Bombay were being shot down by the guns of the police and military, deferred its session indefinitely because of internal quarrels and factional disputes among its officebearers. When it finally met on 14 March, it broke up in a rain of abuse and all-round fisticuffs, without so much as giving one thought to the cause of the 150,000 striking millhands of Bombay, nor of identifying the All-India Trade Union Congress with the greatest industrial struggle that has ever been waged in India.

The British labour government and Labour Party, which rule the destinies of the Indian people today, have limited their inte-

rests in the fate of the starving Bombay workers on strike for a living wage to a statement in the House of Commons that the matter "has been left to the government of India". While in Britain the dockers' strike, the tram and bus strike, and other threatened strikes received the immediate and closest attention of the government—in India an industrial dispute affecting the welfare and very lives of 150,000 workers, to which must be added their families and dependants and reaching out in its consequences to the very shores of England in its effect on the Lancashire textile industry, has been allowed to proceed for three months without a motion to interfere on the part of the labour government, nor a gesture of sympathy or solidarity on the part of the Labour Party.

The British labour government and the British Labour Party have permitted the striking and locked-out millhands of Bombay to die in the streets from starvation, to be shot down by the rifles of armed police and military, without using their supreme power as head of the British empire, to bring this strike to an end and to secure victory to the just demands of the Bombay workers.

What are the facts of this strike? In what way is it proceeding, and what will be the result of a defeat of the workers, both in India and in Great Britain?

The present struggle is more than a mere demand for payment of bonus on the part of the workers. It is an offensive on the part of Indian capitalism (which includes both Europeans and natives) against the Indian working class to reduce still further its already pitifully low standard of living. It was intended to follow up the refusal of the bonus with a cut in wages. The comparative lull in the textile industry was seized upon by the owners as a favourable moment to cut into the wage bill, which had been slightly raised during the boom period in response to the rise in the cost of living and the consequent strike wave that visited Bombay in 1919. Such an offensive had already taken place in Ahmedabad, where the workers were forced to accede. The Bombay millowners were prepared to close down for a short time, to force the men to submit to the new conditions. The strike of the operatives in January was promptly replied to by the declaration of a two-

week lockout. It was held that this period would suffice to bring the men to their knees. In spite of the opposition of their so-called leaders who, having failed in all their efforts to prevent the strike, tried by every means to persuade them to resume work unconditionally, the workers instinctively realised that more than the bonus was at stake—if they yielded, the next attack would be directed against their wages. Therefore they held firm, and the lockout had to be extended for two further successive periods of two weeks. At the close of each one, unsuccessful attempts were made by the owners to reopen the mills with black-leg labour. Signs were posted saying that if the men would resume work the owners guaranteed not to reduce wages, but nothing was said about the bonus. The men held out, and at the end of six weeks, the owners began to feel the effects of the complete stoppage, and division arose in their own ranks. At a meeting of the Bombay Millowners' Association, a strong Indian minority was for granting the demand for bonus, but a slight majority against it carried the day. In the battle between Lancashire and Bombay, in which Lancashire textile products are protected at the expense of native industry, it is the Indian workers who must pay the difference in a lower wage bill to permit the Indian textile industry to thrive.

At the end of six weeks, in response to the urgent demands of the workers and the pressure of public opinion, the governor of Bombay Sir Leslie Wilson, who had refrained from taking any action calculated to bring the dispute to a close, appointed an inquiry committee with power to investigate "the customary, legal or equitable claim of the men to payment of bonus". This committee had neither power to recommend nor to arbitrate; despite the request of the workers, no representative of labour was included among its members, appointed from the prominent capitalists and government henchmen of Bombay. It was a move to gain time by appearing to do something and to drag out the negotiations, until the workers would be forced to surrender. This committee held three sittings, extending over a period of two weeks. Appointed on 29 February it published its findings on 12 March, five days after the events of 7 March when protest meetings of the strikers were fired upon by the police, resulting in five killed, four wounded and thirteen

arrests. The decision of the committee caused no surprise, given its nature and composition : it declared that : "The millworkers have not established any enforceable claim, customary, legal or equitable, to the payment annually of a bonus..." and that "the results of the working of the mill industry as a whole for the year 1923 are such as to justify the contention of the mill owners that the profits do not admit of the payment of a bonus".

On 7 March, just before these findings became public, a notice was posted on all the mill premises to the effect that : "To all workers willing to resume work unconditionally, the mills will be opened for resumption of work on 8 March, and two days later the January wages will be paid." The notice was signed by S. D. Saklatwala, chairman of the Bombay Mill-owners' Association. The result was tragic, and till present writing, unexplained events of 7 March, when in reply to some stone-throwing on the part of assembled groups of strikers gathered together to discuss the notice, police fire was opened without warning on the unarmed crowd, killing five and wounding four. Thirteen workers who attempted to loot a grain-shop were arrested.

This brutal massacre, which roused a storm of indignation in the Indian public mind, was brushed aside by the Bombay government with the single statement in the Bombay legislative council on 8 March that "the government desire to offer their sympathy to the victims, particularly in view of the very creditable behaviour of the men hitherto... Military patrols have been called out, but it is hoped that it will not be necessary to use them unless absolutely essential to preserve law and order." Asked by a member if there was any loss to property as a result of the acts of the strikers, the home member replied : "I understand there has been some window-breaking and some looting in the mills. But so far, I have no information of any serious injury to any of the mills."

The events of 7 March precipitated long-delayed action on the part of the Bombay government, and the Millowners' Association was informed by his excellency that : "January wages should be paid at once without affecting the question of bonus

and irrespective of resumption of work by the men, and that the nullowners should meet the representatives of the men to discuss the questions at issue." It should be remembered that this tardy step to effect negotiations was made two months after the beginning of the dispute, which had plunged 150,000 workers, together with their wives and families, into the direst distress and the whole industrial life of Bombay into an abnormal state. Would a similar strike of such dimensions have been allowed to drag out its course in Lancashire without some action being taken by the labour government?

Yet still another month has been allowed to pass without any decisive action being taken to bring the dispute to a close. The latest reports bring news that the striking operatives, exhausted and starving, have appealed to the government for help to assist 50,000 of them with their wives and children to be repatriated to their villages, where they hope to find some kind of work. Fifty thousand have already found their own way back to the country districts—the remainder, three times fifty thousand at the least if we count those dependent upon them, remain in Bombay to fight it out to the end, performing casual labour subsisting on precarious charity or dying outright in the streets of Bombay. The government has been asked to provide them with some form of work to enable them to survive the struggle. A few of the smaller mills are reported to have opened, to which a few thousand men had straggled back to work. But the overwhelming majority remain firm to their voluntary pledge to abstain from rejoining the mills until their original demands have been met.

The British Labour Party, in power today as the British labour government, has it *within its means* to save the Bombay workers from death by starvation, and from the lingering existence which exploitation renders worse than death. It can send material help to support the starving strikers, and it can demand arbitration of the dispute in a manner fair and just to the cause of the Indian working class.

Upon the outcome of this strike hangs the fate, for the next few years, of the Indian textile workers in their heroic struggle for a living wage. And upon the payment of living wage to the

Indian textile workers depends the future well-being of the textile workers of Great Britain, whom the Indian workers are being forced, against their will, to undercut. The Bombay strike is but another instance of the fact that the international proletariat must hang together or they will hang separately.

*(Inprecor, Vol 4, No 25,  
17 April 1924)*

## 5. India at the Fifth Comintern Congress

### INTRODUCTION

The two articles each from the *Vanguard* and *Inprecor* show how India was reflected at the Fifth Congress of the Communist International which held its sessions in Moscow from 17 June to 8 July 1924. According to the report in *Inprecor*<sup>1</sup> M. N. Roy was elected to the presidium of the congress and to the political and programme commission in the opening session. He was also one of the three comrades from India who were elected to the commission on the national and colonial question.

The *Vanguard*<sup>2</sup> published the agenda of the congress which included the following items: "Lenin and the Communist International, economic situation of the world, report on tactics, trade unions, national question including the attitude of the communist parties towards nationalism, the revolutionary movement in the east and in the colonies, the negro question, organisational problems, the peasant international, international communist youth movement, reports of sections, co-operation, elections to the executive committee.

"Invitations have been issued to the affiliated parties and

1. Vol 4, No 34, 18 June 1924.

2. Vol 4, No 9, 1-15 April 1924.

groups of all countries. The Communist Party of India is entitled to send delegates."

In the course of his report on the organisational question, Pyatnitsky gave a statistical table prepared by the mandate commission, showing the figures of the membership and candidate membership of the affiliated parties at the fourth and the fifth congresses. The number of communist parties listed was 46. India was No 41 but no membership figures were listed against it. In the remark column against India it is written "illegal".<sup>3</sup> On the next page of the same issue, there is another table which gives the number of delegates "with decisive vote" present at the congress and the number of "mandates" allotted to them. Against India we find noted "2 delegates" and "10 mandates". These two delegates are "with decisive vote" and India had no delegates "with consultative vote". According to the information Chinmohan Sehanavis got from the Institute of Marxism-Leninism in Moscow, the two delegates at this congress were M. N. Roy and Mohammad Ali. But we have seen that on the commission for national and colonial question there were three comrades from India.<sup>4</sup> Who then was the third Indian comrade without decisive vote? This is likely to be Clemens Dutt, who was later associated with M. N. Roy and Mohammad Ali and the three formed "the foreign buro" of the CPI described and defined in a later constitution of the party (1927).

The first point on the agenda was "Lenin and the Communist International" in the course of which tributes were paid to the great departed leader as the founder and leader of the Communist International.

This was followed by the report made by Zinoviev on the activities and the tactics of the ECCI between the fourth and the fifth congresses. We have reproduced here Roy's intervention in the course of the debate on Zinoviev's report on 20 June 1924 in which he makes a plea for a strong communist party in Britain which should extend its activity empirewide, supporting the liberation struggle of the peoples of the colonies. He also makes a pointed reference to the fact that the majority

<sup>3</sup> *Inprecor*, Vol 4, No 57, 12 August 1924.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, Vol 4, No 34, 18 June 1924

of the British working class is dominated by the reformist ideology of compromise with imperialism. This was strikingly demonstrated by the fact that the "labour" government headed by MacDonald, which came to power with the votes of the working class, was continuing the same old tory policy of suppressing the struggle of the Indian people for independence and democracy.

Arthur MacManus, a delegate from Britain, read out a protest against repression in India. He referred to the Kanpur Conspiracy Case and to the arrest and trial of 111 peasants of UP for resistance against landlord oppression. The Comintern expressed its solidarity with the workers and peasants of India fighting for their just and democratic demands. This protest was unanimously adopted.

The resolution adopted on the ECCI report contained the following paragraphs on the national and colonial question:

"17. On the national question, the executive had frequent occasion to remind many sections for whom this question is one of the greatest importance, that they were not carrying out the decisions of the Second Congress satisfactorily. One of the fundamental principles of Leninism, that communists should resolutely and constantly fight for self-determination, rights of nationalities (secession and the formation of independent states), has not been applied by all the sections of the Communist International in the desired manner.

"18. In addition to winning the support of the peasant masses and of the oppressed national minorities, the executive committee in its instructions always emphasised the necessity for winning over the revolutionary movements for emancipation of colonial peoples and for all peoples of the east so as to make them the allies of the revolutionary proletariat of the capitalist countries. This requires not only the extension of the direct contact between the executive and the national-emancipation movement of the orient, but also very close contact between the sections in the imperialist countries with the colonies of those countries, and in the first place a constant struggle against

imperialist colonial policy of the bourgeoisie in every country. In this respect the activities are everywhere still very weak."<sup>5</sup>

The report on the national and colonial question was made by Manuilsky. A resolution in connection with this report correctly stated that in order to win over the people of colonial and semicolonial countries there must be a "further development of the direct contact of the executive with the national movement for emancipation".

Roy it seems moved an amendment to this stating that while generally keeping in touch with the national-liberation movement as a whole direct contact must be maintained with "the revolutionary element of the same". This amendment was rejected in the commission on the ground that it did not correspond with the (Lenin's) theses adopted at the Second Congress. These theses had clearly stated, "All communist parties must support by action the revolutionary liberation movements in these countries. The form which this support should take should be discussed with the communist party of the country in question, if there is one." The freedom movement in India as a whole was in general content and aim anti-imperialist in spite of its vacillations because it was directed towards taking the destiny of India away from the hands of foreign imperialism and into the hands of the people. The Communist International supported the national-liberation movement as a whole in this sense, while assessing the correct role of the different elements within it. The task of the genuine revolutionary (i.e. communist) element in the national-liberation movement is to win for the movement as a whole the support of the International, while it is yet striving for winning the majority of the movement for its policies.

Roy, as is clear from this *Vanguard* version of his speech on the national question, did not agree with the idea of according overall support to the national-liberation movement without reservations. Roy argues thus: "...for instance, a movement which might have had a revolutionary significance in 1920 is not in the same position in 1924. Classes which might have been allies of the revolutionary proletariat in 1920 will not be allies

5. *Ibid*, Vol 4, No 91, 17 July 1924.

in 1924." Hence he points out "the danger of rigid formula" and wants "to rectify a fundamental error". The actual record of the discussion which took place between Lenin and Roy on the noncooperation movement of 1920 and the role of Gandhi in the commission on the national and colonial question at the Second Congress is not available to us. But E. Komarov, a Soviet scholar who has studied this record, writes the following in a recent article "There were particularly sharp differences between him (Lenin) and M. N. Roy over the attitude to Gandhi."<sup>6</sup>

The essence of Roy's sectarian approach here is the contraposition of the national-liberation movement to the rising revolutionary workers' and peasants' movement in the colonies. This was stated quite bluntly in Roy's original draft of his "Supplementary Theses" in para 10, the whole of which Lenin cut out.<sup>7</sup>

It is surprising that Roy reverts to the same position in 1924, after the question was again fully and thoroughly discussed and decided in the discussions at the Fourth Congress (1922) which adopted a detailed theses on the question in the light of actual experience of the national-liberation movement in the eastern countries. The theses of the Fourth Congress clearly repudiated this contraposition and worked out the tactic of united anti-imperialist front.<sup>8</sup> This tactic enables the revolutionary elements, particularly the communists, in the national-liberation movement to counteract the vacillating and compromising policies of the national bourgeois leadership and to develop the independent organisational strength and striking power of the workers' and peasants' movement. Roy himself had stated this in his report on the "eastern question" at the Fourth Congress.<sup>9</sup>

But in 1924 Roy again reverted to the dichotomy and to the contraposition noted above. In the last para of his speech, he himself answers the question: "The direct contact of the Comintern must be with the social class which is most revolu-

6 E. Komarov, "India's Movement and the Soviet Union", *Soviet Review*, No 41, 29 August 1972, p 37, for a fuller discussion see Volume One, pp. 156-71, also 178-88.

7 Volume One, pp. 186-88

8. Ibid, pp 531-55

9 Ibid, p 545, last para.

tionary, and the separate conditions of each country must be analysed from this point of view."

This is incorrect. The position of the Comintern has always been in the spirit of Lenin, viz to support the national-liberation movement as a whole in as much as it acts and struggles against foreign imperialist rule, at the same time striving to keep direct contact with the revolutionary elements. If this were done in the spirit of contraposition, it could only create insurmountable difficulties for the revolutionary element, i.e. for the communists, in the task of building the broad united anti-imperialist front for ensuring final victory.

We have thus placed in sharp focus the policy worked out by the Fifth Congress for the work of communists in the national-liberation movement in colonial countries, particularly in India. It has nothing to do with the contraposition between the national-liberation movement and the movement for socio-economic changes, which Roy was proposing in his speech. Communist policy is based on a coordination of the two movements. It is only when the working class in close alliance with the vast mass of peasantry and the revolutionary democrats comes forward to make the greatest sacrifices in the national-liberation struggle while simultaneously fighting for its own demands and for those of its allies that it can become a dominant force in the struggle. It would then be able after political independence is achieved to ensure that further development towards economic independence does not take place along capitalist lines but along new democratic lines, so that the growing over of the bourgeois-democratic revolution into a socialist revolution is rendered possible.

The Fifth Congress concluded with the election of the new executive committee (ECCI). Roy was elected to the ECCI from India; from the USSR Zinoviev, Bukharin, Stalin, Kamenov and Rykov were members, while Sokolnikov, Trotsky, Lozovsky and Pyatnitsky were candidates; from Japan was Katayama; from Bulgaria Kolarov was member while G. Dimitrov was a candidate; from Great Britain, Pollitt and MacManus were members while Stewart and Gallacher were candidates; from Ukraine Manuilsky and Frunze were members; from Italy Bordiga and Ercoli were members; from France Semard and Doriot;

were members; from Germany there were 3 members with Thaelmann among the candidates and from Finland and Baltics there was Kuusinen, while Clara Zetkin and Bela Kun were members in their personal capacity.<sup>9</sup>

In conclusion, it should be mentioned here that the British government was keeping careful watch on the proceedings of the Fifth Congress. In the confidential file of the government of India we have a brief but accurate report of the congress—mostly made up by the intelligence branch of the then newly-established British embassy in Moscow—which is a copy of London file sent to Delhi.<sup>10</sup> The report is all made up from the published report in the Russian press. It gives the agenda, the names of the presidium, a bad summary of M. N. Roy's speech on the national question and the composition of the new ECCI elected at the congress. The report, it is stated in the file, was received on 5 August 1924, i.e. before the details of the election of the ECCI appeared in the English edition of the *Inprecor* on 12 August 1924. There is no comment on the proceedings in this file.

To complete the record, we give a brief report of the concluding speech which Manuilsky made on the national question on 8 July in which he sharply criticised M. N. Roy's approach to the national question.

9. *Inprecor*, Vol 4, No 57, 12 August 1924. In the first session of the newly-elected ECCI held on 8 July 1924, M. N. Roy was also elected as a candidate member of the presidium of the ECCI.

10. Home-Pol. Progs. F. 6/vii, 1924.

## 1. INDIAN WORKERS ATTEND THE FIFTH WORLD CONGRESS OF THE CI

The notice of the celebration of the Fifth World Congress of the Communist International appears elsewhere in our present issue, together with the agenda. It will be seen that among the most important subjects up for discussion is that of the colonial and subject countries of the east. This is one of the reasons why the Communist International as an organisation has special interest and significance to the Indian people. It is the only international organisation which approaches this problem from a revolutionary and fearless standpoint, and which does not hesitate to point to a revolutionary solution. The national and colonial question has appeared on the agenda of all congresses of the Communist International ever since the Second Congress held in 1920, when Comrade Lenin presented his world-famed thesis on the colonial question. Every year the problem is studied afresh and new viewpoints, new tactics discussed and adopted in accordance with the changing international conditions, but always from the standpoint of the revolutionary working-class movement.

It therefore becomes important for all those Indians wishing to participate in the international working-class movement towards political, economic and social emancipation, to follow these congresses very carefully, and to participate in them when possible. For the Communist International has clearly stated that the fate of the international proletariat and that of the subject nations is inextricably woven together, combating as they do against a common foe, international capitalism and imperialism. Indian working-class organisation and those of revolutionary nationalism in search of international affiliation can find no other organisation than the Communist International which stands up for the full right of self-determination and unqualified freedom.

Affiliation to and participation in the congresses of the Com-

munist International are forbidden only to Indians. All other countries where working-class parties exist are free to unite themselves openly and unmolested beneath the banner of the Comintern. The trial now proceeding at Kanpur seeks to deprive Indians of that right and to condemn such affiliation as illegal "conspiracy". Such attempts only prove the fear of the government and the righteousness of our cause.

*Workers of India, send your delegates to the Fifth World Congress of the CI.*

(*Vanguard*, Vol 4, No 9,  
15 April 1924)

## 2. ROY'S SPEECH IN THE FIFTH SESSION

Comrade Roy (India) said that the emphasis on the importance of the English question in Comrade Zinoviev's speech was opportune but belated. The stronghold of bourgeois dictatorship was now England, and if we did not take note of this we should not reach our desired goal of world revolution. The English bourgeoisie was now taking the lead towards the recovery of the bourgeoisie throughout the world. Hence the necessity for a strong British Communist Party, but a statement of the necessity left us a long way from achievement of the fact. It was a complicated task. Comrades Murphy and Petrovsky had not pointed out the facts quite clearly. He wondered also if the difficulties in England were clearly recognised by the Communist International.

We tended to forget the fact that the British Isles were only the apex of a much greater economic and financial domain. If we ignore the existence of the roots which fed this central body we should continue to make mistakes. We must remember the historical development of the British working class. We know that the British labour movement developed simultaneously with British imperialism. The British proletariat is soaked through and through with the spirit of British imperialism. The British Communist Party must get to grips with this fact. Hitherto the British party has failed to find the way to grapple

with this problem and the Communist International has not showed it the way. To give this lead to the British party is now the task of the Communist International.

Comrade Roy challenged Comrade Petrovsky's statement that the British working class was showing dissatisfaction with the MacDonald government. While we know that the British working class would develop in a revolutionary direction, we must be realistic and admit that at present that class was still faithful to its reformist leaders and even to the bourgeois system of government.

The task of the British Communist Party transcended the boundaries of the British Isles. Because of the fact that the British bourgeoisie depends upon the existence of a proletariat which is bribed at the expense of workers in the other parts of the British empire, the British party must make its activities "imperial"<sup>1</sup> in scope. The formation of the desired mass communist party could not be accomplished only by activity in England, but must be achieved by activity throughout the empire.

(*Inprecor*, Vol 4, No 42,  
17 July 1924)

### 3. NATIONAL QUESTION IN THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

(We reproduce a part of the debate on the national and colonial question as discussed in the recent Fifth World Congress. A complete report will be published as soon as it is available, below we give excerpts from the report of M. N. Roy who was called on to open the debate [in the 21st session of 1 July 1924 — C.A.] and who, together with Manuilsky, was the principal reporter on the subject in this year's congress — EDITOR).

It is no longer necessary to emphasise the importance of the question of the colonial and semicolonial lands today. Their

1. The word "imperial" is used in the sense of "empirewide" as the next sentence shows—C.A.

importance has become almost axiomatic for the Communist International and its sections. If sufficient attention has not been given to the question, this is not from any lack of sentimental appreciation of its importance, but because it has not been theoretically understood. The theses of the Second Congress gave us the essentials of the whole affair. We all accepted them and professed to determine our activities by them. But our difficulties and misunderstandings arise from the fact that few of us have really studied or tried to apply these theses. Before proceeding to a review of the revolutionary movement in the colonial and semicolonial countries, since the Fourth Congress, it is necessary to recall the theses passed by the Second Congress, as only by understanding these theses shall we understand the significance of past events and of the present movement in the colonial countries, and be in a position to mobilise the forces of these oppressed countries for the revolutionary movement.

I must first point out that in the resolution on the report of the executive there is a clause which does not correspond with the theses passed by the Second Congress.

My amendment was rejected on the ground that it was not in accord with these same theses but I want to prove that it is the resolution which does not correspond with the theses, and which is totally mistaken when considered in the light of the events that have taken place since the Second Congress. The resolution says, that in order to win over the people of colonial and semicolonial countries, there must be a "further development of the direct contact of the executive with the national movement for emancipation". It is true that we must always have a connection with these national movements, but it seems to have been overlooked that these connections have not always been successful. To quote again from the theses of the Second Congress: "All communist parties must give active support to the revolutionary movement of liberation, their form of support to be determined by a study of existing conditions." For instance, a movement which might have had a revolutionary significance in 1920 is not in the same position in 1924. Classes which might have been allies of the revolutionary proletariat in 1920 will not be allies in 1924. Here is the danger of

rigid formula and the cause of our inefficiency, futility and lamentable lack of any activity in this sphere. If we are to improve we must rectify this fundamental error. Again the theses of the Second Congress show us our way by pointing to the importance of a class movement. "We must try as far as possible to give the peasant movement a revolutionary character, to organise the peasants and all the exploited into soviets and thus bring about the closest possible union between the communist proletariat of Western Europe and the revolutionary peasant movement of the east, and of the colonial and subject countries."

As Marxists we know that in the colonial countries capitalism is not well developed (and it is mere romanticism to speak of a revolutionary proletariat there). But there are masses of peasants and the importance of the revolutionary movement is there. The united front must be extended beyond capitalist countries to the peasants in exploited countries. And this is most important in imperialist countries like England where there are no peasants except in the colonies, so that without an extension of the slogan of the worker's and peasant's government to the colonies, this slogan can have no reality. The theses of the Second Congress also stated that it was the duty of the International to support the revolutionary movement in the colonies and in backward countries for the exclusive purpose of uniting the various units of the future proletarian parties and educating them to the consciousness of their specific task, that is to the tasks of the struggle against the bourgeois-democratic tendencies within their respective nationalities.

If this is our task, then we must have direct connection with the masses but the resolution says, that we must have a direct connection with national-liberation movement. These include all sorts of classes and aims. We shall never progress if we stand by this vague formula, our failure hitherto has been due to theoretical confusion.

What practical result has our connection with the national-liberation movement had hitherto? None, except in one or two cases where a nationalist state government has had friendly relations with the Soviet state. But we are not talking of such

relations but of the revolutionary movement and the connection between the east and west. To understand this, we must analyse the social composition of all the different classes in all these different countries, and then lay down a general law. For instance, the colonial countries themselves may be divided into at least three groups : (1) countries where feudalism is still the dominant form, (2) semicolonial countries having the semblance of a national state, but dominated financially and militarily by imperialist countries, (3) pure colonies completely dominated by imperialism.

The first group plays no great revolutionary role at present, because although there are frequent revolts of the oppressed, they are disorganised and spasmodic and frequently led by reactionaries, priests, etc. It is difficult to give a revolutionary direction to them, but they should be recognised as allies and supported by something more than resolutions.

In the second group, e.g. Persia, China, etc., it is also difficult to find a uniform political character among the social classes. But this is all the more reason for giving a careful attention to facts and not being misled by glittering formulas.

It is necessary to clear up a misunderstanding on one point before going further. It is not true to say that I am in favour of self-determination of the toiling masses and not of self-determination of nationalities. The self-determination of all oppressed nationalities must be advocated, but we must find out how they can realise self-determination. By admitting the self-determination of oppressed nationalities we must not admit the self-determination of the bourgeoisie without admitting that of the masses. But neither has the proletariat alone a right to self-determination. All classes have a right to it. But we must analyse social conditions in order to understand what class is going to play the most important part in obtaining it. The leading them, and must have its direct contacts with that class.

Manuisky said that in the last year there had been a great revival of the national movement in British India. As matter of fact last year was a period of the worst depression in the

nationalist movement there. In 1920 and 1921 this movement led by bourgeois and petty-bourgeois leaders struck terror into the hearts of British imperialists but that period is now past. It is misleading to suggest otherwise or to quote the Bombay strike as a proof of the power of the nationalist movement.

What was the Bombay strike? In any other country it would have been considered as of the first revolutionary importance, but because it happens in a colonial country no one knows anything about it. 150,000 men and 30,000 women struck for three months against Indian and British capitalist imperialism—it was a true revolutionary movement, and had nothing whatever to do with the national movement. Its origin lies in the conflict between Indian and British capitalistic interests in the textile trade. During the war and afterwards, under pressure from the government which desired peace, some small wage increases were given to the workers. When the owners tried to take this away the workers refused to accept their conditions. In came the nationalist leaders—petty-bourgeois humanitarians, radicals and fabians who still lead the trade unions—and told the workers to accept the starvation wage offered for the sake of national interest. If they did not, Lancashire cotton would come in and undersell Indian cotton. But for the first time in history the Indian workers repudiated their leaders and went on with the fight. Yet this is quoted to illustrate the recrudescence of nationalism. The workers were left to struggle without their leaders, people were killed by machine-guns whenever there was the slightest disturbance, the lockout was imposed upon 83 mills. There were many deaths from starvation and when at last a relief committee was organised, the National Congress refused to contribute to it. Such is the recrudescence of nationalism.

Manuilsky also quoted the struggle of the peasants. But these are signs of decomposition in the national movement the form of which—the united front against foreign domination—is dead. The struggle of the peasantry is the class struggle of the exploited peasantry against Indian landlords. It is parallel to the struggle of the Indian town workers against Indian capitalists. Thus the national movement is split. In 1920-21, the revolting peasantry and proletariat were led by bourgeois and petty-bourgeois who, however, failed to understand the significance of the revolution-

ary forces they have called into action. Now this nationalist movement is split by a class struggle. With which class are we to have our "direct contacts"?

The petty bourgeois are still linked in thought with feudalism and landlordism and are separated from the masses, but if we organise the peasantry and the workers they will force the pace for the petty bourgeois who are now ready to compromise with imperialism for the sake of peace and money. If they find that by fighting for more they gain support from the masses in their fight they will grow bolder and less inclined to compromise. No foreign country can dominate another unless it first wins over a section of the people. This imperialism has always done, choosing sometimes one class and sometimes another. In India where national capitalism is growing rapidly the national bourgeoisie has been won over to support the empire and has even demanded in a recent manifesto that military power and foreign relations should remain in the hands of the British government. Why military power? Because the Indian bourgeoisie knows better than any one else that the discontent of the masses is economic and not nationalistic, and exploiting class in India demands protection from the exploited. Indian capitalism is running straight into the arms of the British imperialism and the same tendency will soon be seen in other countries.

After the congress had voted, Roy took another quarter of an hour for his speech, he turned to the question of Egypt and pointed out that Zaghlul who is now in power there had used more revolutionary phrases than any one and had been accepted by the Egyptian people as their leader. But Zaghlul came into power by exploiting the nationalist movement of the masses, and he is still merely exploiting them. They had supported him without asking for anything for themselves, and they were getting nothing—neither economic nor political change. The whole central committee of the Egyptian Communist Party were in jail, where they were being brutally ill-treated. Thus we see clearly that a nationalist liberation can only take place when imperialism is overthrown, and the Egyptian proletariat though young and inexperienced must lead the peasantry in this task. The communist attitude towards the Egyptian bourgeois and petty bourgeois should be to encourage them to fight against

imperialism and to put forward always stronger demands, supporting them in refusing compromises.

In conclusion Roy said that after the debate on this important question it should be approached in the commission on the broad lines above indicated. The direct contact of the Comintern must be with the social class which is most revolutionary, and the separate condition of each country must be analysed from this point of view. Every section of the International must be given its special task, in order that national sections may not be reproached again with negligence which has not been their fault

(*Vanguard*, Vol 5, No 2,  
15 August 1924)

#### 4. CONCLUDING SPEECH OF MANUILSKY ON THE NATIONAL QUESTION

Some deviations were recorded by the commission. Roy as at the Second Congress exaggerated the social movement in the colonies to the detriment of the national movement. He thinks that the year 1922 was characterised by the decomposition of the national movement. We have nevertheless witnessed the success of this movement in Turkey and in Egypt. He goes so far as to say that the national movement has lost its character of the united front of all classes of an oppressed country, the new period was beginning in which the class struggle is becoming transported into the colonies.

Let us grant that in India there has been relative development of the class struggle. But to generalise this to all the colonies would mean to lose sense of reality. During last year in Tunis and Algier we had altogether no more than 8 strikes, involving 800 workers!

Roy wants to dissociate himself from the old error of Bukhann who recognises only the right of self-determination for the working class and not for the nationalities. In reality, he falls into a similar error, and even in an aggravated form because it is a question of the backward countries. He admits for in-

stance that in Central Africa the national movement has not even started. Under these conditions, how could he maintain that the first stage of the struggle was terminated and that we were now entering upon a period similar to that of the European countries where class struggle exists.

In regard to the colonial question Roy reflects the nihilism of Rosa Luxemburg. The truth is that a just proportion should be looked for between the social movement and national movement. Can the right of self-determination be in contradiction to the interest of the revolution? Had Roy put the question in this manner, one could discuss with him.

To quote but one instance, after the October revolution the Finns asked for their separation. To grant this separation meant to detach them from the Russian revolution in order to hand over to a bourgeois state a territory that was now a part of a country which was ruled entirely by proletarians. Nevertheless bolsheviks were in favour of separation because it was a means of formidable agitation against bourgeois solution of the national problem. The fact is that no general formulae can be given; concrete cases have to be decided upon according to the situation.

An "error of equal gravity" was found to have been committed by Kreibich. He thinks that the Czechoslovakian party should not permit the separation of the German territory from Czechoslovakia on the plea that there was no separate movement among the Germans. Even if that be true, the argument was unsound because bolshevism always insists on the absolute right of nations to dispose of themselves. Kreibich even urged *before the commission* that the only thing could be inscribed in Czechoslovakian programme is autonomy. This is nothing but a survival of the old bourgeois democracy.

To make things worse, Kreibich takes a leftwing position in his party on the national question; the rest of his comrades have refused autonomy even to Slovakia. This constitutes a shade of nationalism, which must be firmly combated. We can be unanimously opposed by bourgeois opinion, but must have the courage to face it because it is the only way to consolidate a communist party.

The same was done by Varsky, who asserted in the Polish sub-commission that nowhere in Poland there was consolidated German majority. But we know that in Upper Silesia, in a district like Kattowitz, only 4000 out of 27,000 voters declared themselves for Poland! Two-thirds of the population of Upper Silesia, in spite of the dictatorship of the armies of the entente, have declared themselves for Germany. The Polish comrades should take the proper view of the Upper Silesian problem as well as in the case of Lithuania. They have recognised the right of the White Russian and Ukrainian population to unite with the Soviet Republics. They should take one more step.

In regard to controversial questions, I propose that a commission be appointed comprising Bukharin, Manuisky, MacManus, Petrov, Treint, Roy, Kaizan, Katayama, Stalin, Kaparova and Brique to prepare definite theses on the national question.

*(Inprecor, Vol 4, No 57,  
12 August 1924),*

## 6. Organising the Communist Party in the Face of Repression

### INTRODUCTION

The documents produced here were written and published between September and October 1924, i.e. after the session court judgment in the Kanpur Conspiracy Case was pronounced and before the high court appeal was heard in November. The question discussed is whether the communist party can be organised openly or not. It came up for discussion and for actual trial in practice in those days because of a statement made by the prosecuting counsel in his concluding speech, stating that the accused were not being prosecuted merely for holding communist views or propagating them.<sup>1</sup>

It is well known that about this time Satyabhakta, who was a leftwing congressman and in touch with terrorist groups in UP, formed an Indian Communist Party in Kanpur. The reference at the end of the first document to a communist party being formed in Kanpur is to this.

Bagerhatta's "*Open Letter to M. N. Roy*", from Ajmer on 8 September 1924, seems to have been written under the influence of the same official pronouncement, though he has nowhere made a reference to it. He probably had the Kanpur Conspiracy Case at the back of his mind when he writes, "I hope this (letter)

1. See section iv of 1924 in this volume.



commented upon. It is sufficient here to state that the Indian version bore the imprint: "Printed by K. N. Joglekar at the Labour Press, Bombay 2, and published by Messrs Janaki Prasad Bagerhatta and Arjunlal Sethi, members of the AICC."

This Indian version printed in Bombay was distributed at the Belgaum Congress. The police had already intercepted some copies of the original manifesto posted by Roy from abroad. In a confidential document we find a note by D. Petrie, dated 5 July 1925, in which he has compared the original of Roy's manifesto with the Indian reprint as actually distributed at Belgaum:

"The Belgaum leaflet is almost completely identical with Roy's leaflet except for the omission of the last para which advises the revolutionary nationalists and the workers and peasants of India to establish closer relations with the advanced proletariat of the world; and for the signature 'The Communist Party of India' of the original leaflet being substituted by 'Fraternally Yours, M. N. Roy' in the Indian version."<sup>3</sup>

The same file further states that the government of India took up with the government of Bombay the question whether the printer and publishers of the leaflet could not be prosecuted. The Bombay government replied on 6 February 1925 as follows:

"The governor-in-council is still of the opinion, after the examination of the pamphlet in full, as circulated in Belgaum, which as you are aware, is a modified form leaving out in particular the last paragraph of the original pamphlet, that it would be better policy not to institute a prosecution on this 'appeal' published under the signature of M. N. Roy but to watch for personal pronouncements on revolutionary lines by the printer and publishers."<sup>4</sup>

Rest of the history of Bagerhatta is as follows: In December 1925 he attended the First Communist Conference as a delegate from Ajmer together with Arjunlal Sethi. Bagerhatta was elected as one of the joint general secretaries with S. V. Ghate. Some time early in 1925 there is a letter from Roy to Bagerhatta as the general secretary of the Communist Party of India in which Roy makes certain criticisms of statements made at the conference by Satyabhakta, Hasrat Mohani and M. Singaravelu. In

3. Home-Pol. Progs. F48/25, part B, 1925.

4. Ibid.

this letter Roy also makes some suggestions to be taken up at the next meeting of the central committee. We will deal with this letter and the articles which Roy wrote in the *Masses* on the First Communist Conference in 1925 at the appropriate place.

Later in 1926, there is a letter on record from Bagerhatta to M. P. B. T. Acharya (?) informing him that Satyabhakta has resigned from the Communist Party. In January 1927, when Shapurji Saklatvala was to arrive in Bombay from England, Ghate wrote to Muzaffar Ahmad, who was then in Lahore, to come to Bombay and bring along Bagerhatta also. Muzaffar Ahmad records that he contacted Bagerhatta, who secured from somewhere the money to purchase railway tickets, and they both proceeded together. Muzaffar Ahmad says he began to suspect him at that time; firstly, because of the ease with which he secured the money for the travel; secondly, because Bagerhatta casually told Muzaffar Ahmad that he had met David Petrie, the director of the intelligence bureau of the home department; and thirdly, because of the arrest of Ashfaqullah, the well-known martyr in the Kakori Case, whose hiding was entrusted to Bagerhatta. Muzaffar Ahmad writes: "I developed a strong suspicion that Janaki Prasad was very probably in the pay of the intelligence bureau. But I did not show this in my words or behaviour. As soon as I met Ghate on my arrival in Bombay, I disclosed everything to him and told him that we should be careful about Janaki Prasad."<sup>5</sup>

Saklatvala arrived in Bombay on 14 January 1927. Muzaffar Ahmad says: "The visit of Shapurji was the occasion for our meeting in Bombay. Janaki Prasad had accompanied me. Shamsuddin Hassan and Krishnaswami Ayengar had also arrived from Lahore and Madras respectively."<sup>6</sup> There were two other persons in touch with the communist group in Bombay at the time, i.e. in January 1927. They were two British communists who were up to that time moving underground, i.e. untracked by the police. They were Donald Campbell, whose real name was George Allison, the well-known mining workers' leader and a member of the CPGB, and Philip Spratt, also a member of the

5. *Myself and the CPI*, pp. 438 & 440.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 462.

CPGB. George Allison had arrived in India on 30 April 1926 and had been contacting Indian trade-union leaders first in Bombay and then in Calcutta and had come to Bombay from Calcutta to meet Saklatvala. Philip Spratt had arrived from England on 30 December 1926. George Allison did not come to the notice of the police for the first six months.

Muzaffar Ahmad says that a letter sent by George Allison by post from Calcutta to Joglekar fell into the hands of the police in Bombay and that prompted them to start investigations about him. He says further: "When we reached Bombay, everything about Donald Campbell had been exposed. We were in Bombay surrounded by police informers, but none of us yet knew that Donald Campbell was, in fact, George Allison."<sup>7</sup> As we have seen, at this Bombay meeting held from 14 to 18 January 1927, apart from Bagerhatta himself, Saklatvala, Campbell and Spratt, important members of the central committee of the CPI elected at the First Communist Conference were present. In Bagerhatta's file seized from Rewari, in connection with the searches for the Meerut Conspiracy Case in March 1929, there is a draft copy of the detailed report of this meeting. We shall come to it later.

Muzaffar Ahmad records that after the Bombay meeting, Donald Campbell and himself left for Calcutta on the same day but by different trains and that Campbell reached earlier. When Muzaffar Ahmad reached Calcutta he found that Campbell was arrested soon after his arrival at his lodging. Muzaffar Ahmad does not attribute Campbell's arrest to Bagerhatta, but to the fact that "the police had received definite information" and that they had got hold of Campbell's passport which was deposited by him with trade-union comrades of the Bengal Jute Workers' Association.<sup>8</sup> Campbell (George Allison) was arrested on 22 January 1927 and was taken to Bombay where he was tried and sentenced to 18 months RI in the chief presidency magistrate's court.

At Bombay Saklatvala had arranged to meet the communist and trade-union comrades from different parts of India in Delhi on 14 March 1927. The seventh session of the AITUC had met

7. *loc. cit.*

8. *Ibid.*, pp 462-63.

in Delhi on the two previous days (12-13 March). Muzaffar Ahmad, who presided over the meeting of the communists with Saklatvala's participation, records: "I disclosed my suspicion about Janaki Prasad to our leading comrades from different places. Then Gauhar Rahman told me that he also had his suspicion about Janaki Prasad in the matter of Ashfaquallah. When Janaki Prasad realised that we were suspecting him, he burst into tears...and said, 'You are suspecting'."<sup>9</sup>

Janaki Prasad Bagerhatta was present at another all-India meeting of the Communist Party of India held in Bombay on 31 May 1927. Muzaffar Ahmad says he did not attend this meeting which Ghate had convened. Muzaffar Ahmad wanted Ghate to abandon this meeting but does not say why. At this meeting, Muzaffar Ahmad says, "Janaki Prasad announced...his decision not to participate further in anything because he realised that he had lost the trust of the comrades. After that he cut off all contacts with the Communist Party."<sup>10</sup>

As for the last sentence, the actual record must be put straight. In the Bagerhatta file mentioned above, there is a letter from him to S. V. Ghate dated 14 July 1927 in which he again complains of lack of trust in him of comrades which makes his functioning difficult. Between July and December Bagerhatta seems to have submitted his resignation from the party. This resignation came up before the meeting of the central committee of the CPI held in the last week of December 1927 in Madras where the annual session of the Indian National Congress was being held at the time. In Bagerhatta file, there is a letter from Ghate to Bagerhatta dated 12 January 1928 wherein Ghate states that Bagerhatta's resignation from the party was accepted at the meeting of the executive committee of the CPI held at Madras on 29 December 1927.

Muzaffar Ahmad has stated: "That we had suspected him rightly was proved during the trial of the Meerut Conspiracy Case... On searching the papers the police had collected from Janaki Prasad's house, we found a copy of a bill sent to the intelligence bureau of the government of India and, strange to

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 441.

<sup>10</sup> *loc. cit.*

say, it was a bill for travelling expenses for the journey undertaken by Janaki Prasad along with me from Delhi to Bombay."<sup>11</sup>

What is contained in the Bagerhatta file is not just a reference to the bill of expenses for his Bombay trip, but a detailed handwritten draft report of all the discussions which took place in Bombay between Indian communists and Saklatvala, Campbell and Spratt, about the functioning of the Communist Party. At the end of this report is the following draft covering letter which makes it quite clear that the detailed report of the secret communist meeting at Bombay with the relevant documents is being transmitted to the police or the CID :

"Sir,

"On account of a high fever I regret I could not stay at Delhi on my return from Bombay. I am sending with this a full report of my recent visit to Bombay with the necessary papers and a bill of my expenses.

"I am now reaching Delhi on Tuesday and will see you the same evening at about 7 p.m. to receive further instructions in the matter. I will try to enquire on the phone to know if this time suits but in case I fail to find a solitary phone, I will come straight."

Further comment is hardly necessary. In the report, Bagerhatta writes: "All these three new gentlemen, i.e. Campbell, Saklatvala and Spratt, have come with a definite programme of work. Spratt and Campbell will try to establish their legality gradually, while Saklatvala will be going away after a tour of India. Along with the speeches he will deliver, Saklatvala will be forming small groups who will agree with his programme at all the places he will visit and will place them in contact with Campbell."

This report was in the hands of the intelligence bureau by 18 or 19 January and Campbell was arrested on 22 January in Calcutta. If Campbell's letter to Joglekar gave police the clue, this report disclosed everything and it is no wonder that the police acted promptly. The other question discussed in the report is whether the communist party should function openly

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 441-42.

or secretly. The suggestion is made that the CPI will have to function underground while a workers' and peasants' party be formed which will function independently, organising the workers and peasants in their class organisations and it will function inside the Congress fighting for an anti-imperialist anti-feudal programme of complete independence.

To conclude this digression on Janaki Prasad Bagerhatta, let it be stated that the four-page manuscript report including the covering letter conclusively proves that this was the original draft the typed copy of which was sent to the central intelligence bureau. This was the conclusion to which the communist prisoners in Meerut came when they carefully examined this manuscript report, which was among the documents seized from the papers of Bagerhatta in Rewari. The editor remembers quite clearly that S. V. Ghate who knew Bagerhatta's handwriting was quite firm on this conclusion. As for the subsequent history of Bagerhatta, he disappeared from the political movement altogether. Muzaffar Ahmad records that Bagerhatta came to meet him in 1938 and told him that he was writing scenarios for films.<sup>12</sup> Janaki Prasad is now no more.

Whatever may have been the subsequent history of Bagerhatta, we are here concerned with his article in the *Socialist*, which was replied to both by the then editor of that paper and by M. N. Roy in a private letter and later in an article meant to be published in the *Socialist*. The point which Bagerhatta makes is that in order to propagate communist policy openly, a legal open communist party be formed in every provincial centre, a strong party be formed inside the Indian National Congress and that leaflets and newspapers be brought out in Hindi and Urdu. Referring to the Communist Party formed by Satyabhakta in Kanpur openly, he says that it should seek the support of the Third International.

K. N. Joglekar, who took over the editorship of the *Socialist* after the arrest of S. A. Dange (March 1924) writes in the same issue (September 1924) agreeing generally with the idea of organising the communist party openly. But he does not agree with the idea of seeking the support of the Third International.

12. *Ibid*, p 442.

The negative attitude which the editor of the *Socialist* takes publicly towards the Communist International is understandable in view of the Kanpur Case convictions. This is clear from what Joglekar writes in his reminiscences about this period. He and his colleagues in Bombay had formed a defence committee to assist the Kanpur Case prisoners and V. H. Joshi went to Kanpur in the latter part of 1924 to arrange about the high court appeal. Joshi came in touch with Satyabhakta and Hasrat Mohani who were then (1924) forming a *National Communist Party* in Kanpur. Joglekar writes. "Thus did not appeal to our group. We decided to organise, instead, CPI following the lines of the Communist International... V. H. Joshi was chosen to contact comrades in other provinces... He in the course of his visits to UP and Calcutta to arrange for the defence (appeal) against the conviction of S. A. Dange and Muzaffar Ahmad and others made some contacts... But nothing substantial materialised except... contact with Halim in Calcutta."<sup>13</sup>

Roy in his private letter to Bagerhatta on Vanguard letter-head from Zurich dated 22 October 1924 appreciates the questions posed by Bagerhatta and answers them in considerable detail. We need only emphasise two points from this article. After dealing with the question whether communist propaganda is to be carried on secretly or openly, Roy points out that "propagation of communism is not an immediate necessity". He says further that "the immediate task of the communists in India is not to preach communism but to organise the national revolution: the role of the Communist Party of India is to be the heart and soul of the revolutionary nationalist party."

The second point Roy makes, while agreeing with Bagerhatta's plea for "a strong party to be formed in the Congress and all nerves to be exerted to capture the organisation", is that he proposes a concrete plan for this: "The fight for our programme in Belgaum may mark the birth of this party. The group can immediately after the congress call a conference of all the elements holding the same view and prepared to subscribe to our programme which will not be a communist but a revolutionary national-democratic programme. This conference

will declare the inauguration of the party which can be called the people's party or the republican party."

As for the programme, Roy says: "Since the Gaya Congress, we have kept before the country such a programme." It should be remembered that Roy is writing this in October 1924, after the effort to organise a workers' and peasants' party at a conference to be called in Lucknow in the early months of 1923 had not materialised and after the Labour Kisan Party of Hindustan of M. Singaravelu remained stay-put after the Kanpur arrests and the conspiracy convictions.

The same points are more clearly dealt with in the next and the last document of this section. In the article "Should the Communist Party Be a Secret Society?" sent for publication in the *Socialist* in October 1924, Roy makes three points: *firstly*, that the communist party is not to be organised as a 'secret society' on the pattern of 'terrorist movement'; *secondly*, in the present situation after the convictions in the Kanpur Conspiracy Case, the communist party has to function and work illegally; and *thirdly*, that at the same time the fight for the legal existence of the party has to be kept up. Roy then goes on to say that the fight for legal existence of the party does not mean legality at any cost. We should not be deluded by the hypocritical pose of the government that communist propaganda as such is not considered illegal. But as soon as the communist party goes forward to its main task in India, to the task of organising the workers and peasants in their fight for complete national independence and its socioeconomic programme, repression comes down upon its head as in the Kanpur Conspiracy Case. In this sense Roy criticises the legalist tendency of Bagerhatta.

From this point of view, Roy criticises the Labour Kisan Party of Singaravelu formed in 1923. As we have pointed out earlier<sup>14</sup> the conception of labour swaraj and the programme of that party were defective. Dange, who supported that party in his *Socialist*, criticised the programme. But that was not an attempt to form a 'legal' communist party. It was the first im-

<sup>14</sup> See section v of 1923 in this volume

perfect attempt to form a broad open mass party of the type of a people's party or a workers' and peasants' party which the Communist International and Roy were themselves proposing. If the Labour Kisan Party and the effort proposed to be made at the Lucknow conference to organise a workers' and peasants' party failed, it was due to repression and to the immaturity of organisation in 1923 and not just to legalist illusions.

Roy criticises the manner in which the defence in the Kanpur Case was conducted, "owing to the utter inability of the defence counsels to grasp the political importance of the case". In the section on the Kanpur Case we have pointed out these weaknesses and shown how they arose. Roy says: "The line of defence should have been, not to plead 'not guilty' to the charge brought but to prove that the acts alleged to have been committed or connived at by the accused were perfectly constitutional." When he wrote this, Roy was not aware that in an Indian court the accused get the chance to make fighting propagandist defence only by pleading 'not guilty'.

That Roy himself when he stood his trial in the Kanpur Case in 1930 and the accused in the Meerut Conspiracy Case which was proceeding at the same time did this with remarkable effect is well known.

## 1. AN OPEN LETTER TO M. N. ROY

My dear Mr Roy,

I am writing this letter to you in the teeth of the intelligence department which has always been careful to suppress our feelings however uncrushable they may be. It has always tried to cut the connection between people at home and out. But I hope that this will not be stopped, there being nothing to conspire against the bureaucracy of India. I have only to write to you some suggestions if they can meet your favourable consideration. I learn from the vernacular press of India that you and your party have decided to propagate communism by illegal secret societies. I have always maintained that secret parties can do no real good to the country and that communism cannot be preached without open propaganda. It is purely an economical movement and we will bring success at our feet without pains. By secret methods we can approach only a few educated men worth for nothing in any political or economical activity.

The middle class or the educated people can produce a few workers only. They cannot be expected to induct the revolutionary spirit in the country as it is very difficult for them to mix up with the proletariat. The condition of the Indian labour and peasantry being quite different from that of the European one, a peaceful and effective work only with a very large number of workers will raise them.

They take no interest in the present noncooperation movement. Khaddar and spinning is not new to them, they have been using it even before the birth of Mr Gandhi. They are too poor to send their children to the government educational institutions. They go to the law courts against themselves. They never even dream of the council seats. Of course they look upon the noncooperators for help to get the forced labour and other highhandedness of the government and landlords removed from among them. There is a great fear of the police among these

people, their mentality is slavish. Any educated man clad in European dress or a man who can easily mix with the officials can terronise and make a tool of them. A good deal has been done by the noncooperators to remove this but not to complete success. The thing is that these people also influence the villagers by the same methods. The Congress worships aristocracy. A poor villager with a worn-out garb cannot find an access to Mr Gandhi as easily as a rich merchant will. Many of the members of the All-India Congress Committee are rich men and live upon the blood of the poor, i.e. on the house rents and the land rents. As a matter of fact these people have played a great havoc in the Congress. Gandhi himself wants to protect the aristocrats from labour troubles. He has ridiculous remedies for serious diseases.

The noncooperation movement inaugurated by him is no more a political movement, its remains are now only to be seen in the Sabarmati Ashram or in the charkha. Most of the Congress offices are being closed for want of men and money. The workers are growing faithless and divisions exist. Young men are gradually severing their connection from the Congress. A good many of them can be utilised for our work, if the Communist Party in England or elsewhere may decide to preach communism openly. The majority of Gandhi's followers are with him to win a name for themselves. They are men of no principles and are the blind followers of the Mahatma. There is a strong competition going on among them. Everybody wants to become his fifth son. The no-changers have more such sheep than the pro-changers. The pro-changers or the council advocates, however misled and misguided they may be, are men of principles and standing, though there are men among them also who have joined them to get an easy path to the councils. Some of them are political jugglers like Pandit Malaviya. They have now adopted the dead constitutional methods of the dark ages. It is foolish to expect anything from these people. Their council agitation has restored the lost influence of the bureaucracy and the capitalists which had greatly been damaged by Mr Gandhi's boycott of the councils. These councilwalas still expect much from the government and have thus left their boats on its mercy. There is only one thing that these

people can do and it is to establish a parallel government with the help of their electorate. But they are too timid to do so. They cannot muster courage to face the consequences of their deeds. Let us see what they do. I do not think it worth while to write more about these people and will finish it by saying that most of the foremost men in Congress are capitalists, they live upon the blood of the poor, they hate mixing up with the people upon whose work they live and enjoy all social esteem. They are no less bureaucratic in their own offices than the brown bureaucrats. They oppose the present government to enjoy offices at present enjoyed by them. They take no notice of a peasant who does not get sufficient to eat even after working for 24 hours in the hot sun and cold nights and under heavy showers of rain. It is my sad experience that these people will prove to be no less tyrants to the people than the foreign rulers if providence places the government of the country in their hands. At present they are in a position of a tyrant being crushed by a greater one. So to say, it is a fight between a snake and the mongoose.

The Congress has no definite programme to place before the people and thus a golden opportunity has been given to the sectarian people whose bread and butter lies in exciting a community against the other; Swami Shradhanand's suddi movement has given a death blow to the peace and unity among the masses. The movement is no doubt nearing its own death. But the mistrust among the people still exists. There is a great mental perplexity owing to no work.

Now to come to my suggestions about communist propaganda in India which is the main issue here. I have to write the following :

- (1) Communist offices should be opened at every provincial centre to organise all sorts of labour and peasantry.
- (2) To distribute leaflets etc. to spread communist ideas in namaz.
- (3) A strong party be formed in the Congress and every nerve be exerted to capture the organisation.
- (4) All efforts should be made to abolish religious influence from the people Hindu-Muslim unity cannot be successful unless everybody is well fed and religious bigotry is removed.

Newspapers in vernacular, i.e. in Hindi and Urdu, will be of a great help. If our Indian friends out of India will go on sending their articles to these papers the press will very soon become a self-supporting one and will bring down the influence of the English press.

If possible night schools should also be started to educate the labourers and their children.

I am fully confident that such work will very soon bear fruits and the names of Marx and Lenin will at once become household names in India.

Communism only can free India from the foreign bondage and human slavery. The poor will at once embrace it and India, the victim of fate and chance, will smile again.

I am,  
Your devoted comrade,  
J. P. BAGERHATTA  
Member, All India Congress Committee

PS : I hear that communist party has been organised at Kanpur. But so far I think no such party can live without the help of the Third International.

Address : Janaki Prasad Bagerhatta,  
c/o Congress, Beawar, Rajputana.

(*Socialist*, Vol 2, No 38,  
24 September 1924)

## 2. REFLECTIONS

We print elsewhere an open letter to M. N. Roy. The letter has been sent to us for publication by Mr Janaki Prasad Bagerhatta, member, All-India Congress Committee, of Ajmer. The writer is responsible for the views he expresses under his signature. We publish them here only to allow our readers to know and think about them. The writer makes some important remarks and suggestions about organisation work here.

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From time to time we have expressed our views through these columns about socialist organisation work here. Our readers are quite familiar with them. But the Kanpur Case has become an instrument of creating an atmosphere of doubt. We therefore take this opportunity to clearly express them again.

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In expressions, open and private, Mr Dange has unmistakably made it clear that the source of our inspiration is from within and not from without. We do not favour any secret and illegal organisations. We hold no good can come out of such attempts in the present state of our society. There is a vast ignorance about our movement all the country over and a serious attempt at the education of the intelligentsia will have to be made before we can successfully bring about any organisation in the country. People are not accustomed to see things historically interpreted. They cannot have therefore any consciousness of the class element in the struggle. And no organisation is possible unless there is this consciousness. This historical perspective of things and incidents can only be given through a system of open propoganda and association. Only through this means can we approach the masses.

\* \* \*

Mr Bagerhatta counts too much upon the help of the Third International. But we have to say that we differ from him considerably. Let this however not be misunderstood. We do not think that there is anything wrong in accepting any outside help for the propagation of socialism here. It is immaterial to us whether the help comes from the Third International or the Communist Party of Great Britain. We owe allegiance to none excepting our own scheme of work and we look for guidance to none but ourselves. Any help is therefore legally acceptable even if it were to come from the devil. All help could be accepted only on our conditions which are quite clear from the outline of our scheme of action. On these terms even if the government themselves were to come forth with an offer we shall not feel the least hesitation to accept it.

As regards the Third International we have to point out that there is no special point in looking to it for help. We do not

authentically and authoritatively know anything about it and therefore there is no reason to be specially particular about it.

(*Socialist*, Vol 2, No 38,  
24 September 1924)

### 3. M. N. ROY'S LETTER TO BAGERHATTA OF 22 OCTOBER 1924

My dear comrade,

It was indeed a great pleasure to receive your letter. Let me assure you in the very beginning that I fully agree with your analysis of the situation, remarks and suggestions. It may be necessary to clear out some minor tactical differences that are likely to arise in course of work. Since you wrote the letter as an "Open Letter" and since its contents are highly interesting I will take the liberty of publishing it in our paper over your signature.<sup>1</sup> This will also go to prove that we are not partisans of secret organisation, if the chance of open and legal activities is available. We will expect to receive in future similar contributions from you and others.

The "vernacular" press from which you gather your information about the methods of our work must be badly informed. We do not propose to organise our party as a "secret society". You are quite right in your remark that a great political movement like ours cannot influence and conduct by means of "secret societies". If we have been forced to carry on our work illegally that is because we are denied the freedom of press, speech and platform. Besides we publish our literature quite openly and would be only glad to distribute them equally openly if the possibility of doing so exists. This can be done as soon as a sufficiently large number of people to undertake this work is available because although we consider our activities fully legitimate and democratic, the powers that be do not have the same view. Unfortunately a considerable section of our nationalists, at least on this question, agree with the government. This being the

<sup>1</sup> It was printed in *Vanguard*, Vol 5, No 5, 15 November 1924—G.A.

case we will not be able to establish our right of propaganda of a perfectly legitimate programme without a fierce struggle. We must conquer the right. In other words it is necessary to legalise our propaganda. You might be aware that in the course of the Kanpur communist trial, both the government prosecutor and the judge admitted that a communist party or communism as such does not constitute a criminal offence. There we have a starting point. We must hoist them on their own petard. Had the defence lawyers approached the issue from a broad angle of vision and had the accused themselves had more courage of conviction the very Kanpur Case could be turned into a historic test case. But that was not done. The defence was a spineless judicial one while the issue was a broad political and constitutional. There is still time to do what was left undone. We must take up the challenge and propagate not simple communism but our right to be free and organise a mass revolutionary party on this foundation.

Here I must point out one little error you seem to have fallen into. You write, "if the Communist Party of England or elsewhere may decide to preach...", that it will be necessary to preach communism in India which should be done by Indians convinced of this necessity and not by any outside agency. The latter may be helpful in many ways and since communist parties are international organisations there cannot be any question of foreign interference in accepting such help; but the initiative and foundation must be native. It is the development of social forces that lead to communism. The analysis in connection with which you made this remark is thoroughly correct. As soon as a new channel for their political energy is marked out a considerable section of the followers of Gandhi on the one hand and of the Swaraj Party on the other will leave the present leadership.

Our agreement in general leads us to determine what will be the minimum task. I venture to suggest that propagation of communism is not an immediate necessity. What is to be done is to give the demobilised and dismembered nationalist movement a revolutionary leadership which can be given alone by the communists. Why? The nationalist movement is fundamentally a revolutionary struggle, not only against foreign domination but ultimately against the backward economic conditions

and reactionary social institutions which retard the progress of the Indian people and which have carefully been perpetuated by imperialism. The forces that will free the Indian people from these economic and social impediments, therefore, must begin by attacking the foreign domination. This fundamental significance of the national struggle is not understood by the majority of our nationalists. Therefore, a gigantic social upheaval is crammed into the suffocating limits of a movement for administrative reforms and at the most political makeshift. Therein lies the weakness of our movement, and so long as this cause of weakness is not removed British domination will remain solid and national regeneration consequently will be sought through such reactionary and romantic path as *charkha*. Now who can cure this weakness of our nationalist movement? Presumably those who possess the ability to appreciate the social significance of national struggle. Perhaps our nationalists will be shocked to hear that they are involuntarily engaged in a social revolution. They have failed to push this revolution forward because they are involuntarily involved in it. They must make room for those who will go into the matter voluntarily and consciously. This will be the communists.

It is necessary to look into the situation a little deeper to know why such an apparently incongruous confusion should be visualised. Why and how should a nationalist movement which is essentially a bourgeois movement be led by the communists? Here comes the peculiarity of the Indian situation. Our nationalists talk ad nauseam of the peculiarity of India, but they only start from the wrong end. The peculiarity of India does not lie in the imaginary spiritual character of its people but in their reactionary tendencies of its bourgeoisie. Under normal conditions the bourgeoisie lead a national movement. They did it because their economic interests demand the disruption of feudalism and the economic and political institutions that go with that social stage. It is well known that the pivot of the British domination of India has been the landed aristocracy. So the logical course to deliver an attack against foreign domination would be to pull down this pivot. But clearly enough Indian nationalists are worshippers of landlordism. In other words bourgeoisie have turned traitor to their historical

heritance. Why? Are they naturally depraved or is it an accident? This queer situation has been created by the retarded and abnormal way in which economic forces have developed in India under the British domination. Both upper and lower strata of the Indian middle class are closely linked up with the land. Although the present land system contributes indirectly to the poverty of the Indian people the middle class which is the social foundation of nationalism does not propose any radical change in the land propertyship. In all the nationalist struggles in history the bourgeoisie rallied the peasantry on their side by (means) of a radical agrarian programme. The failure of the Indian bourgeoisie to do the same leaves the 80 per cent of the people susceptible to government influence. The ability of the British to pose as the protector of the peasantry has been the second pivot of their domination in India. The nationalists ostensibly shun all questions of agrarian revolution, on the pretext of keeping in their camp both the landowning class and the peasantry. This mistaken policy enables imperialism to stand totally on those two social elements.

We cannot convince the national bourgeoisie of the blunder of their policy because the policy is dictated by material interest. The present land system provides a source of unearned income however miserable to a large section of the lower middle class in all provinces where zamindari system prevails. On the other hand not a few of the professional liberals and even capitalists have money invested in land. The combination of these forces defeated the Bengal Tenancy Amendment Act, while a similar legislation was passed under official auspices in Oudh and the other is going to be passed in Malabar. The former killed the kisan sabha and eka movement but the latter will appease the agrarian troubles in Malabar. The masses of peasantry will regain their faith in the sarkar.

This being the juxtaposition of the social forces that are destined to enter into the composition of the nationalist rank, the movement for national liberation will never succeed if left under the present leadership which is historically incapable of having the required revolutionary outlook. Since the abnormal development of the last 200 years has deprived the bourgeoisie of their social revolutionary role, they cannot lead the nationalist

movement which makes for nothing less than a social revolution. Consequently the leadership must evolve out of the ranks of the workers and peasants, who under normal conditions would have followed the bourgeoisie in the national revolution. A working-class leadership must be socialist for which we use the term communist to distinguish ourselves from those who have betrayed the working class in the name of socialism.

The communists, that is the conscious vanguard of the working class, will be called upon to assume the leadership of this struggle against imperialism in the next stage of our movement; but this does not alter the situation that the immediate object of the movement still remains the same, namely, national freedom. Bourgeois revolution has its place in history. We cannot jump over a long period of history. All that we can do is to shorten it. Bourgeois revolution must take place in India to overthrow foreign domination, to wipe out the remnants of feudalism, establish a democratic form of government, to free the forces of production, ensure the realisation of the social, economic and political advances which was denied to the Indian people by the foreign rule. Since this great revolution cannot be organised and led by the bourgeoisie, the vanguard of the working class must step forward. The immediate task of the communists in India is not to preach communism but to organise the national revolution; the role of the communist party of India is to be the heart and soul of the revolutionary nationalist party.

The third point of your suggestion corresponds with this general view of ours. "A strong party to be formed in the Congress and all nerves to be exerted to capture the organisation." Yes. This is precisely the task before us. Under separate cover a package of our literature is sent to you. Therein you will find our propositions as to how this revolutionary wing should be organised inside the Congress with the objective of capturing it ultimately. The work must naturally be started with the publication of the programme when the new party will be organised. Since the Gaya congress we have kept before the country such a programme. The Belgaum congress will find the nationalist forces much more decomposed; so a small group can dominate the situation if they appear with a con-

crete programme to revive the movement. I hope you will be able to organise this group. This will be the proper procedure to liberate the rank and file from the Gandhi-Swaraj leadership as you propose.

We are in complete agreement with your proposition about the organisation of propaganda centres etc. The development of the vernacular press is also very important. We will certainly be prepared to contribute and are even prepared to find some financial aid when necessary. We must start with a few selected papers. Can you make some concrete suggestions? Meanwhile I can send some articles to you.

Of course everything will depend upon your ability to bring into existence an organised political party. The fight for our programme in Belgaum may mark the birth of this party. The group can immediately after the Congress call a conference of all the elements holding the same view and prepared to subscribe to our programme which will not be a communist but a revolutionary national-democratic programme. This conference will declare the inauguration of the party which can be called the people's party or the republic party. There is absolutely no conspiracy in this plan. We are out for a comprehensive political fight. There is no room for futile secret society. Nor do we have any patience for the romantic ideas and schemes they indulge in. The press of a political party will of course be open unless the government deprives us of the right to free speech. In that case we must have an illegal press and means of propaganda while fighting to establish the right of free speech.

As soon as means will be found to print our literature inside the country we will be spared the great inconvenience of bringing them in from outside. Meanwhile, however, the current practice has to be continued. Therefore I will request you to make some provision to receive our literature from outside. No propaganda can be made without literature. If you will send us from time to time some addresses we can keep you supplied with all the necessary literature.

I think I have covered all the ground, at least for the pro-

sent. Hoping that you will agree with the contents of this letter and be prepared to work with us on these lines.

I remain,

Yours fraternally,

M. N. Roy

NB : It is not necessary to address my letters to Moscow. They can be addressed to the Zurich office of the Vanguard or to Librairie du Travail, 96 Quai Jemanapes, Paris-10.

#### 4. M. N. ROY'S LETTER TO BAGERHATTA OF 6 NOVEMBER 1924

Dear comrade :

Possibly you have already received my letter written last week. I am expecting a reply at your earliest opportunity. After I had mailed my letter, a copy of the *Socialist* with your "Open Letter" came to my notice. Enclosed herewith is a copy of the communication I am sending to the *Socialist* by this mail. I am sending you a copy, because you may give it to the vernacular press. The matter is of public importance, and should be given the widest publicity.

Yours fraternally,

M. N. Roy

SHOULD THE COMMUNIST PARTY BE A SECRET SOCIETY ?

To

The Editor, The *Socialist*, Bombay.

Dear Sir,

May I have the use of your journal to answer the Open Letter addressed to me by Mr Bagerhatta, member, All India Congress Committee? This letter was published in the *Socialist* of 24 September.

Mr Bagerhatta raises two questions: (1) The necessity of

organising a communist party; and (2) how this party should function. On the first question there is no difference, Mr Bagerhatta agreeing with us on the necessity of a communist party. In fact, he goes so far as to say: "Communism only can free India from foreign bondage and human slavery." On the second point however he labours under some misunderstanding. He appears to think that we prefer an illegal existence to open political activity. Obviously he is not well informed on the matter; because we fully agree with his advice that the communist party must be openly organised, and function in an open political field. Like many others, Mr Bagerhatta must have got this wrong impression about our programme and activities in consequence of the story told by the prosecution in the Kanpur trial. But the fact of the matter is that on many an occasion we have deprecated the organisation of secret societies for conducting a great political movement, and we have registered our opinion unmistakably against the futile terrorism advocated by the nationalist secret societies, which are numerically negligible and politically of no importance. Even the letters and public documents produced to establish the "guilt" of the accused in the Kanpur Case testified to our opposition to "terrorist conspiracies". Unfortunately the defence failed to take advantage of this weakness of the prosecution—a weakness which, firmly seized upon, would have cut the ground from under the feet of the prosecution.

Nevertheless the fact remains that so far communist propaganda has had an illegal character in India. Now the question is, whether this illegality has been of our own choice or has been forced upon us. Undoubtedly the latter is the case; we were forced underground, because we were denied the freedom to act openly. The Kanpur Case held not only communist propaganda and the attempt to organise a working-class party to be criminal, but declared punishable any suspected relation with the Communist International, or even with individual communists. If under these circumstances we have not been able to organise our party openly, that failure has had ample reason. Nor has our desire to avail ourselves of all means for carrying on the propaganda and the

preliminary work been mistaken. This does not, however, remove the necessity of legalising communist propaganda in India and to make the communist party an important political factor. We never lost sight of this necessity, and prepared ourselves for the first available opportunity to take up the fight; because the first stage of the communist party is bound to be marked by a bitter struggle for the right to a legal existence. The moment has arrived to begin this struggle.

When we talk of a communist party, what we have in mind is a political party reflecting essentially the interests of the working class, in which category the masses of the poor peasantry are included. Therefore our party will be a party representing the overwhelming majority of the nation. There is no constitutional pretext on which such a party can be denied the right to a legal existence. But precisely for this reason that we propose not to organise study-circles or a small sect preaching fanatically a novel socioeconomic philosophy, but to mobilise the masses of the people under the banner of our party for a gigantic political struggle, we have been subjected to determined persecution from the very beginning. In the Kanpur Case, the judge as well as the prosecution counsel declared that communism or a communist party, as such, did not constitute a criminal offence. The infant communist party of India incurred the towering wrath of the British gohath, because we adapted our programme to the timely needs of India. Had we been inclined to "economism" and wedded to the abstract theories of social justice, we would not only be left alone, but even possibly receive furtive encouragement from the powers that be. The government do not object to communism as such. What does it mean? It means that the government would not consider us dangerous if we lived in the height of theoretical isolation; but applied communism is not tolerable. It is no longer dead theory. It invigorates the present political struggle by stimulating the consciousness and energy of the revolutionary social forces. The very fact that the mightiest government is so zealous to root us out, when we are apparently such a negligible quantity, proves the historic necessity of the task we have initiated; proves that a working-class party under communist leadership

is destined to play a great role in the actual political life of India.

We must struggle for legal existence. The findings of the Kanpur court provide the startingpoint. A communist party is not criminal. Let it be organised; but there should be no illusion. The government will demand that it be a "communist party as such", that is, a party which indulges in a dream which will be realised in some distant future, and which leaves the present alone. Our reply will be that the communist party must exist, not by the sanction of the government, but as a historic necessity—by its own power. All suggestions to trim our sails for the sake of legality should be dismissed. Illegal existence is bad; it places us under great disadvantages. But legality, which is attained at the sacrifice of our political demands, is worse; it will render us an impotent sect. In the advocacy of the much-needed legalisation, this highly dangerous tendency is discernible. This tendency is to be found in Mr Bagerhatta when he says, "It (communism) is purely an economic movement, and we will bring success at our feet without pains." I am sure that Mr Begerhatta does not fully comprehend what this sentence implies. It contains the germs of "economism", which ignores the fact that without political power no economic change or social transformation can be realised. The so-called Labour Kisan Party of Mr Singaravelu Chettiar of Madras was born under this evil star and, consequently, was suffocated in its own impotency. The programme of the above party was to secure "labour swaraj" and economic amelioration of the masses. It started out on this ambitious task, totally ignoring the realities of the situation. It was simply ridiculous to talk of labour swaraj while the burning question of national swaraj was still unsolved; it was equally ridiculous to suggest any way of ameliorating the economic conditions of the masses without challenging the political institutions which created those conditions. Yet the Labour Kisan Party, which chose to call itself communist, put forth this ridiculous programme to insure its legal existence. This inordinate zeal for a legal existence cost the party its existence altogether. Shall we make the same mistake?

The question of the legalisation of the communist party

should not be a diplomatic question. It is a broad political issue, and should be dealt with as such. The Kanpur Case provided a splendid opportunity which unfortunately could not be properly used, owing to the utter inability of the defence counsels to grasp the political importance of the case. It must also be said that the attitude of the accused left very much to be desired. One should have more courage of conviction. The line of defence should have been not to plead "not guilty" to the charge brought but to prove that the acts alleged to have been committed or connived with by the accused were perfectly constitutional. How can the communists pretend to be in a position to give a more revolutionary lead to the nationalist struggle, if they fight shy of the burning question of the nationalist movement? The economics of communism demand that the communist party of India should be in the foremost ranks in the struggle for national liberation. Bourgeois nationalism can be satisfied with a compromise with imperialism; but no appreciable improvement in the economic condition of the working masses and of the considerable section of the lower middle class can be realised, without a complete break with the political and economic domination of a foreign power. Since the communist party is the political spokesman of this overwhelming majority of the nation, it will never play its historic role unless it is prepared to challenge the programme of bourgeois nationalism, and demand that the nationalist struggle should be conducted according to the interests of the majority of the nation. All these paramount issues were involved in the Kanpur Case. They were not met, but avoided.

The prerequisite of the legalisation of the communist party will be to settle these issues. Let me hope that the next opportunity will not be lost. I affirm once more that the communist party stands upon too broad a political platform to fit into the narrow limits of "secret societies". But it will be suicidal to buy legality at the sacrifice of the cardinal points of the communist programme as applied to the present situation in India.

M. N. Roy

(Meerut Conspiracy Case,  
Exhibit P 1138)

## 7. Gandhiji, C. R. Das and the Revolutionaries

### INTRODUCTION

The documents in this section are all articles either from the *Vanguard* or from the *Inprecor* or as in one case a leaflet distributed at the British Labour Party Conference. They are all from the pen of M. N. Roy and have appeared in the organ of the Communist Party of India or in the international communist press. The period covered in these documents is the latter part of 1924 and the events referred to are : (1) Ahmedabad session of the AICC ; (2) the first labour government in Britain and its attitude to India ; (3) the fall of the labour government ; (4) the repression against the revolutionaries and the swarajists ; and (5) the reaction of the national leaders to the same.

The first article "Mr Gandhi's Swan-song" is in the main a comment on the Ahmedabad session of the All India Congress Committee which met on 27-29 June 1924. The article ends with the words : "The defeat of orthodox Gandhism is complete and final ; the swarajists have won the day and Mr Gandhi as leader of Indian national struggle has sung his swan-song." This is rather an exaggerated summing up of the division between the Gandhists and the swarajists which came to a head at the Ahmedabad AICC session. The division was on the issue whether the swarajist policy of entering the legislative councils with

the object of carrying on obstructions to government measures was to be given the sanction of a Congress policy, at a time when the noncooperation movement itself was at a standstill after the Bardoli withdrawal. There were other points of difference also. The idea of Gandhiji to make the spinning of a particular quantum of yarn a compulsory qualification for a member of a representative organ of the Congress was challenged; the creed of nonviolence was also in a way challenged when the resolution on political assassination came up for discussion. The difference was so sharp that Gandhiji came to the point of resigning from the Congress. But the differences were resolved partly at the session itself but finally towards the end of the year at the unity conference in Calcutta, against the background of massive repression which the government launched against the revolutionary (terrorist) movement and against the swarajists.

On the eve of the AICC session at Ahmedabad which began on 27 June 1924, Gandhiji wrote an article in *Young India* which is dated 25 June. In this article, which is in the form of an open letter to the members of the AICC, Gandhiji wrote :

“The Congress passed a resolution in 1920 that was designed to attain swaraj in one year. At the end of the year we were within an ace of getting it. But because we failed to get it then, we may not now regard it as indefinitely postponed. On the contrary, we must retain the same attitude of hopefulness as before. Above all, we must be determined to get swaraj sooner than the chilly atmosphere around us will warrant. It is in this spirit that I have framed the resolutions for submission to you. They have been before the country now for a week.”

One of these resolutions was the so-called “Spinning Franchise Resolution”. This resolution in its original form required that “members of all elected Congress organisations shall, except when disabled by sickness, etc. . . . , send to the secretary of the All India Khadi Board at least 2000 yards of even well-twisted yarn of their own spinning, so as to reach it not later than 15 August 1924 and thereafter in regular monthly succession; any member failing to send the prescribed quantity by the prescribed date shall be . . . deemed to have vacated his office and such vacancy shall be filled in the usual manner.” The swarajists led by

Motilal Nehru and C. R. Das opposed this resolution as a move to eliminate them from the Congress. It was in reply to this that Motilal Nehru, as stated in the article, said: "We decline to make a fetish of the spinning wheel or to subscribe to the doctrine that only through that wheel can we obtain swaraj." He said further that "the resolution is an unconstitutional contrivance and we go away today to return with a majority which will refuse sanction to such unconstitutional attempts". With this the swarajists led by Nehru and C. R. Das and Srinivas Iyengar walked out of the AICC. After their walkout the resolution was put to vote and carried by 85 to 25 votes. But Gandhiji intervened and said: "This resolution could not have been passed in its present form if we count the votes of those who have walked out. He persuaded the AICC to remove the penalty clause. Swarajists then returned and the AICC proceeded further.

There was another clash between Gandhiji and the swarajists at the Ahmedabad AICC. That was on another resolution which Gandhiji brought forward. That was a resolution on political assassination, which came up in the context of the resolution adopted by the Bengal Provincial Congress Conference at Serajgunj in July 1924 paying homage to the memory of Gopinath Saha who was executed in March 1924 on the charge of having assassinated Mr Day.

The next document, "Mahatmaji's Bolshevism", is an article in the Vanguard. M. N. Roy sent a copy of this article to Mahatma Gandhi, who published it in *Young India* dated 1 January 1925. In the introductory note prefacing the reprint in his paper, Gandhiji wrote that the article was "in reply to my article on bolshevism". Gandhiji's article, entitled "Bolshevism or Discipline", was published in *Young India* dated 21 August 1924. In this Gandhiji is replying two complaints raised by "two American friends" in a "passionate letter" to him. Their first complaint was that Gandhiji was probably introducing in India bolshevism, which knows no god or morality and is frankly atheistic. In reply to this Gandhiji wrote that "I do not know the meaning of bolshevism", some "paint it in blackest colours" while others say "it is deliverance for the downtrodden

based on violence and denial of god, it repels me. I do not believe in short-cuts to success. These bolshevik friends who are bestowing their attention on me should realise that however much I may sympathise and admire worthy motives, I am an uncompromising opponent of violent methods even to serve the noblest of causes."<sup>2</sup>

On 27 September Roy sent a "Memorandum to the Conference of the British Labour Party" which is included in the *Vanguard*<sup>3</sup> as a separate sheet without the *Vanguard* page numbering on it so that its off-prints could be distributed as a leaflet at the conference to which it was addressed. The conference was meeting some ten months after the British Labour Party came to power for the first time.

In this memorandum the exposure of the MacDonald government, of its imperialist policy vis-a-vis India, is carried further. In the course of the election campaign in December 1923 Colonel Wedgwood had stated: "India will prove the test of a labour government. The Labour Party hopes to overcome the difficulties by accelerating the conversion of India into a self-governing dominion." MacDonald not only negated this vague promise by his "jingoist message" from which we quoted in an earlier section but continued the imperialist policy of colonial subjugation of India and of brutal repression of patriotic and popular movements for freedom. At about this time Motilal Nehru had moved an amendment in central legislature to an official resolution demanding a round table conference. This amendment, which was adopted in the teeth of government opposition, called upon the government to convene a round table conference of the representatives of all Indian political parties to draft the constitution of a responsible government at the centre and in the provinces and that this constitution be adopted and put into operation through the newly-elected legislature. This mild and timid demand was outright rejected.

Rejected also were the resolutions passed by the central, Bengal, Central Provinces legislatures demanding the release of all<sup>4</sup>

2. *Young India*, 11 December 1924; also *Collected Works*, Vol 25, p. 424.

3. Vol 5, No 4 of 15 October 1924.

political prisoners. Instead the labour government launched the Kanpur Conspiracy Case to suppress the rising organisation of workers' and peasants' parties and put hundreds in jail in Bengal without trial under the Criminal Law Amendment Act. The reference in the memorandum to legislative councils in Bengal and Central Provinces, where the swarajists with their allies were the majority and where they threw out the budgets, being dismissed, is not strictly accurate. They were just prorogued and not called again while the governors-in-council carried on the administration through certification.

The last document in the section, namely "MacDonald's Parting Kick" was written in November 1924 and refers to the round of repression launched by the government on 25 October by the promulgation of the Bengal ordinance and the arrest of swarajist leaders. On that day repression started with sensational raids, house-searches and arrests without warrants in Calcutta and in many district towns. Subhas Chandra Bose, Anil Baran Roy and 50 other Congress secretaries and office-bearers were arrested. Within a week 72 persons were taken away and some 35 more were added to the list within one month. Lord Reading, the then viceroy, while promulgating "the ordinance 1 of 1924" made a statement to the press in the course of which he gave a summary of terrorist "actions" of 1923 including the assassination of Mr Day by Gopinath Saha. This repressive piece of legislation established a summary procedure of arrest and trial before special commissioners of persons who the local government was satisfied belonged to associations allegedly charged with "revolutionary crime". Throughout November the ordinance and the arrests were the talk of the day. On 21 November 1924 an all-parties conference in Bombay demanded the release of the arrested patriots and the withdrawal of the ordinance as well as regulation 3 of 1818. On 31 October 1924 a lakh and a half people assembled in Calcutta in a mass demonstration to protest against the ordinance.

The introduction to the *Indian Annual Register*,<sup>4</sup> from which we have summarised the details of repression, also analyses the causes in the following words :

4. Vol 2, July-December 1924.

"In March (1924) reforms became virtually a dead letter in the central government of India, in Bengal and in the Central Provinces... Nothing could be done under the constitution to check the swarajists. So a campaign was started by the bureaucracy of maligning the opponents and representing them as revolutionists in league with the Third International. From March onwards the campaign of misrepresentation was carried vigorously in India and in England... stories were invented of revolutionist plot... 'Red Bengal' leaflets were manufactured by agents-provocateurs and fathered upon swarajists."<sup>5</sup>

This detailed account of the repression and its analysis taken from a contemporary Indian nonofficial source tallies generally with what Roy writes.

In condemning imperialist repression, both the liberal *Indian Annual Register* and Roy dissociate the arrested swarajists from the revolutionary (terrorist) movement which was no doubt ascendant in the early twenties in Bengal. Roy points out that even the extremists among the swarajists are advocates of non-violence.

The strength of the popular movement in defence of the arrested swarajist leaders and against the repressive Bengal ordinance forced the imperialist government in Britain to come out with an India Office communique. This communique, while it stated that the viceroy's ordinance was not aimed at the swarajist movement, bluntly asserted that it was directed towards the "speedy punishment" of the terrorists and the "more effective prevention" of their actions.

It is necessary to give here a brief account of the resurgence of the national-revolutionary (terrorist) movement in the early twenties against which the promulgation of the Bengal ordinance and the arrests of 25 October 1924 were directed. The resurgence began in the context of the mass upsurge in the early years of the postwar period, almost simultaneously with the first noncooperation movement. It is on record that Gandhiji called upon the leaders of this movement to give him one year's time and hold their hand. He assured the country that if his

5. *Ibid*, p. 8(b).

programmes were carried out India would be free by the midnight of 31 December 1921. According to Manmathnath Gupta, it was only after the Bardoli withdrawal and the swarajist revolt, that the "scattered revolutionary groups began to be brought together and Sachindranath Sanyal took up the task of organising the revolutionaries in the north and the Anushilan started work in Bengal".

Attack on the Sankaritola post office in August 1923, the observation of the death anniversary of Bagha Jatin in September and the hold-up in Chittagong in which the revolutionaries escaped with Rs 17,000—were the earliest actions in 1923. Mr Tegart—later Sir Charles Tegart—with a record of repression against Irish revolutionaries was in charge of dealing with this new development and soon his name became a hated name because of the particularly brutal methods of torture he used against young Indian revolutionaries. In January, 1924 Gopinath Saha shot one Mr Day mistaking him for Tegart. Saha was arrested, tried and sentenced to death and executed in March 1924. "He became a legendary figure. In court, as well as in jail his behaviour was exemplary."

In his statement before the court, Saha said: "I am extremely sorry for the innocent sahib that I have killed, and for those who have been wounded. I do not consider a man enemy because he is a sahib." Thereafter when the judge pronounced the sentence Saha exclaimed in tones loud and distinct: "May every drop of blood of mine sow the seed of liberty in every Indian home."

The account given by Manmathnath Gupta tallies with the detailed account given in the contemporary confidential reports of the government now available in the National Archives of India.<sup>6</sup> "In June 1924 the Bengal Provincial Congress at the political conference at Serajunj passed a resolution expressing admiration for the spirit of self-sacrifice exhibited by Gopinath

<sup>6</sup> Manmathnath Gupta, *History of the Indian Revolutionary Movement*, pp. 100-1.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted by Dewan Chamanlal in a letter to *Forward*, 19 June 1924.

<sup>8</sup> *Terrorism in India—1919-1936*, compiled by the Intelligence Bureau of the government of India, and a note by the secretary of state for India, 30 November 1933, on "Terrorism in India".

Saha. The effects of the resolution were electrical. It was by far the most potent instrument for organisation and became a perpetual incitement to the youth of Bengal to take to violent ways." Such was the tendentious comment of the second government document cited above. As Manmathnath Gupta points out this resolution created a stir. Gandhiji condemned it, while C. R. Das supported it. There was a prolonged controversy. The text of the resolution as it appeared in the *Statesman* of 8 June 1924 was as follows: "While adhering to the policy of nonviolence, this conference pays its respectful homage to the patriotism of Gopinath Saha who suffered capital punishment in connection with the murder of Mr. Day."

C. R. Das, in his paper *Forward*, expressed surprise at the views appearing in the daily press regarding the resolution. In a statement dated 8 June 1924 published in the paper he gave his own translation of the original Bengali text of the resolution:

"This conference, while denouncing (or dissociating itself from) violence (every kind of himsa) and adhering to the principle of nonviolence, appreciates Gopinath Saha's ideal of self-sacrifice, misguided though that is in respect of the best interests of the country, and expresses its respect for his self-sacrifice."

Defending his stand in support of the resolution, C. R. Das in the same statement quoted Gandhiji's statement on the subject which had appeared in the *Statesman* dated 16 June 1924. Gandhiji said he would call them patriots, but not without an indispensable adjective, namely "misleading". He added: "Their selflessness, defiance of death, love of country, I think must be held to be unquestionable, but on that very account, while I would call them misleading patriots, I would condemn their actions. . . and would be no party to resolutions praising their motives."

C. R. Das made use of this statement for exactly the opposite purpose, namely to defend the Gopinath Saha resolution. He said: "The resolution in question does not offend according to the text laid down in the above quotation...overwhelming majority at the conference was in support of the resolution... I feel under such circumstances it is my duty to say that it is wrong that violence should be committed, that every kind of

murder is bad but at the same time the sacrifice of such a man is worthy of praise. The resolution in question expresses no more than this."<sup>9</sup>

The controversy round the resolution came up before the Ahmedabad session of the AICC at the end of June. One of the resolutions moved by Gandhiji at this session was one condemning political murders. To this C. R. Das moved an amendment which was an exact counterpart of the resolution adopted at the Serajgunj conference under his presidentship. C. R. Das made stirring speech in support of the amendment. After some discussion Das's amendment was defeated by 78 to 70 votes. Finally the original resolution was carried by an overwhelming majority.

Gandhiji, however, did not consider this as his victory but his defeat. In an article reviewing the Ahmedabad session of the AICC Gandhiji wrote in *Young India*:

"I had a bare majority always for the four resolutions. But it must be regarded by me as a minority. The house was fairly evenly divided. The Gopinath Saha resolution clinched the issue. The speeches, the result and the scenes I witnessed after, was a perfect eye-opener. I undoubtedly regard the voting as a triumph for Mr Das, although he was apparently defeated by eight votes. That he could find 70 supporters out of 148 who voted had a deep significance for me. It lighted the darkness though very dimly as yet."

In a subsequent issue of *Young India* in an article entitled "Series of Defeats", Gandhiji wrote:

"It is true that the Gopinath resolution was carried by a bare majority. A clear majority would have pleased me no more than a bare majority. I do not forget the fact that many who voted for Das's amendment did so because of the rumour of impending arrests.<sup>10</sup> ... Sentiment often outweighs moral consideration and I have no doubt that the Bengal government will make a serious blunder if they arrest Mr Das and his supporters.

<sup>9</sup> Home-Pol F 38, 1924.

<sup>10</sup> This was written in July 1924. The arrests and the ordinance came on 25 October 1924. C. R. Das was not arrested though there were rumours of his arrest as well—C.A.

"If the Congress was a political organisation with no limitation as to means, it would be impossible to object to Mr Das's amendment on the merits. It would then be reduced to a question of expedience. But that there were 70 Congress representatives to support the resolution was a staggering revelation. They have proved untrue to their creed. In my opinion the amendment was in breach of the Congress creed or policy of nonviolence. But I purposely refrained from raising such an objection."

The resolution finally adopted at the Ahmedabad AICC was exactly opposite of the resolution passed by the Serajgunj conference. The AICC resolution "regrets the murder of the late Mr Day by the late Gopinath Saha and offers its condolence to the deceased's family". It "strongly condemns this and all such political murders" "though deeply sensible of the love, however misguided, of the country prompting the murder".

This account of the resurgence of the national-revolutionary movement in 1923-24 has relevance here for two reasons. Firstly, it shows that opposition to Gandhiji at the Ahmedabad session which came from the swarajists led by Motilal Nehru and C. R. Das had also the support of the national-revolutionary leftwing. This was particularly true in Bengal where C. R. Das for the successful implementation of his policy of council obstruction had to rely on the support of the national-revolutionary groups which had captured most of the district Congress committees. It was natural therefore that C. R. Das supported the Gopinath Saha resolution at the Serajgunj conference and at Ahmedabad moved and voted for the amendment incorporating that resolution. Secondly, the national-revolutionary movement, in the sense we mean here, came under the influence of the October socialist revolution and of the communist movement in India. Roy in the early twenties was keeping in touch with these groups and individuals were coming to the communist party even in those days. The contemporary confidential reports of the government record this fact thus:

"...it is necessary to add a word dealing with the influence of events in Russia on the thought and programme of the terrorists. The bolshevik revolution had received the close attention of Indian revolutionaries by reason both of the

violent methods on which it was based and also because of its connection with several Indian revolutionaries of whom the most notable was Narendra Bhattacharya alias M. N. Roy... Several members of the Anushilan and Jugantar organisations were sent to Europe to study revolutionary methods and by 1924-25 the influence of this movement is definitely traceable in the ideas and plans of the terrorists in general."<sup>11</sup>

How did the leadership of the National Congress and the Swaraj Party react to the round of oppression launched by the imperialist government? A complicated situation was developing in the country, against the background of the virtual suspension for over two years of the noncooperation which had aroused such spirit and hopes among the masses. In Bengal with its tradition of anti-imperialist struggle there was a resurgence of the national-revolutionary (terrorist) movement with a considerable mass backing from the middle class and the intelligentsia. Simultaneously C. R. Das, the sagacious leader of the national bourgeoisie, was forging a Hindu-Muslim pact to solve the future problem of sharing power in a Muslim majority province. In Bombay, in the context of the spontaneous textile workers' strike, the prerequisites for the rise of a militant working-class movement were taking shape. But elsewhere, where the elements for the rise of such a leftwing movement were lacking, the imperialists and their agents were busy stirring up communal riots to queer the pitch for a possible resumption of the noncooperation movement. In the middle of July there were communal riots in Delhi and in Nagpur. On 12 August 1924, the AICC appointed a committee headed by Gandhiji to take up the Hindu-Muslim unity question. On 12 September 1924 there was a Hindu-Muslim riot in Lucknow. On 18 September Gandhiji began his 21-day fast for Hindu-Muslim unity. This roused the conscience of the leaders of the different parties and communities and a unity conference was convened on 26 September at which 300 delegates from all over India assembled. On 8 October Gandhiji broke his fast. Thus we see that imperialism was launching a two-pronged attack of re-

11. Note of the secretary of state for India on "Terrorism in India", 30 November 1933.

mented: "This is a significant gesture which assured the government that the newly-cemented united front of constitutional responsibility would disown all connections with those suspected of any revolutionary tendency."

This attitude Roy describes as a "retreat before repression". Instead he recommends "resistance to repression". "A revolutionary offensive in the form of a general strike in towns, in the posts and on the railways, and a no-tax campaign all over the country will make the situation disagreeably hot for the government." This alternative course of revolutionary action, he points, can only be implemented by a party in which the masses have confidence.

Roy called for the organisation of a people's party.

"For a while, in the early days of noncooperation, the Congress involuntarily came near to being such a party of the people. It was pushed to such a dangerously revolutionary extent against its will, under the pressure of objective circumstances. It retraced its steps as soon as bloody battles were in sight. Consequently, it lost the confidence of the masses and has become the impotent show that it is today. . . . The revolutionary offensive, in the form of countrywide mass action, therefore, depends upon the organisation of a party of the people."

While the criticism of the compromising policy of the leadership of the National Congress and the slogan of building a leftwing workers' and peasants' party are both correct, the issue is once again posed here in the spirit of a sectarian confrontation between the two. We have seen how Roy was criticised in the Fifth Congress of the CI for this tendency.

## I. Mr GANDHI'S SWAN-SONG

That the leadership of the Indian nationalist movement has passed definitely out of the hands of Mr Gandhi and the orthodox school of noncooperation was proven by the session just concluded of the All-India Congress Committee at Ahmedabad. This is the first official deliberation in which Mr Gandhi has participated since his release from prison in January of this year, when he was operated upon for appendicitis, and has since been undergoing a slow convalescence. The two years, which have intervened between his arrest and conviction to six years' rigorous imprisonment, have brought many changes in the programme and tactics of the Indian National Congress. The Swaraj Party headed by Mr C. R. Das of Bengal succeeded in having an amendment passed to the noncooperation programme, permitting those who desired to take part in the elections to the legislative councils for the purpose of carrying on obstruction to the government. The elections of 1923 were contested by the Swaraj Party, which succeeded in capturing about half the seats in the provincial and all-India legislatures. By an agreement arrived at with the independent nationalists, whose demands are not so extreme as the swarajists but who occupy a centre position between the liberals or moderates and the noncooperators, the swarajists were able to command a small majority of votes in the central legislature and several of the provinces and to defeat practically all the government measures brought before those bodies for approval. Thus the centre of gravity of the national struggle has shifted during the past six months from the central legislature and several of the provinces and to a part of the Indian National Congress, formerly entirely controlled by Mr Gandhi and his followers.

The release of the Mahatma from prison by an act of grace of the labour government soon after the latter assumed office was regarded as the dawn of a new era in Indian political life. The lost leader had returned to his followers; the non-

cooperation movement which had fallen into stagnation since his arrest would be revived and become once more a powerful revolutionary force, which would sweep the Swaraj Party into the background of the struggle. Six months passed without any change in the situation, due to the feeble health of the Mahatmaj, and his desire to acquaint himself with the details of the situation, with which he had lost touch for two years. Private conversations with the various leaders of the National Congress representing different schools of thought were held at Juhu, the little sea-side resort where Mr Gandhi was convalescing, but strict secrecy was observed as to the nature of these discussions. Thus the first official pronouncement of the Mahatma was made just a few weeks previous to the Ahmedabad session of the All-India Congress Committee—the supreme executive body of the Indian National Congress.

This official pronouncement took the form of a simultaneous statement of policy on the part of Mr Gandhi for the orthodox noncooperators, known as the “no-changers”, and of the two chief leaders of the swaraj faction or “pro-changers”, Messrs C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru. This statement, which followed a series of prolonged conversations between the rival factions within the National Congress, aroused a great sensation throughout India. In it, for the first time, a frank difference of opinion was expressed on the tactics and programme of the national struggle, and an inability to arrive at any agreement between the two schools of thought. Mr Gandhi reiterated his faith in the “constructive programme” which he had laid down at Bardoli in February of 1922 and which limited the activities of the National Congress to the charkha (spinning wheel), khaddar (the wearing of homespun cloth) and social reform activities, such as the removal of “untouchability” of the lower castes, the campaign against the drink evil, and village education. The absolute boycott of government schools, law courts and legislative councils was insisted upon, as well as the boycott of foreign cloth.

To this programme the swarajists opposed their own, which was to enter the legislative councils with the object of carrying on obstruction to government measures, until their demand for swaraj (self-government) should be granted. They agreed to



With these words, Pandit Nehru and Deshbandhu Das left the hall taking with them fifty-five swarajists. One hundred and ten persons remained; when the resolution was put to vote, it was carried by 67 for and 37 against with six abstentions. This apparent victory of the Gandhists is merely apparent; had the swarajists remained in the hall, the resolution would have been defeated by about twenty votes.

As a result of this vote, Mr Gandhi recognised defeat. After hurried consultations with his followers, he agreed to drop his resolution on compulsory spinning and the fivefold boycott, making it only advisory in nature, and with these and other concessions, the swarajists were persuaded to rejoin the sessions. Thus the defeat of orthodox Gandhism is complete and final; the swarajists have won the day and Mr Gandhi, as leader of the Indian national struggle, has sung his swan-song.

(*Inprecor*, Vol 4, No 44,  
19 July 1924)

## 2. MAHATMAJI AND BOLSHEVISM

Some of his American friends wrote to Mahatma Gandhi that in the name of religion he was probably introducing bolshevism into India. These gratuitous "friends", obviously taking their cue from the spokesmen of Anglo-Saxon imperialism (who often masquerade as pacifists), depict the revolt of the Moslem peoples as a menace to the world, because this revolt is supported by bolshevik Russia. It should have been very simple for Mahatmaji to give a fitting reply to this impudent communication. He could have told his "responsible (?) foreign friends" that the Moslem peoples have legitimate reason to revolt, and that any political doctrine or government supporting this revolt is to be considered favourable by all apostles of freedom. Besides, he could have requested his American friends to get busy at home, if they sincerely dreaded any menace to the world. What is

carry on the constructive programme of Gandhism outside the councils, and to enforce the boycott of merely British, as opposed to all foreign cloth. To these modifications in his programme Mr Gandhi could not agree, and the statement of difference was issued to the country as a means of testing public opinion before the session of the All-India Congress Committee in June, which would have to decide between the two factions.

It was the first time that Mr Gandhi's word had been challenged upon an issue of national importance. The gauntlet had been thrown down; the leadership of the Indian national movement hung in the balance. Mr Gandhi had declared that if his programme were rejected, he would retire from politics and devote himself to social reform. The choice therefore was clear and uncompromising. He further announced that he would submit a resolution declaring that all persons who did not spin for half an hour a day and who did not observe fivefold boycott of legislative councils, law courts, government schools, titles and mill-made cloth would be forced to resign from the All-India Congress Committee. This resolution, if carried, would automatically exclude the swarajists from power and restore the leadership of the Congress to the orthodox noncooperators.

The All-India Congress Committee met at Ahmedabad—Mr Gandhi's own province and seat of authority—on 27 June, and continued its deliberations for three days. Mr Gandhi submitted his famous "self-denying ordinance" despite the heated opposition of the swarajists, and even that of some of his own followers, who vainly sought to reach a compromise beforehand. It was dramatic moment; Mahatma Gandhi, the idol of the Indian people, stood at bay, defied by the opposition within the Congress ranks. It fell to the lot of the Pandit Motilal Nehru to state the case for the swarajists :

"We decline to make a fetish of the spinning wheel, or to subscribe to the doctrine that only through that wheel can we obtain swaraj. Discipline is desirable, but it is not discipline for the majority to expel the minority. We are unable to forget our manhood and our self-respect, and to say that we are willing to submit to Mr Gandhi's orders. The Congress is as much ours as our opponents', and we will return with greater majority to sweep away those who stand for this resolution."

With these words, Pandit Nehru and Deshbandhu Das left the hall taking with them fifty-five swarajists. One hundred and ten persons remained; when the resolution was put to vote, it was carried by 67 for and 37 against with six abstentions. This apparent victory of the Gandhists is merely apparent; had the swarajists remained in the hall, the resolution would have been defeated by about twenty votes.

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Some of his American friends wrote to Mahatma Gandhi that in the name of religion he was probably introducing bolshevism into India. These gratuitous "friends", obviously taking their cue from the spokesmen of Anglo-Saxon imperialism (who often masquerade as pacifists), depict the revolt of the Moslem peoples as a menace to the world, because this revolt is supported by bolshevik Russia. It should have been very simple for Mahatmaji to give a fitting reply to this impudent communication. He could have told his "responsible (?) foreign friends" that the Moslem peoples have legitimate reason to revolt, and that any political doctrine or government supporting this revolt is to be considered favourable by all apostles of freedom. Besides, he could have requested his American friends to get busy at home, if they sincerely dreaded any menace to the world. What is

menacing the world more today than American imperialism? Is the revolt of the Moslem people more sinister than the Ku Klux Klan and the American Legion? Is bolshevist atheism more godless than the anti-Asiatic spirit of the American democracy?

The Mahatma, however, did not give such a direct answer. He preferred to justify himself—to absolve himself from any possible suspicion of bolshevist tendency. But the curious thing is, that although by his own confession he did not know anything about bolshevism, nevertheless he was extremely solicitous to disown any leaning towards it, so sure is his instinctive antipathy for it. In an article in the *Young India* he writes: "In the first place I must confess that I do not know the meaning of bolshevism." This is indeed a very damaging confession, in view of the fact that it is made by one standing at the head of a great popular movement. The Mahatma said in the same article that he knew that there were two opposite pictures of bolshevism, "one painting it in the blackest colour the other hailing it as a deliverance for the downtrodden masses all over the world". But he does not know what to believe. Here again he could follow a simple human course. He could easily find out who paints the first picture. It is done by those who are ruling over the world with the policy of blood and iron. In deference to his scruples of impartiality, he might not believe those giving the second picture; but certainly Mahatmaji does not need be convinced that the first party is not the friend or deliverer of the human race. Therefore when they depict a thing in the blackest colour, the oppressed section of humanity can instinctively sense some sinister motive, they feel that the "blackest colour" is for deceiving them. By this unerring instinct, Indian nationalists during the war used to read two German victories in the place of each allied victory cabled by Reuter, and the Mexican peon calls himself proudly a bolshevik, for the simple reason that the American capitalists are so much against bolshevism. But, I suppose, the mentality of a Mahatma is too complicated an organism to admit of such a simple instinctive process.

Since the deplorable ignorance of bolshevism is not the Mahatma's alone, but is shared by many in India, and since this ignorance does not preclude them from forming an opinion on the subject, it may not be uncalled for to say a few words about

this "monstrous" doctrine. It is more called for, in view of the fact that bolshevism (which by the way is not the result, as is commonly believed, but the basic principle of the Russian revolution of 1917) is the most dominant political factor of the contemporary world. Just as the great French revolution of 1789 affected the political thought and life of Europe at that epoch, the Russian revolution is bound to play the same role in our time, with the difference that the geographical situation of Russia coupled with the principles of her revolution will bring wider spheres, including Asia and Africa, under its sway. This is the case despite the explicable apprehension and righteous indignation of the pacifically minded ladies and gentlemen, whose good faith is taken for granted by Mahatma, but is seriously doubted by more practical men of the world.

Now, as far as Mahatmaji is concerned, the main principles of bolshevism will not be anything new. He himself will think so. But principles become a bundle of dead formulas if they are not put into action. By his own declaration, the Mahatma desires to see the masses freed from the domination of capitalism. Well, bolshevism does not propose anything more monstrous. The bolsheviks are generally in agreement with Mahatmaji when he says: "the greatest menace to the world today is the growing, exploiting, irresponsible imperialism which is threatening the independent existence and expansion of the weaker races". But the difference between the Mahatmaji and the bolsheviks is that in the hand of the former this gospel of freedom loses all practical value, being subordinated to an intricate conception of morality, religion and god, while the latter do not permit their vision to be clouded by illusions and deal with the world as it is. The result is, that while bolshevism forges ahead, breaking one link after another of the mighty chain of time-honoured servitude, in the face of united and determined opposition of the powers that be, Gandhism gropes in the dark, spinning out ethical and religious dogmas that only prevent the masses from developing the will to fight for freedom.

It can be taken for granted that Mahatmaji is acquainted with the general principles of socialism, not the utopian brand of St Simon, Thomas More, Tolstoy, etc., but that formulated on the basis of scientific knowledge and economic facts by Karl

Marx and Frederick Engels. The principles of socialism are (1) to overthrow the capitalist system of production; (2) abolition of private property; (3) reorganisation of the means of social production and distribution on the basis of communal ownership; and (4) transformation of the class-ridden society into a free human fraternity. These are also the principles of bolshevism, the latter being socialism in its militant and initial stages of victory.

The term "bolshevism", which has come to be associated with bloodshed, destruction, terror and what not, is very harmless in its meaning. It is derived from the Russian word *bolsheviki* which is the synonym for the adherents of the majority. The term was first used when the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party split in 1903 into two factions, on the questions of programme and tactics. The programme and tactics advocated by the majority, led by Lenin together with others, came to be known as bolshevism; and since the Russian proletariat scored the victory in October 1917, having fought according to the programme and tactics advocated by the majority of the party ever since 1903, the October revolution is called a bolshevist victory, which means the first triumph of socialism. What are the concrete results of the Russian revolution? (1) A corrupt, irresponsible despotism was overthrown; (2) the bourgeoisie which under the guise of democracy, sought in conjunction with foreign powers to deprive the Russian masses of the benefits of the revolution was also overthrown; (3) the landed aristocracy, the mainstay of the tsarist despotism, was destroyed, land declared to be the property of the entire nation and distributed among the cultivators; (4) large industries were nationalised; (5) foreign trade made a state monopoly; (6) all legislative and administrative power was transferred to the overwhelming majority of the people, namely the workers, peasants and soldiers, who exercised this power through their councils (soviets); (7) all right to private property and the class privilege accruing therefrom was abolished. These in general are the principles of bolshevism, applied practically in Russia in consequence of the revolution. Now that he knows what bolshevism is, what is the attitude of the Mahatma towards it? It will be interesting for India, as well as the whole world, to know the reply.



two alternatives; call upon the Russian workers and peasants to be god-fearing and meekly slip back into the bondage they had so heroically broken, or to keep on fighting even against god and religion, if they stood in the way, to protect and consolidate the freedom won. Bolshevism was obliged to accept the second alternative, because not only all available material forces were concentrated in order to force the Russian workers and peasants back under the capitalist and tsarist tyranny; all the arms of god and religion were also mobilised for the same purpose. Bolshevism is not a gospel of god; bolshevists are not angels. But neither is bolshevism the spirit of demons. The Mahatma proposes "to touch the masses through their hearts, their better nature". It is a fascinating proposition, to which bolshevism would not object, had it been found workable in the practice of liberating the masses from class domination and imperialist oppression. His theory of "discipline" is also very questionable. It may be good for the spiritual well-being of the masses; but it certainly weakens their will to fight for freedom. All these doctrines about "heart", "better nature", "discipline" and the like have been adumbrated from time immemorial by those who were the (perhaps unconscious) instruments of class domination. Bolshevism does not shirk any task, however disagreeable or difficult it may be. It challenges the existence of god, and denounces all the codes of religion and ethics originating therefrom, because in the struggle for freedom they are all found arrayed on the side of despotism, tyranny and oppression.

Bolshevism is prepared to leave god alone, if he and his agents on earth agree not to meddle in things temporal. But if they do not agree to be satisfied with their supermaterial position and seek to make trouble on earth, bolshevism will preach atheism to liberate the masses from the snare of ignorance woven by religion.

M. N. Roy

(*Vanguard*, Vol 5, No 4,  
15 October 1924)

## 3. MACDONALD'S PARTING KICK

M. N. Roy

There is no use in beating a dead horse. But it is necessary to throw light upon an event which was lost sight of in the excitement of the general elections in Britain. This event could be called MacDonald's parting kick to India. Of course, he dealt it with quite a different purpose—as the first of many to follow; but unfortunately for him, it proved to be the parting-kick.

We mean the sudden arrest of 72 leading nationalists and the simultaneous raid on several hundred houses in the province of Bengal. This act of terrorism was perpetrated by a special ordinance issued by the viceroy on 26 October. The pretext was to check the growth of "anarchical crimes". But the men arrested were all members of a political party (Swaraj Party) which has repeatedly declared itself against violence, and whose programme does not even call for separation from the empire. The arrested men have not been put on trial, nor any charge been framed against them. The unconstitutional nature of this act therefore is evident.

Now the most interesting part of the event is the complicity of the labour government in it. The situation in Britain did not permit any particular attention to be paid to this act of terrorism in India. It was even believed that the government of India acted on its own initiative, as soon as labour's return to office became doubtful, because it is indeed difficult to believe that the labour government would sanction such high-handed autoeracy, which was totally unwarranted. The record of the MacDonald cabinet, of course, did not leave ground to doubt that it would not rush to defence of the empire whenever necessary; but absolutely nothing happened in India to justify such a drastic action. Nevertheless the labour government not only justified the action of the viceroy once it had been committed, but actually sanctioned it in advance. Absolutely nothing of this complicity of the labour government with the uncalled for repression in India was known in Britain. Not a word about it appeared in the press. The London correspon-

dent of the semiofficial Calcutta paper, the *Englishman*, cabled the day after arrests were made :

"Whitehall is not surprised at the Bengal arrests, but is only surprised that they were not made much earlier. The British government were fully aware that the government of India contemplated taking action, and that the cabinet had promised fullest support to maintain constitutionalism."

On 28 October, the India Office issued a communique concerning events in India. This document was not published in any British paper, but was sent out to India by Reuter. It ran:

"The viceroy's ordinance is not aimed at the swarajist movement or any legitimate activity of the members of that movement. It does not affect lawful interests and activities of any citizen as long as he does not associate himself with the promotion of crimes and violence. The government is determined to preserve from such crimes that public security on which political progress depends and intends to proceed along lines of political development laid down. The ordinance does not create any new offence, but it is directed towards more speedy punishment of the offenders and more effective prevention of acts already defined as crimes under ordinary law."

As mentioned above, there is absolutely no evidence to prove any guilt on the part of the men arrested. So all these theories of "criminal violence and constitutional progress" go wide of the mark. The simple fact is that MacDonald gave in to the demands of tory imperialism for a "strong hand in India". He did it just before the elections in order to show that labour was "fit to govern".

According to its own admission, the labour government withdrew the charge against Campbell, because the attorney-general thought that there was not enough evidence to secure a conviction. But in India one need not bother about evidence. If the ordinary law does not suffice, a special ordinance can always be issued. In a country where such an unconstitutional situation obtains, the labour government demanded strictly "lawful activities" on the part of the nationalists.

The labour government has gone; but the men who constituted the labour cabinet still dominate the British Labour

Party Therefore this story of MacDonald's parting kick to India is very instructive to the British proletariat. It reveals what a monstrous lie is the doctrine of self-determination as indeed is any other doctrine of the Second International.

*(Inprecor, Vol 4, No 81,  
27 November 1924)*

## 8 Belgaum Session of National Congress

### INTRODUCTION

In this section we are giving documents issued by the Communist Party in connection with the Belgaum session of the Indian National Congress held in the last week of December 1924. The first is the manifesto to the session while the other is a commentary on the session and on the presidential address of Mahatma Gandhi. The version of the manifesto which we reproduce here is the one printed as a supplement in the *Vanguard* dated 15 December 1924. This was the last issue of that fortnightly issued by M. N. Roy. This was followed by the monthly *Masses of India* which began publication from 1 January 1925 and which was also issued by Roy from abroad.

"Appeal to the Nationalists" actually distributed at the Belgaum session was a slightly amended version of the original *Vanguard* text which was reprinted in India in a leaflet form. By the end of December the police had by interception and seizure got hold of both the versions. From a contemporary confidential government file, we know that early in January 1925 the government was considering the question of prosecuting the printers and publishers of the reprint distributed at the Belgaum Congress. This file, preserved in the National Archives of India, includes a note dated 5 January 1925 by David Petric, the then:

director of the central intelligence bureau. In this note, Petrie records that packets containing the 4-page pamphlet "Appeal to the Nationalists" by M. N. Roy was intercepted on 21 December 1924. The same file contains a copy of this printed pamphlet which on comparison is found to be identical with the one included in the Vanguard.

In his note, Petrie says further that Roy's manifesto in a pamphlet form was being freely distributed in the congress camp. This he says was mentioned both in the police intelligence reports as well as in press telegrams about the Belgaum Congress. Comparing this copy with the one intercepted in the post, Petrie says :

"The Belgaum leaflet is almost completely identical with Roy's; it omits the final para of Roy's, which advises the revolutionary nationalists and the workers and peasants of India to establish closer relations with the advanced proletariat of the world, and for the signature 'The Communist Party of India' which ends Roy's leaflet, it substitutes—'Fraternally yours, M. N. Roy' By way of P.S. it has the following seemingly quite original addition : "Dear readers, a mass party for the emancipation from the general exploitation is now overdue. And we expect that the suggestions made above by M. N. Roy will offer sufficient food for thinking minds—Publishers." The following is the imprint of the Belgaum leaflet. "Printed by K. N. Joglekar at the Labour Press, Bombay-2, and published by Messrs Janaki Prasad Bagerhatta and Arjunlal Sethi, members of the AICC."

Petrie then goes on to give his police-eye information about the printer and publishers : "K. N. Joglekar edits the *Socialist* which was conducted by Dange before he was convicted in the Kanpur Bolshevik Case. Janaki Prasad Bagerhatta is an Ajmer congressman, who is known to have been in direct correspondence with Roy, while Arjunlal Sethi is a very dangerous character who was lucky enough to escape prosecution in the Delhi conspiracy and the Arrah temple murder cases who has given much trouble in the Rajputana and Central India states (possibly both). He has been in jail at least once. It was I think for a seditious speech in the Central Provinces but this can be

readily verified.”<sup>1</sup> Arjunlal Sethi, “a very dangerous character” in the eyes of the police, is described by K. N. Joglekar, “as a militant anti-imperialist and a staunch supporter of communism”. In his reminiscences Joglekar records that Sethi “together with Hasrat Mohani and Bagerhatta took the initiative in organising the reception committee for the First Communist Conference in Kanpur in December 1925... Subsequently in 1928-29 he helped us considerably in organising railway workers at Ajmer and textile workers at Beawar.”

As to the question whether the printer and publishers of the Belgaum leaflet should be prosecuted or not, the Bombay government came to a negative conclusion :<sup>2</sup>

“The governor-in-council is still of the opinion after the examination of the pamphlet in full as circulated in Belgaum, which as you are aware is a modified form leaving out in particular the last paragraph of the original pamphlet, that it would be better policy not to institute a prosecution on the ‘Appeal’ published under the signature of Roy but to watch for personal pronouncements on revolutionary lines by the printer and the publishers.”

As stated here and earlier in this introduction, the reprinted “Appeal” actually distributed at the Belgaum session of the National Congress was a modified version. The responsibility for the modifications is taken by one of the publishers, namely by Janaki Prasad Bagerhatta. In the Meerut Case records in the file of papers seized from Bagerhatta’s place, there is a typed copy of a letter sent by him to M. N. Roy<sup>3</sup> on 13 January 1925 which says : “The appeal sent by you has been published and distributed among the members and delegates of the subjects committee of the Belgaum Congress, with some changes here and there, which were made owing to some differences in opinion and our angle of vision. I think I could have convinced you of the changes if the time for the discussion could have been at our disposal.”

The changes were made, as Bagerhatta says, because of “differ-

1. Home-Pol. Progs. Deposit Part B, F 48, 1925

2. Ibid, reply of the Bombay government, 6 February 1925.

3. Meerut Records, D-374.

ences in opinion and angle of vision" among the publishers. The major change made, and this is noted by the intelligence bureau chief Petne also—is the deletion of the last paragraph of the original, and the replacement of the signature. Besides, two sentences are added at the end, which have also been quoted above. The meaning of the change becomes clear, when we take into consideration the fact that the manifesto is being legally published in India after the Kanpur Case judgment and convictions. The deleted last para states that "the subject peoples in their struggle for freedom must have the cooperation of the international organisation of the revolutionary proletariat". Thus thinly veiled reference to the Communist International and the signature of the "Communist Party of India" have been deleted, to prevent the leaflet being banned.

The other changes are indicated in the text in footnotes.

Important point to be noted in these changes is the deletion of the words "complete break from the 'empire'" from the first item in the programme given and defining "national independence". In the petition of complaint filed against the accused in the Kanpur Case, the "conspiracy" with which they were charged was among other things for "the complete separation of India from imperialist Britain". This change also seems to have been made from the same point of view as explained above. It is well to remember here that Hasrat Mohani was convicted under 124-A IPC in May 1922 and was sentenced on the charge that "at the Muslim League and National Congress sessions at Ahmedabad in 1921 he stood out for complete independence from Great Britain, for the establishment of an Indian republic and for the adoption of violent methods".<sup>4</sup> All this however is not justification for these changes. The cautious and timid attitude of the publishers, who were both members of the AICC and whose background and history we have already given, was the main reason why they made these changes. All the same it is necessary to note one thing. Though manifestos of the Indian communists were distributed at the Congress sessions from

<sup>4</sup> Home-Pol. Progs. 1924. Part B, F 229. This information is given in government's note when the question of release of Hasrat Mohani was raised in the legislative assembly in 1924 by swarajist members. He was released towards the end of the year.

the Ahmedabad Congress (1921), two new persons came forward to sponsor the manifesto, get it printed and distributed at the session. This only shows that Peshawar and Kanpur conspiracy cases had not succeeded in crushing the new rising communist movement but only made it more popular.

The manifesto was dated 1 December 1924, nearly a month before the session was due to meet. It reviews the political situation in the country on the eve of the Congress session. The split inside the Congress, between the no-changers led by Gandhi on the one hand and the swarajists led by C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru on the other, was keenly discussed at the Ahmedabad session of the AICC where an agreement to differ but peacefully to coexist was arrived at. The noncooperation movement as such remained suspended for the last two years since the withdrawal at Bardoli. The no-changers were active in implementing the five boycotts including the boycott of foreign cloth, promoting Hindu-Muslim unity, removal of all discrimination against the so-called untouchables and above all, reviving the hand-spinning and hand-weaving industry through charkha and khaddar. The swarajists, as we have seen, after the general election of 1923 had succeeded in capturing strategic position in the central legislative assembly as well as in the legislative councils of Bengal and Central Provinces. This position they used successfully to reject the repressive measures of the government, expose the utterly undemocratic character of the legislative machinery, which could be operated only through the autocratic fiat of the governor-general and the governors. Its final exposure came by the deadlock brought about by the swarajist majorities in the Bengal and Central Provinces legislative councils.

The second feature of the situation was the emergence of a national-revolutionary wing of the national freedom movement, which was turning to progressive social aims and revolutionary actions under the impact of the October socialist revolution in Russia. A section of this was turning to the organisation of retaliatory actions against the most-hated top administrative and police officers of the government (terrorist actions). Another section was turning to the ideology of scientific communism and was concretising the national goal of "complete independence"

by putting forward a programme of democratic revolution and advocating the organisation of workers and peasants for their class demands and thus creating a new militant force for the national freedom movement.

The third feature of the situation was a severe offensive of repression launched by the government on 25 October 1924, with the promulgation of the Bengal ordinance and the mass arrests of swarajists and revolutionaries, of Subhas Chandra Bose and others, under the guise of suppression of what was called "revolutionary crime". As far as the communists are concerned, they were being prosecuted through the wellknown Peshawar and Kanpur conspiracy cases, apart from being arrested under regulation 3 of 1818 and the Bengal ordinance. It is round this offensive of repression—the promulgation of the Bengal ordinance and the arrest of 66 swarajists, including Subhas Chandra Bose—that the actual situation on the eve and at the Belgaum Congress developed. As we pointed out at the end of the introduction to the last section, Gandhiji went to Calcutta and from there issued a joint statement together with C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru, in which they reviewed the situation created by the repression. It was the agreement and unity arrived at Calcutta on 6 November 1924 that was finally confirmed at the Belgaum Congress.

The points of agreement and unity between Gandhiji and the swarajist leaders, C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru, are given in the joint statement in these words: "...whereas, therefore, it has become a matter of immediate necessity to invite and secure the cooperation of all parties for putting forth the united strength of the nation against the policy of repression, we the undersigned strongly recommend the following for adoption by all parties and eventually by the Congress at Belgaum :

"—Congress should suspend the programme of noncooperation;

"—the work in connection with the central and provincial legislatures should be carried on by the Swaraj Party on behalf of the Congress and as an integral part of the Congress organisation ;

"—repeal article vii of the Congress constitution and ... substitute the following...

: "No one shall be a member of any Congress committee or

organisation who is not of the age of 18 and who does not wear handspun and handwoven khaddar at political and Congress functions or while engaged in Congress business and does not make a contribution of 2000 yards of evenly spun yarn per month of his or her spinning or in the case of illness, unwillingness or any such cause, a like quantity of yarn spun by any other person."<sup>5</sup>

While at Calcutta, Gandhiji, in reply to the address presented to him on behalf of the Calcutta Corporation, said: "My views about anarchical activities are wellknown. I am opposed to them with my whole soul. I believe that they can do no good whatever to India. . . I may be excused, however, for adding that I detest the extraordinary measures adopted by the government just as much as I detest the anarchical activities. I can only hope that the government will retrace its steps and abandon the procedure which can only be described as lawless and that Mr Subhas Chandra Bose will soon be restored to the corporation and be able to resume the services which, from all accounts I have heard, he was rendering with great ability, efficiency and integrity."<sup>6</sup>

The vicious round of repression unleashed by the Bengal ordinance and the arrests of swarajists and revolutionaries brought about unity not only inside the Congress as evinced in this joint statement but an all-party conference was convened in Bombay on 22 November 1924 to review the situation. The resolution unanimously adopted at this conference "condemns the action of the governor-general in promulgating the criminal law amendment ordinance of 1924, as . . . being a direct invasion upon individual liberty. . . enacted without the sanction of the legislature. . . implicating innocent persons and interfering with constitutional political activity." It demanded the withdrawal of the ordinance and trial in accordance to ordinary law of the persons detained, and in conclusion said that "the only effective remedy" was "the speedy establishment of swaraj".

This account not only sums up the situation on the eve of the Belgaum Congress and indicates the line and the resolutions.

5. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 25, pp. 288-89.

6. *Ibid*, p. 291—quoted from *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 7 November 1924.

that were going to be adopted at the session. This information reported by Reuter is before Roy by the end of November when the manifesto was written.

The next document, the article in the first issue of the *Masses of India*, the new journal which from 1 January 1925 replaced the *Vanguard*—briefly reviews the Belgaum Congress. The article was written when Roy had received only brief telegraphic reports of the Belgaum session. The decisions of the Belgaum session which were immediately broadcast by the official (imperialist) news agency were two: (1) withdrawal of the noncooperation movement, which was already in a state of suspension since the Bardoli withdrawal; (2) sanction to conduct a joint national demand to be placed before the British government. The comment in the article refers to only these two points. The all-party conference held in Bombay had appointed a committee to produce a report on the national demand. This committee was to publish the report by March 1925.

Pattabhi Sitaramayya's comment on the results of the Belgaum Congress sums up the situation thus:

"In the history of the noncooperation Belgaum is a landmark. The revolt against Gandhism was almost complete. The Congress stood at the parting of ways... The time, however, had come for a halt. People that had noncooperated began to repent in many cases. The reaction made them worse than before they noncooperated. So all the boycotts had to be lifted. The boycott of foreign cloth alone remained... An agreement in difference was reached between the swarajists and himself (Gandhiji). They agreed to the spinning franchise. He agreed to their work in the councils."

The comment of the *Masses* on the outcome of the Belgaum session was that the Congress as an organ of the mass movement has "died of inanition". The reborn Congress is taking to constitutional work; so the revolutionary elements within it must now come forward to organise "a mass party untrammelled



rantee of status to Indian chiefs without any hindrance from the central government; (9) repeal of arbitrary powers; (10) abolition of race distinction in services; (11) religious freedom to various denominations; (12) administration through vernacular languages and Hindustani to be the national language.<sup>10</sup>

Roy correctly points out that barring the first and the last points, the programme is the same as the Congress has been putting forward since its inception. "Reduction of the military budget (2), judicial reform (3), lower taxation (4), retrenchment in all the branches of administration (5), free access for the Indians to the higher services (10), curtailment of the power of the executive (9) — these in short are the basis of swaraj. These familiar demands are supplemented by the demand for the protection of capital—native and foreign—and the Indian chiefs (7 and 8)... The programme he (Gandhiji) formulated could have been formulated by any leader of the Liberal League."

Since the Ahmedabad session of the Congress (1921), Gandhiji and his close associates had always opposed the resolutions brought by the communists and the left to define swaraj as complete independence from British imperialism, and its concretisation in a minimum socio-economic programme in the interest of the masses. At Belgaum (1924), Gandhiji came out with his own definition and concretisation of demands. Roy points out that Gandhiji is suggesting his points for the consideration of the committee appointed by the all-party conference in Bombay for framing a scheme of swaraj, and they are such as would be acceptable even to the liberals who were bound to be on the committee.

Gandhiji further takes his stand for "equal partnership within the British empire" as against "complete independence". He says :

"In my opinion, if the British government mean what they say and honestly help us to equality, it would be a greater triumph than a complete severance of the British connection. I would, therefore, strive for swaraj within the empire, but would not hesitate to sever all connection if severance became

a necessity through Britain's own fault."<sup>11</sup> Further he says that any scheme he would frame, while Britain declares her goal about India to be complete equality within the empire, would be that of alliance and not of independence without alliance. "I would urge every congressman not to be insistent on independence in each and every case, not because there is anything impossible about it, but because it is wholly unnecessary till it became perfectly manifest that Britain really means subjugation in spite of her declaration to the contrary."<sup>12</sup>

In his criticism, Roy pointedly refers to the contemporary events in Ireland and particularly in Egypt and says that when British imperialism talks of "equal partnership" it means "subjugation". Then he goes on to raise and answer the question—for whom is this "equality" solicited?

"It is frankly the swaraj for the two per cent that the Mahatma stood for at Belgaum, and the Congress has tacitly ratified this class programme. Nowhere in the 12 points of the Mahatma does a single sentence occur which is calculated to demand something in behalf of the masses. Native princes should be protected (as a corollary to this programme, landlordism within the British territories will remain sacrosanct), the rights of capital, even of foreign origin, should be scrupulously respected, higher posts should be open to the scions of aristocracy and to the intelligentsia. Such is the 'equal partnership' demanded... It is an equal partnership in the right of exploiting masses."

This policy Roy characterised as the policy of the Indian bourgeoisie, who reject the revolutionary path in which there may be a danger to property and to the present class domination: "In 1921, the nationalist movement was a revolutionary mass movement, while today its basis has narrowed down to the bourgeoisie. Its programme has at last been nicely adjusted to the limited interests of that small class." The Mahatma's plea that those who believe in the cult of violence are retarding India's progress is rejected. It is asserted that "it is the cult of nonviolence that has retarded India's progress especially be-

11. *Ibid.*, p. 481.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 482.

cause it deprived the oppressed of the weapon which is freely used by the oppressor."

It is well to remember that Gandhiji's cult of nonviolence met with a strong opposition within the Congress itself in 1924. We have already quoted Pattabhi Sitaramayya saying that "the revolt against Gandhism was almost complete and the Congress stood at the parting of ways" at Belgaum. We have shown in the introduction to the last section how the issue of violence versus nonviolence came up before the Ahmedabad session of the AICC on the question of condemning political murders, in the context of the resolution on the martyrdom of Gopinath Saha. The question of violence versus nonviolence came up again in the All-India Congress committee at the Belgaum session in connection with two resolutions—one on the condolence on the death of Lenin and the other on a fund for political sufferers. Both were negatived with a narrow margin.

A confidential government file, giving a report on the political situation for the first fortnight of December 1924 records that one Bhagwan Prasad Nigam, said to be a member of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee, submitted a draft resolution on condolence on the death of Lenin to the AICC to be adopted at the Belgaum session of the National Congress.<sup>13</sup> In the Lahore daily Tribune dated 30 December and in the Bombay Chronicle dated 29 December, we have reports of the resolution being moved. The Tribune report is very brief while the Bombay Chronicle one is fairly detailed. The latter says that the resolution was moved by Jehangir Patel. It appears that a number of members had given notice of a similar resolution. Jehangir Patel, though he had given notice of his resolution, said he was prepared to support the draft put forward by Atul Sen. This draft was as follows :

"This Congress committee expresses deep sense of sorrow at the death of Lenin, a friend of the working classes, and sympathises with the Russian people in their great loss and also authorises the president of the Congress (Mahatma Gandhi)

13. Home-Pol. F 25, 1924.

to convey this resolution to the president of the Russian Soviet Republic."

We give the rest of the report in the words of the *Bombay Chronicle* :

"Mahatma Gandhi, on hearing the last clause of the resolution cried, 'Oh, oh !' and asked, 'If the president is unwilling to convey the resolution?'

"Mr Patel retorted : 'You are bound by our vote as we are bound by your rulings.' (laughter)

"Mr Jhangir Patel, in moving the resolution said that although they might not agree with the methods of Lenin, they must understand the force behind Lenin's ideals, ideals which impelled him to fight the tsarist government for the amelioration of the working classes and peasants. We, in the Congress, were passing resolutions on charkha because we wanted economic freedom and salvation of India. Similarly Lenin was fighting for freedom and the emancipation of the working classes in Russia. Lenin had fought not only against tsarist imperialism, but also the capitalism of Russia. 'We may not agree with his methods today, we may agree with them some day, if not in the near future, probably at some distant date. But if we understand and are convinced that the man was absolutely impersonal and that there was nothing personal for the actions which he did towards securing the amelioration of the working classes, then I ask you to accept the resolution.'

"Babu Atul Sen seconded the resolution.

### *Why Not Mr Montagu ?*

"Mr Khare opposed the resolution and warned the house against committing the Congress to a proposition the ultimate effects of which it did not fully realise. Two days ago there was a resolution relating to the death of Mr Montagu, a person who had done so much for India and that was not brought for discussion. But now is brought forward a resolution over the death of one who was not directly concerned with India. 'Why not charity begin nearer home instead of allowing it to travel as far as Russia?' asked Mr Khare who said he could not approve of Lenin's methods. From the point of view of the

Indian National Congress this resolution was not very desirable.

“Mr Sidhwa supported Mr Khare and said ‘If you are going to pass these resolutions, then allow me to move a resolution over the death of Mr Montagu.’”

### *Gandhiji Explains*

“Mahatma Gandhi: ‘If I had the power to bring myself to believe that I would be within your constitution in overruling this resolution I would not take a second to do so. Do not for a moment run away with the idea that I prohibited you from moving the resolution about Mr Montagu’s death. I think I said what was running in my mind in that connection and what prevented me from even mentioning Mr Montagu’s name in my address. As to this resolution, I think the committee would be going entirely out of its beat in passing it. The Russian people will not be particularly thankful to you for sending this resolution after all these months. It will be an All-India Congress Committee’s resolution and not a Congress resolution. It is, in my opinion, undignified to pass this resolution.’”

“The resolution was put to vote and lost, 63 voting against, 54 for it. Among those who voted for it were Messrs Vithal-bhai Patel, MLA, Sardar Mangal Singh, Babu Shiva Prasad Gupta and Maulvi Zafar Ali Khan. Those who voted against included the Ah brothers, Pandit Motilal Nehru, Lala Lajpat Rai and Mr C. Rajagopalachari.”

There is nothing in the *Tribune* report which is at variance with this detailed report in the *Bombay Chronicle* except the voting figure, which according to the former were “63 against 44.” The *Bombay Chronicle* figures are likely to be nearer the truth. The *Masses* article on the Belgaum Congress as we have seen also says that “nearly 50 per cent” supported the resolution. It is true that neither the *Collected Works* of Gandhiji nor the official *History of the Indian National Congress* mentions anything about the Lenin resolution in their pages dealing with the Belgaum session. But the *Indian Annual Register*,<sup>14</sup> which devotes several pages to a fairly detailed re-

14. Vol 2, July-December 1924.

port of the proceedings of the Belgaum session, gives an account of the All-India Congress Committee which met on 28 December 1924, after the session of the Congress was over. The account given here on the discussion on the Lenin condolence resolution tallies exactly with the report we have reproduced from the *Bombay Chronicle*. The voting figures given here are 63 vs 54, the same as in the *Chronicle*.

There was another resolution before the same AICC session on which again the sympathy for the revolutionaries became the subject matter of controversy. This was the resolution for instituting a political sufferers' fund moved by Atul Sen. In the account given in the *Indian Annual Register* referred to above it is stated that the fund was to be earmarked for helping families of bona fide dependants during the period the sufferers remain deprived of freedom and also for helping the sufferers by adequate funds and that the fund be controlled by the AICC on the recommendation of the provincial Congress committee concerned.

Before Sen moved the resolution, Mahatma Gandhi requested him to withdraw it as there was no necessity for earmarking the fund for this purpose as the provincial Congress committee which enjoyed full authority had every right and power to help sufferers.

Sen, however, refused to withdraw. Muzumdar supported the resolution which was put to vote and after a show of hands was declared carried, 59 voting for and 51 against it. Shankerlal Banker and N. C. Kelkar pressed for a recount, which being done resulted in 70 voting for and 73 voting against. Gandhiji declared the resolution lost.

In a confidential government file<sup>15</sup> we have an intelligence report of the proceedings of the AICC at the Belgaum Congress. Forwarding the report to Muddiman, the home member, Petrie says that the resolution regarding the institution of a political sufferers' fund was negatived by a narrow majority of 73 to 71. Petrie adds: "It is noteworthy that the resolution

expressing sorrow at the death of Lenin was rejected by 64 votes to 54. This resolution too was dealt with by the AICC and not in the open congress."

The report itself confirms all the facts as given in the *Indian Annual Register* quoted above. The intelligence report gives the following additional information:

(a) The resolution detailed the following items for the use of the fund: (1) maintaining the families of political sufferers till they gained their freedom; (2) help political sufferers after release from jail or internment till they get employment; (3) give them loans to set up business; (4) in case of capital punishment help their dependants; (5) in case of capital punishment help widow or mother with a lifelong stipend; (6) educating their helpless children; (7) help families of those killed in political strife.

(b) Among those who voted against the resolution were C. R. Das, Motilal Nehru, Mahammad Ali, Shaukat Ali, Wahid Hussam, Lala Lajpat Rai, Abhyankar, V. J. Patel, Abul Kalam Azad, Jawaharlal Nehru.

It is clear that Gandhiji opposed and the house was sharply divided because the question of those who believed in "violence" was involved!

The communist position on this question is fairly stated in an article in the *Masses* on "Gandhism". In the concluding paragraphs, reply is given to Gandhiji's charge that it is "those who believe in the cult of violence" who are "retarding India's progress":

"... Those who held views opposed to those of Mr Gandhi and his school do not make a cult of violence... They maintain, and do it in the light of history, that the struggle for freedom of the subject people and of the oppressed classes is bound to culminate in a period of violent revolution, because those opposed to this freedom are sure to put up a fierce resistance and will not give in before all their resources are exhausted. They argue and this argument has not been refuted, that the cult of pacifism or nonviolence is preached with a view to preserve the present system of class domination and national domination, because it deprived the oppressed of the

weapon which is freely used by the oppressor. The correctness of this argument is demonstrated for the millionth time by the Mahatma's placing two such diametrically opposed forces as the British government and the revolutionary nationalists in the same dock of the accused."

Revolutionaries and communists have always supported nonviolent noncooperation in as much as it meant mass resistance to imperialist rule and recognised Gandhiji's great role in initiating a new militant mass phase of our national-liberation movement in the context of a worldwide upsurge of national freedom struggles under the impact of the great October socialist revolution in Russia. What was opposed was the rigid and inflexible "cult of nonviolence" which acted as a brake on the developing mass resistance, as in the case of the Bardoli withdrawal of the first noncooperation movement in 1922. What is important to note here is that on this point Gandhiji met with considerable opposition inside the Congress itself in 1924. This happened three times: once at the Ahmedabad AICC on the Gopinath Saha resolution and at the Belgaum AICC on the resolutions on the death of Lenin and on the political sufferers' fund. Gandhiji's inflexible attitude to nonviolence was the issue involved on all these three occasions and every time he won but with a narrow margin. And at least on one of these occasions, Gandhiji recognised this "victory" as his defeat.

## 1. APPEAL TO THE NATIONALISTS

*Fellow Countrymen,*

This year the National Congress meets in an atmosphere of depression and decomposition. There remains nothing but a memory of the gigantic movement that swept the country in the years immediately following the imperialist war. The process of disintegration has touched the bottom. In fact the period has lasted much longer than was expected. The scene at Coconada was sad indeed; but Belgaum promises a worse spectacle.

The nationalist movement is confronted with immense and intricate problems which are not approached from the right angle of vision. In India, as in every other subject country, nationalism is a revolutionary force; it must, therefore, pursue a revolutionary course. Otherwise it is bound to degenerate either into political reformism, on the one hand, or social reaction, on the other. This has unfortunately been the case in India. Except during the short period of militant noncooperation the Indian nationalist movement has never proceeded along a revolutionary path. Since direct mass action, envisaged in the original programme of noncooperation, was repudiated at Bardoli, the nationalist movement, as represented and guided by the Congress, has been switched off the revolutionary road. The consequence has been a great confusion in the nationalist ranks. Demoralisation followed confusion. A process of decomposition set in. The mighty Congress organisation was torn by internal conflicts, and killed by the want of exhilarating action. A continued state of depression and inaction drove one section of the nationalists back towards the old and discredited constitutionalism; the more restless elements reverted to futile terrorism, which they had temporarily deserted in quest of a broader field of political activity; deprived of political significance, the orthodox noncooperators sank into social re-

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# APPEAL TO THE NATIONALISTS

Belgian Congress

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action; while the masses began to lose enthusiasm for the nationalist movement.

The nation is as far away from swaraj as it stood five years ago; only the hopes and illusions, that inspired it then, are gone today. The situation was no better a year ago; but the Coconada Congress signally failed to repair it. The Belgaum Congress meets in the same gloomy atmosphere but under no better leadership, with no clearer vision, actuated by no revolutionary zeal. It obviously has but one purpose: to draw a curtain over the revolutionary events of the postwar years—to bring the nationalist movement back on the safe and sane road of constitutional agitation. Of course there will be no lack of bombastic speeches, meant only to cover the retreat.

A recapitulation of the trend of the principal events of the past twelve months will show that the mythical goddess of unity, whom the Belgaum Congress will enshrine, signifies only a great political reaction.

(1) The Congress-split ended in a complete victory of the pro-change elements. The Swaraj Party became the predominating political factor. All projects of direct action were disowned by the responsible spokesmen of all political tendencies.

(2) The first act of the swarajists upon entering the councils was to seek alliance with the independent nationalists, that is, the leftwing of the liberals. This alliance could be had only at the sacrifice of the cardinal points of the swarajist programme.

(3) The famous "national demands" were put away.

(4) Even the immediate grant of dominion status was not made the *sine qua non* of the nationalist programme.

(5) There is not one political party in the country which will not be satisfied with such measures of reform as provincial autonomy, Indianisation of the services and partial responsibility of the central government. Even the swarajist leaders have clearly committed themselves to this beggarly programme of liberalism.

(6) The swarajist tactics of parliamentary obstruction have reached the end of their rope. The sponsors of these tactics, who spoke so heroically when engaged in the fight against the

no-changers, have failed to carry their policy of resistance outside the council-chambers. In the parliamentary bout, the government held its autocratic position, throwing challenge after challenge insolently to the nationalists. At last the swarajists were forced to make their choice between revolutionary direct action and reversion to impotent constitutionalism. They have decided in favour of latter, as we predicted at their birth, and are seeking the alliance of the liberal co-operators and loyal ministerialists.

(7) The no-change wing of the Congress, on the other hand, has lost all political significance. Their only stock-in-trade was civil disobedience, which however they could not put into practice because of the reactionary cult of nonviolence. Their political impotency can no longer be hidden behind the cry of pure Gandhism, when the prophet himself throws overboard his programme of triple boycott to welcome Mrs Besant and her followers back into the Congress fold. The fate of the Belgaum Congress will be predetermined in the caucus conference of Bombay which, under the guidance of such a devoted imperialist as Mrs Besant, will eliminate the line of demarcation between cooperation and noncooperation.

(8) Hindu-Moslem unity, which was made a cornerstone of the noncooperation movement, and to the realisation of which unity India's fitness for swaraj was mistakenly attributed by the nationalist leaders themselves, has been revealed to have been a superficial makeshift. The disastrous effects of hinging a great political movement of an essentially revolutionary character on religious fanaticism and extraterritorial patriotism are manifest today in the communal riots which spread all over the country and assume ever uglier forms, despite the frantic efforts of the leaders to check them. The nationalist leaders of both the communities have miserably failed to grasp the problem, much less to solve it.

(9) The decomposed state of the movement, coupled with the thinly-veiled anxiety of the leaders for a compromise made the government so sure of its position that it decided to deal the last crushing blow. It was aimed at those nationalists who were suspected of the least revolutionary tendency. The nationalist movement as a whole was staggered by this un-

expected blow and proved unwilling and incapable of retaliating. On the contrary, the governmental terrorism in Bengal stampeded the swarajists into an unholy alliance with the moderates. Some of the best elements of the nationalist ranks are locked up in jail by a despot's ukase, without provoking any determined resistance on the part of the Congress. This speaks for the character of the leadership and the lamentable impotency into which the nationalist movement has sunk in consequence of its nonrevolutionary orientation and reformist policy.

This brief review of the situation shows which way the wind is blowing. The progress has been positively retrograde. The preparations of the last year have brought the Congress on the eve of resuming the old programme of evolutionary nationalism from which, under the pressure of popular revolt, it broke away in 1920. At this juncture it is the duty of the revolutionary nationalists to mark out a new way which will lead to the goal of freedom.

The present deplorable state of the nationalist movement is due to a wrong conception of nationalism. Our leaders are no less afraid of and hostile to a revolutionary movement than the British government, although they stand at the head of a movement essentially revolutionary. Taking their cue from the government, not a few of the nationalist leaders energetically denounce what they call "revolutionary crime". It is a current topic in the nationalist press that the government should concede the constitutional demands of the nationalists, if the country is to be saved from a violent revolution. Thus all goes to show that nationalism is considered to be antirevolutionary, and this narrow conception of nationalism is the root-cause of the weakness of the nationalist movement.

Revolution is not an unconstitutional affair. In fact practically all the modern constitutional states owe their origin to some sort of a revolution. India has no constitutional government. When one talks of constitution in India, one has in view the British constitution. This latter has for its foundation the Magna Charta, which was not secured without the application of force, that is, which was the product of a revolution. Then every successive period in the evolution of the

British constitution is equally marked by events of a revolutionary nature. The same process can be read in the history of any other modern nation.

What is a revolution? A very wrong notion about it obtains in Indian nationalist circles. Revolution is generally associated with bombs, revolvers and secret societies. Hence arises the expression "revolutionary crime" so current in Indian political terminology. Revolution, however, is a much greater affair. An important historical event which marks the close of a given historical period and opens up a new one is called a revolution. Since the social factors, economic classes and political institutions, that used to be benefited by the state of affairs obtaining in the closing period, would not permit a change which spells the end of their domination, often their total annihilation, without a fierce resistance, political violence and social convulsion are usually the features of the historical phenomenon which is called "revolution". The forces that go into the making of the new epoch are originally conceived and go on gathering strength within the framework of the old which eventually must burst if the germs of the new contained therein are to fully fructify. This process is to be noticed throughout all the physical existence. Revolution, therefore, is in the very nature of things; it is quite constitutional.

Once we have this correct conception of revolution, it becomes clear that nationalism, in a given period of history, is a revolutionary force, whose manifestations are not "criminal". This force operates through a series of historical events, which will separate the India of tomorrow from the India of yesterday. This process cannot take place within the framework of a superimposed constitution, which by its very nature is meant to prevent this epoch-making break. Indian nationalism cannot therefore be "constitutional". Its object is to establish a constitutional government of the people, for the people, by the people of India.

The goal of nationalism can never be realised in the way indicated by those who, in unison with the British government, are positively hostile to revolution. The struggle for freedom of a subject people can never be separated from revolution. Freedom will never come as a gift from those who deprived us of

it. The people of India must conquer freedom; and the idea of conquest cannot be separated from the necessity of breaking down the resistance of the opponent. The nationalists, who prescribe safe and sane "constitutional" methods, are quite conscious of the resistance that has to be met. They are even doubtful if that resistance can ever be broken by the means advocated by them. Nevertheless they recoil from visualising the operation of those forces that alone can break down this resistance. Presumably they are not particularly in love with imperialism; but they are not prepared to countenance the social convulsion which will inevitably occur if those forces are let loose. This nonrevolutionary nationalism leads to compromise, because it lacks the power to go further.

No less futile is sporadic terrorism carried on by secret societies. Those who resort to the futility of this extremism possess an equally wrong conception of revolution. Violence is not per se an essential attribute of revolution. Under the present state of society, political and social revolutions can hardly be expected to be bloodless and nonviolent; but everything bloody and violent is not revolutionary. A particular social system or political institution can never be overthrown by assassinating individuals upholding them. It is no more possible to win national independence by killing a number of officials than by a series of reforms acts passed by the British parliament. One method is as impotent as the other, because none of them strikes at the root of the evil. Both are political blunders; but it is preposterous to call the terrorists "revolutionary criminals", as the "constitutionalists" are positively nonrevolutionary, and will become counterrevolutionaries as soon as the fateful movement comes.

These considerations are necessary to find a way out of the present depression to insure that the "unity" to be realised at Belgaum causes a reaction among the revolutionary nationalists. The forces that make for militant nationalism having for its object not a mere administrative readjustment, but the introduction of a new historical epoch through a great socio-political convulsion, cannot find adequate expression in the programme of reformism on which narrow basis the "reunited" Congress will take its stand. Nor can the political potentiality of those



struggle. But this shortsighted policy prejudices even their own interests; because experience has shown that imperialism will not yield an inch of ground without resistance. This determined resistance of imperialism, which wields a tremendous power, can be broken down neither by parliamentary strategy nor by futile terrorism. The success of the nationalist movement demands the mobilisation of the national energy. The entire nation must be hurled against the stone wall of imperialism. A programme of reformism, which will be adopted by the "reunited" Congress at Belgaum, cannot accomplish the task. The causes that created the revolutionary ferment of the post-war years have not been eliminated. The masses are still discontented with their condition and will readily rise in revolt to free themselves from unbearable exploitation. This revolt must be organised and led.

As against the reformism of the upper-class politicians, there must be a programme of revolutionary nationalism. This programme demands more than heroic words expressing noble sentiments. It should be prepared with realism. The government is no more afraid of threatening speeches than of bombs and revolvers. They may be zealous to suppress both for the sake of precious prestige; but they do not take them seriously. The unanimous protest of the entire nation against the Bengal arrests failed to make any impression upon the authorities. Why? Because they knew that there was no desire on the part of the nationalists to translate their protests into action; that they were not prepared to back up their threats by action. Under the present condition of the country, despotic actions of the government can be retaliated only by direct mass action—general strike and nonpayment of taxes. But this direct action presupposes two conditions, namely a political party commanding the confidence of the masses and a revolutionary outlook on the part of the nationalists. Neither of these conditions unfortunately exists at this moment. These conditions must be created before the nationalist movement can be carried further ahead.

That party alone can command the lasting confidence of the masses, which not in word but in deed reflects the grievances and demands of the masses. Here, again realism should be the

guiding principle. The everyday material needs; immediate economic demands and general earthly wellbeing should be the determining factors. Metaphysical prejudices should be set aside. Then the nationalists, who will gather under the banner of such a party, must be inspired with a revolutionary<sup>2</sup> outlook; because mass energy once aroused and applied to a political struggle will not subside as soon as the foreign government is overthrown. It is bound to go to the extent of effecting a radical transformation of the present socio-economic system. The choice has to be made between this revolutionary readjustment of social relations and continued imperialist domination, brutally naked or eventually camouflaged<sup>3</sup> as partnership in the empire.<sup>4</sup>

The programme of a revolutionary<sup>4</sup> nationalist party, which will stand on the solid foundation of mass energy consciously asserting itself for the realisation of a concrete goal, must have for its cardinal points the following:

- (1). National independence: <sup>5</sup>complete break from the empire<sup>5</sup>; democratic republic based on universal suffrage;
- (2) abolition of feudalism and landlordism;
- (3) nationalisation of land: none but the cultivator will have the right of landholding;
- (4) modernisation of agriculture by state aid;
- (5) nationalisation of mines and public utilities;
- (6) development of modern industries;
- (7) protection for the workers; minimum wage; eight-hour day; abolition of child-labour; insurance; and other advanced social legislation;
- (8) free and compulsory primary education;
- (9) freedom of religion and worship;
- (10) right of minorities.

A movement for the realisation of these concrete objects will be a really national movement. The time is gone when the people could be inspired by a vague promise of swaraj. The depression of the nationalist movement has been caused by the temporary cooling of mass energy. Had the latter been in

2. "broader".

3-3. deleted.

4. deleted.

5-5. deleted.

the same high-tide as in 1920, the Congress would have been pushed in a revolutionary path against its will. The only way of cutting its projected<sup>6</sup> retreat will be to rekindle the fire, which by no means is dead. A vigorous agitation on the basis of the above programme, which by the way is perfectly "constitutional", will infuse new life in the movement.

Revolutionary nationalists : Your days have come. Don't let the faith in the "sincerity" and wisdom of the leaders mislead you any longer. There is no reason to question the sincerity of the leaders, but the wisdom of the last years' politics is certainly open to doubt. What sort of wisdom is that which counsels a retreat after having sabotaged the movement? What happened to those gigantic forces that "brought the mightiest government on its knees". They were dissipated, misled, abused and finally betrayed. The Congress leadership is to be held responsible for this calamity. This leadership has thoroughly discredited itself. Its nonrevolutionary proclivities make it constitutionally unfit for the great role thrust upon it. The movement cries for a new leadership with a bolder spirit and broader vision. You, revolutionary nationalists, are called upon by history to give this leadership. "Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached!"

Brave patriots! Don't waste your energy in futile terrorism. Your noble idealism and undaunted spirit demand a much wider field of action. 'The organism of a society subjugated and exploited for centuries, is surcharged with inflammable materials which, once ignited by a revolutionary leadership, will shatter the chain of slavery.' The dynamic outburst of social forces is much more powerful than bombs. The revolutionary action of the toiling masses will free India. Let us organise and lead this action.

The struggle of the Indian people for freedom is an integral part of the struggle of the international proletariat against capitalist domination, in that its success will break down one of the strongholds of world capitalism. The revolutionary nationalists of India should, therefore, not only join hands

6. "approach of". . . . 7-7. Sentence deleted. . . .

with the Indian workers and peasants, but should establish close relations with the advanced proletariat of the world. In this age of monopolist imperialism, the subject peoples in their struggle for freedom must have the cooperation of the international organisation of the revolutionary proletariat. The communists will fight side by side with the revolutionary nationalists and will be found always in the front ranks.

1 December 1924

THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA<sup>8</sup>  
(Supplement to *Vanguard*, 15 December 1924)

## 2. THE BELGAUM CONGRESS

Even in the absence of full reports of the proceedings it is not at all difficult for us to judge the achievements of the 30th annual session of the Indian National Congress. Those who looked forward to a constructive lead from Mr Gandhi as the president of the congress are sorely disappointed. But the naivete of the faithful is no less responsible for this disappointment than the volte face of the prophet. The Belgaum Congress has been the true indicator of the political situation. Except this, it does not deserve any other credit.

The disappointed Gandhites speaking through their only faithful organ the *Servant* likens Gandhi's speech to a mausoleum erected over the remains of a beloved memory. This graphic simile has its picturesque pathos; but it contains a large element of truth, truth that the no-changers resolutely refused to recognise, drunk in the wine of their self-adoration. But better late than never. Those who speak, through the *Servant* should now rejoice at their liberation from a fetish. The beloved, to whose tender memory Mr Gandhi today consecrates an airy monument, departed long before the blind admirers would have the courage to look the facts in the face. The demise occurred in the summer of 1922 at Delhi as a result of the severe disciplinary blows dealt first at Ahmedabad, then at Bardoli. The high priest who sacrificed the beloved on the altar

8. Replaced by "Fraternally yours, M. N. Roy".

of his fetish was spared the full suffering of the pains of his own making by the kindness of the "satanic government", who tenderly removed him far off from the rude realities of life, to live nominally in jail "happy as a bird". While assisting at the *sradh* at Gaya, the crowd, fooled by the demagogy of the "deputy Mahatma", adored a dead god. Months passed, the year rolled on, the faithful clung to the putrid cadaver with all the frenzy of idolatry. They met at Coconada and dispersed, with but the vague feeling of a loss. The beloved had gone, the faith that adored a figment of the imagination was flagging; only the ghost of a painful memory stalked around. It is from this unpleasant memory that the Mahatma has absolved his followers by his valedictory sermon at Belgaum. Amen, let the country begin all over again, this time with more realism.

To tell the truth, the Belgaum gathering was superfluous, because the function of the Congress has been usurped by the committee appointed by the Bombay unity conference. Before coming to Belgaum, all responsible Congress leaders had committed themselves to accept the findings of the committee as the guide for the future of the nationalist movement. The committee will publish its report in March. Even the contents of the report are predetermined; they will be the *modus vivendi* with imperialism. Now the task of the annual session of the Congress is to lay down the programme for the next year; but that programme was laid down by the Bombay conference. What on earth was the use of the Belgaum show? Its resolutions are bound to be meaningless, its decisions will bind none. It met in an atmosphere of unreality; naturally the presidential speech was an airy mausoleum to a ghostly memory, and the decisions were conspicuous by undecisiveness.

If the Belgaum Congress accomplished anything it was to prepare the country for the recommendation of the all-party committee. It has dispelled the last vestige of any doubt about the demise of the Congress. The only coherent portion of the presidential address predicted the decisions to be taken by the more abiding March conference. The desideratum of the Mahatma's 12 points is, "What will be acceptable to the members of the joint-committee" that has usurped the Congress? Reduction of military expenditure; final court of appeal to be

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removed from London to Delhi; administrative retrenchment; repeal of arbitrary powers of the executive; guarantee to the native states; inquiry into the monopoly rights without encroaching upon vested interests—these are propositions which can be safely expected to be accepted by all the parties, and to serve as the basis of negotiations with the government. It is more ludicrous than the mountain begetting a mouse. One cannot help rubbing one's eyes to be sure that we are not dreaming of the eighties of the last century. The fathers of the Congress used to speak in these terms. Perchance the Mahatma is repentant for having murdered the Congress and wants to give it back to the country in its primitive pristine purity.

May we enquire what happened to the masses, who enabled the Mahatma and his followers to occupy the centre of the stage for four eventful years? Where do those poor devils come in in this new scheme of swaraj? The Mahatma felt very sore to find that the masses were not with him, and that all the "intelligent" people had left him. He pondered over the situation and decided to make a rush to catch up with the latter, but ruefully saw that some educated youths still stood by him. In his anxiety to regain the company of the elite, he throws overboard the faithful, and cynically flings the discredited charkha in their bewildered faces. The great spiritual mission of building a superclass society is abandoned. The unity should be on the terms of the intellectual elite, who will return to the Congress only if it ceases to be what it has been during the last four years; if the dirty chatais are replaced by comfortable arm-chairs. The object of the Belgaum assembly was to make the country swallow all these conditions in the name of unity, and on the shadowy authority of a departed Congress.

The lessons are that a mass movement, which the nationalist movement must be if its object be something more than to secure places on the civil service and protection for the Tatas, cannot be organised within the limits of an apparatus created at a time when the social basis of the movement was much narrower. The National Congress has become an antiquated structure. A party of mass composition cannot be fitted into its framework without bursting it. Its traditional identity can be preserved only at the expense of the mass movement, as has been done during the last three years. The noncooperation

movement demanded not a change of the Congress constitution but total discarding of the old inadequate skeleton in favour of a new organisational form adaptable to militant political action in which millions participate. This being the case there is nothing to lament. The Congress has died of inanition. Those who clung to its superannuated forms did so to keep it clear of revolutionary digression. These people will rejoice at the rebirth of the Congress under the auspices of the joint committee. But this reshuffling of the Congress organisation will throw those revolutionary elements hovering upon its outer peripheries upon their own resources. The result will be the rise of a mass party untrammelled by traditions of form and creed.

That the materials for such a mass party exist in the decomposed body of the Congress was demonstrated by the large minority (nearly 50 per cent) supporting the resolution regretting the death of Lenin. It is but a question of time for this sentimental admiration for the great leader of the masses to be converted into an intelligent appreciation of his revolutionary teachings. So soon as beginning in that direction is made, the masses will again be in a gigantic motion which will transcend the stifling traditions of the National Congress, and operate on a much broader field. Belgaum, in spite of itself, might mark this beginning.

(*Masses*, Vol 1, No 1,  
1 January 1925)

# 1925

## 1. Repression and the Activities of the Revolutionaries

### INTRODUCTION

The year 1925 opens with a new round of repression launched against the upsurge of the national-revolutionary (terrorist) movement by the British government. The communist movement which had come into prominence through the Peshawar and Kanpur conspiracy cases (1922-24) was considered by the imperialists as a part of this upsurge. We have already referred to this new resurgence of the revolutionary (terrorist) activity which gained momentum in the wake of the suspension of the noncooperation movement by Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress Working Committee through the Bardoli resolution of February 1922. Thousands of noncooperators were imprisoned as a result of the massive repression against the movement, which was in a state of stalemate in the years 1923-24. The government was now stepping up its repression against the activities of the revolutionaries. We have earlier referred to the Bengal ordinance promulgated on 25 October 1924 when a general round-up of national revolutionary and leftwing swarajist leaders took place in Bengal. In the beginning of 1925 the government was seeking to replace the ordinance which was due to expire by a permanent repressive legislation and was pushing it through the Bengal and central legislatures in the teeth of nationalist and popular opposition.

On 7 January 1925 the government introduced the Bengal criminal law amendment bill in the Bengal legislative council. The bill had the same provisions as the Bengal ordinance of October last. It provided for arrest without warrant, wide powers of house-search and provisions for speeding up the court trial procedures. Deshbandhu C. R. Das attended the session from his sick bed. The governor-in-council in his opening speech made this hypocritical remark: If you pass this bill to suppress "terrorism and secret conspiracy", then "a new chapter will open in the political history of Bengal". The new chapter that had opened was one of repression. Moving the bill in the Bengal council, Sir Hugh Stephenson stated, "Out of 111 persons now under restraint, 69 have either been convicted of political crime or been previously restrained for personal participation in revolutionary activities." Replying to the charge of the national press that the repression was aimed at the Swaraj Party which had emerged as the most popular party in Bengal, Sir Hugh said, "these persons were revolutionists before they were swarajists; our action has not been directed against the Swaraj Party."

Though the bill was introduced in the Bengal council, it could not get through. It was defeated by 9 votes—57 voting for the bill and 66 against it. The governor-in-council had no other alternative but to use his special powers and certify the bill as an ordinance and forward it for the assent of the viceroy, which he did on 18 January 1925. This successful nationalist opposition in the legislative council demonstrated the worthlessness of the so-called Montford reforms and of "the dyarchy". On 21 January 1925 Mahatma Gandhi sent a telegraphic message to Deshbandhu C. R. Das, "Warmest congratulations—great victory."<sup>1</sup>

The scene now shifts to Delhi, where the winter session of the Indian central legislature opened on 20 January 1925. The swarajist opposition had forestalled the government by introducing a nonofficial resolution to supersede the Bengal ordinance. Sir Alexander Muddiman, the home member, opened the debate by giving a resume of the recrudescence of terrorist activity after the amnesty of 1919. He stated: "A series of out-

1. See *Indian Annual Register*, 1925, Vol I, pp. 120-52, for details. .

rages, dacoities and murders, including that of Mr Day<sup>2</sup> showed that there was an organised conspiracy behind the movement and that it was in possession of dangerous types of revolvers and bombs." He read out the text of a "Red Bengal" leaflet which threatened retribution to the official persecutors of revolutionaries and on traitors, approvers and informers. He referred to the case of an approver in Mamkola Bomb Case who was found later on murdered and dead on a railway line.

In the course of the debate another Britisher, one Col Crawford—a representative of the European Association—referred to the Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy Case, and to the manifesto distributed at the Belgaum Congress under the signature of M. N. Roy. Attacking the swarajists and congressmen he said: "The authors of the notorious Serajgunj resolution and those who supported it at Nagpur and Ahmedabad could not escape the responsibility which history attached to them(!)." The same Crawford did not miss to refer to the arrest of Subhas Chandra Bose (who was in the first batch of those detained in October 1924 and was transferred to Mandalay jail in the beginning of 1925) and his colleagues. Then Crawford asked: "How did the government sanction his appointment as the chief executive officer of the Calcutta Corporation?"

Reply to all this came from Motilal Nehru on 5 February in his speech supporting the nonofficial resolution to supersede the Bengal ordinance of 1924. To begin with Motilal Nehru quoted Bengal government's justification for the ordinance. It was the case of the Bengal government that because of "terrorism of witnesses and juries," murder of witnesses and approvers that justice was not obtainable under existing laws". Motilal Nehru then proceeded to demolish this "justification" by taking up all the reported cases of 1923 and 1924 one by one and showing that in no case "justice" was hampered because of this alleged terrorism of witnesses and juries, etc. In the Howrah Dacoity Case of May 1923, which was supposed to be the first case of "revolutionary crime" in the early twenties, he pointed out that it was proved that the case was fabricated on the basis of perjured evidence. Similarly

2. See section 8 of 1924 above.

in the Ultadingi Post Office Case, both the judge and the jury agreed that the evidence of the chief witness was fabricated and perjured. The accused were acquitted but immediately rearrested and jailed under regulation 3 of 1818. In the Sankar-tola Murder Case, Motilal Nehru pointed out that the assailant was captured, the witnesses and jury functioned normally and the accused was sentenced to death. Then in the Bengal Assam Railway Robbery Case the accused were arrested with the help of villagers, they were tried and sentenced in accordance to the ordinary law. In the case of the discovery of a bomb factory in Calcutta, the arrested were tried and convicted. In the Mirzapur Street Bomb Case, in which a bomb was thrown into a khaddar shop, there was no conviction.

Motilal Nehru then went on to show that in all those cases quoted by the government, granted that they show the existence of "anarchical crime", they also show that the "crime" has been put down by ordinary law. Nehru also pointed out that often cases of alleged "revolutionary crime" are worked up with the help of police informers and agents-provocateurs. In this connection he quoted the testimony of Reginald Clarke, the ex-police commissioner of Calcutta. In a letter published in the Times (London) this police official stated that "Anarchical crime cannot be fought by the use of police informers and agents-provocateurs."

Nehru referred to the detention of Aswini Kumar Dutta and Krishna Kumar Mitra and asked why were they detained? What evidence had the government against them? He read out the chargesheet given to Bhupendra Kumar Dutta and Jibanlal Chatterji, after they were arrested and detained :

- "(1) You were arrested in the year... and detained as state prisoner and released under the royal amnesty in the year. : .  
 (2) You were conspiring to overthrow the British government. (3) You started and maintained ashramas which were centres of revolutionary recruitment. (4) You were directly or indirectly connected with the collection of fire-arms. (5) You were connected with the Indian agents of bolshevik Manabendra Nath Roy. (6) You were privy to the murder of police officers."

Nehru asked, "Who can defend himself against such vague

charges?" It is clear from these "charges" that the government was casting the net wide and seeking to arrest and detain everyone having even the most distant connection with the activist groups. Besides they were also trying to rope in also those who had come in touch with M. N. Roy and Nalini Gupta. In those days the government suspected that the revolutionary groups and the rising communist groups were in touch with each other. For instance, the central intelligence bureau's confidential report *Terrorism in India* has this to say on the point :

"Dacca Anushilan Samiti under Narendra Mohan Sen was known to be engaged in forging notes for this purpose and in fact Sachindra Chakravarty and Probodh Das Gupta were arrested in this connection in March 1925 and were later sentenced to 5 years' rigorous imprisonment each. At the same time, there were indications that some members of the party are attempting to obtain from communist sources money and help in their aims. Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee who was arrested in October 1924 and was later sentenced in Kakori Case had been seen to visit R. C. L. Sharma, M. N. Roy's agent in Pondicherry. Sachindra Nath Sanyal was also in correspondence with known communist agents."

Now it is a fact that Roy was in correspondence with his old friends in the terrorist party and especially with the younger elements in it. But that was not for the purpose of supplying them arms, etc. It was exactly for the opposite purpose—for persuading them to give up the futile path of individual terrorism and turn to the path of organising workers and peasants and the toiling masses. Most of the articles and documents of this period are addressed to the national-revolutionary groups. They are called upon to turn their attention to the organisation of workers and peasants—of the toiling masses who form the overwhelming majority of the people of India. Not only M. N. Roy was writing these articles in the *Masses* but the Young Communist International found it necessary to address a special appeal to "the Bengal Revolutionary Organisation of Youth". This is the last document in this section.

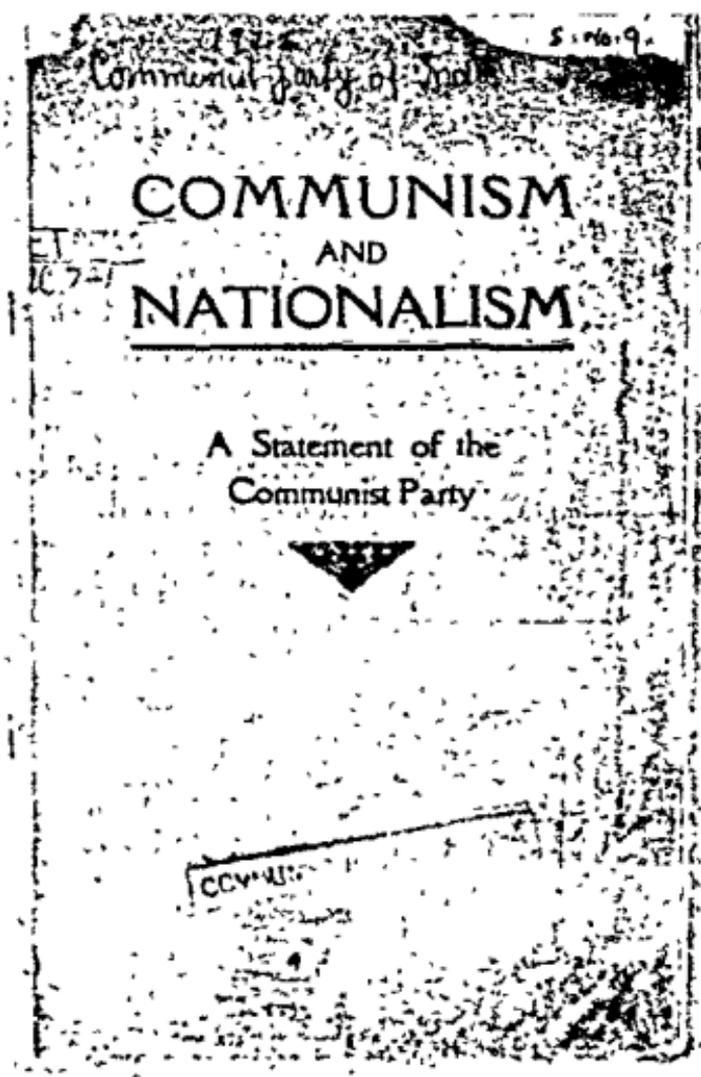
It is necessary to make two more points before we take up the individual documents produced in this section. Firstly, it is important to note that the revival of the national-revolu-

tionary (terrorist) movement in the early twenties was mostly the work of the younger elements of the revolutionary party who were fresh entrants in the arena of political struggle. It was no longer the Anushilan and the Yugantar which were so much in the forefront, but a new party—the All-Bengal Revolutionary Party that was initiating the new actions. The second point is that the struggle perspective of the national revolutionaries was not restricted to assassination of individual oppressors. They had a whole perspective of developing the struggle to guerilla warfare, armed struggle, etc. We see that the Young Communist International document in arguing with the national-revolutionary groups makes the point that while communists oppose individual terror, they are not against armed struggle as such. The point is that the stage when armed struggle is on the agenda, when the armed forces of the foreign oppressor begin to defect, cannot be reached by acts of individual terror, but by the militant class organisations of the toiling masses—of workers and peasants and their mass participation in the national freedom movement.

As for these two features of the new rising national-revolutionary movement in 1924-25 is concerned, it is best to quote further from the same confidential report :

“Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee and Sachindra Nath Sanyal were the representatives of the younger generation who disapproved nonviolence, incurred the displeasure of Narendra Sen and others by their actions in the United Provinces and Sanyal's issue of the ‘Revolutionary’ and ‘Appeal to My Countrymen’—pamphlets in January 1925. During the year—a new violence party arose under Nalini Dutt, head of a faction of Anushilan and Nagendra Sen of the Chittagong Party. Their aim was the immediate resumption of terrorism after collecting bombs, arms and ammunitions.

“Sachindra Nath Sanyal was arrested, but planning went on without being carried out. . . On 10 November 1925 houses in Dakshineswar and Sova Bazar Street, Calcutta, were searched. Eleven known leaders of the party, which was now known as the All-Bengal Revolutionary Party, were arrested. Rajendra Lahiri was sentenced to death for his part in the Kakori Case. In Sova Bazar Street search, a copy of the official programme of the party was found. It quoted from Mazzini that “actions are



Cover page of the pamphlet, *Communism and Nationalism*

the work of the masses—ideas ripen quickly when nourished by the blood of the martyrs”, and then went ~~on to say that re-~~ <sup>on to say that re-</sup> <sup>volution would arrive in India in the following stages)</sup> ~~volution would arrive in India in the following stages)~~

- “(a) Individual demonstrations such as the murder of high officials, the capture of government arms and ammunitions, the destruction of government institutions, jail outbreaks, the destruction of bridges, the wrecking of trains and the murder of spies and informers;
- “(b) Simultaneous demonstrations;
- “(c) Insurrection including guerrilla warfare;
- “(d) Revolution.”

The first document in this section is “Communism and Nationalism”, a pamphlet printed in England and dated 1 January 1925. A few copies, certainly reached India. It is signed “The Communist Party of India”. It is a comment and reply to the high court judgment in the Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy Case (November 1924). This judgment had said: “The revolutionaries proposed to sweep away all Indian political groups and labour organisations.” In fact, as the pamphlet points out, “the government counsel and the judge lied maliciously”, giving a distorted presentation of the programme and policy of the communists. The government’s aim, apart from outright repression, was to isolate the communists from the nationalist opinion. The pamphlet explains that the communists in India stand for the “liberation of the country from the exploitation of foreign capital, for establishment of a democratic national state”. Their programme put before the Gaya session of the Congress called for “a federated republic and a national assembly elected on universal suffrage”. The pamphlet emphasised that the communists “will fight as a part of the Congress” and that their programme is “not hostile to the interest of the nationalist movement but positively helpful to it”. The author of the pamphlet, M. N. Roy, pointed out that the letters produced in the Kanpur Case were not conspiratorial letters, they were political letters and they were published on the eve of the trial as a pamphlet—*Political Letters*.

The “Red Bengal” leaflets referred to above seemed to have appeared in Calcutta first in the middle of 1924. The original copy of one such leaflet is preserved in a confidential govern-

ment file in the National Archives. It is a small printed leaflet entitled "Bande Mataram" and signed "Bengal Revolutionary Council." Its brief text threatens "ruthless assassination of police officers and of anybody helping the government, giving evidence in favour of the prosecution". It goes on to say that all such persons are "considered condemned and will be despatched forthwith".<sup>3</sup> The same file notes that the leaflet was first noted in July 1924. Its copies were received by various offices, mills as well as by the editor of *Englishman*. The file further records that the government of Bengal forfeited the leaflet on 2 August 1924. The *Statesman* dated 29 July 1925 reproduced the similar text of another "Red Bengal" leaflet. It was also headed "Bande Mataram" but signed "President-in-Council, Red Bengal".<sup>4</sup>

Contemporary nationalist press comment on the "Red Bengal" leaflet campaign was that it was the provocative work of police agents. For instance, *Modern Review* of August 1924 wrote that the leaflets were not only sent by post to all Anglo-Indian papers but were also pasted on lamp-posts and on other prominent places. The journal further commented that "the affair was somewhat suspicious" and was "a dodge on the part of secret agents".

There were a number of "Red Bengal" leaflets with varied texts issued in the middle of 1924 and all of them were not the work of police agents. Abdur Razzak Khan, the veteran communist leader of Bengal who was in touch with the revolutionary activities as a young man in these days, has this to say :

"The British government also became extremely panicky because it was now afraid that the more determined younger sections of the Bengal revolutionaries would turn towards bolshevism by using the link with Moscow created by the Abani Mukherji-Santosh Mitra axis. The appearance of the new 'Red Bengal Manifesto' from the ranks of the revolutionaries seemed to confirm its fear. Militant elements in the Congress and khilafatist ranks (like us) were disillusioned by the retreat at Bardoli and were seeking alternative paths

3. Home-Pol F 27, 1925.

4 Home-Pol. Progs. Part B, F 38, 1924.

to freedom. Thus a very good objective basis was laid for forging a revolutionary united front between militant Indian nationalism and the international communist movement. Abani had drawn Santosh and others towards communism. Nalini Gupta had attracted younger elements of the Anushilan Party towards communism (men like Gopen Chakravarty). We were on the threshold of a new era..."<sup>5</sup>

On 30 January 1925 M. N. Roy was expelled from France where he was trying to establish a safe base for working a transport and communication system to keep in touch with communist groups in India. Bundles of the *Masses* as well as important communications were sent from French ports like Marseilles or Toulon through Indian sailors on ships going to Pondicherry where they delivered them to R. C. L. Sharma—an old revolutionary and a communist and whose name appears among the eight accused in the Kanpur Conspiracy Case. R. C. L. Sharma managed the further dispatch either through courier or by posting to cover addresses. The British intelligence had come to know of this system. They were intercepting letters posted from Pondicherry to a certain Madras address. They also knew later that one Ajodhya Prasad, later an accused in the Meerut Conspiracy Case, functioned as a sailor in this system, keeping contact with Sharma. Despite all these difficulties, the link functioned and the police and the government came to the conclusion that centres functioning in France, Pondicherry and Chandernagore must be smashed. That is why they brought pressure on the French government to take action against Roy in France, against Sharma in Pondicherry and against Motilal Roy in Chandernagore.

It is necessary here to give a brief account of Ram Charan Lal Sharma. He is featured in the contemporary confidential documents of the government. His life sketch is given in the "Who's Who" attached to David Petrie's *Communism in India: 1924-27* and also in another document.<sup>6</sup> Verified facts about his life are as follows: He was born on 25 October 1885 in Etah district. His ancestors were rebels in the Great Re-

5. Gautam Chattopadhyay, *Communism and Bengal's Freedom Movement*, Vol I, p. 150.

6. Home-Pol. F 120, 1924.

bellion of 1857. He was a participant in the revolutionary movement under Aurobindo Ghose and was sentenced to 6 months' RI in 1909. He was again "wanted" in a sedition case in 1920 but managed to escape to Pondicherry where he settled down. On the eve of the Kanpur Conspiracy Case Khusi Muhammad alias Muhammad Ali (Sepassi) came to contact Sharma on behalf of Roy. British-Indian intelligence came to know of it. They could not arrest them as they were on French territory. So the British brought pressure on the French government. As a result Muhammad Ali was expelled from Pondicherry on 25 February 1924 and R. C. L. Sharma was detained in a village in the interior.

A campaign was run in those days in the leftwing and communist press against the expulsion of Roy from France and for Indian national movement generally. From the *Labour Monthly*, May 1925, we come to know that in France there was a "Comite Pro-Hindou" consisting of such eminent progressive personalities as J. R. Bloch, P. Langevin, Marcel Cachin, etc. The protest statement was signed by the famous French writer Henri Barbusse himself. Addressing the French people Henri Barbusse says, Roy's expulsion is not because he is a communist: "Do not be deceived on this point; this is not the reason which underlies the expulsion which Mr Herriot has conceded to Mr Chamberlain. Manifestly, it is the activity of the writer and propagandist in the cause of Indian freedom, who has consecrated himself since the age of 14 years solely to the cause of the freedom of his country."<sup>7</sup>

The significance of the second document in this section is that the Young Communist International—the youth wing of the Communist International—finds it necessary to address a special manifesto to the "Bengal Revolutionary Organisation of Youth", and this is because the youth of India and particularly of Bengal was in the early- and mid-twenties being drawn to the terrorist movement while simultaneously

7. Home-Pol. F 286, 1925, contains the original of Henri Barbusse's leaflet and a copy of the monthly "Bulletin du Comite Pro-Hindou", dated April 1925. The bulletin has an editorial on Roy's expulsion, an article on "the conditions of peasants of India" and a newsitem on "Political detainees in British Indian prisons".

it was also being attracted towards communist ideology and the workers' and peasants' movement under the impact of the socialist revolution in Russia and of the rising communist movement in India itself.

The text reproduced here is from the *Masses* of July 1925. It was probably also produced as a separate pamphlet and smuggled out to India and may have reached the hands of national-revolutionary groups and individuals with whom Roy was in touch. The executive committee of the Young Communist International, addressing itself to the revolutionary youth of Bengal, is concentrating on exposing "the harmful character of individual terror as a method of the struggle". Actually, as far as we know no such organisation as the "Bengal Revolutionary Organisation of Youth" or "National Revolutionary Youth League of Bengal" seems to have existed. What existed in the early- and mid-twenties in Bengal, as we have pointed out, was the All-Bengal Revolutionary Party or the Nonviolence Party—which was mostly composed of young revolutionaries. The manifesto was addressed to this organisation and to the youth round it.

The Young Communist International shows a sympathetic and an understanding approach to the revolutionary youth but is equally categorical in sharply criticising their method of struggle.

After arguing that methods of individual terror divert the attention from the main task of organising the broad masses without which no revolution is possible, the Young Communist International points out: "It was not the terrorist acts which commenced in 1907 but the agrarian disorders and the labour strikes which scared British imperialism."

It calls upon the youth "to combat the idealistic theories and particularly the theological nonresistance philosophy of Gandhi" and warns that fight against this is not an easy one. The youth will have to study revolutionary Marxism and go forward to the organisation of the toiling masses, particularly workers and peasants. Referring to the Gaya programme it says: "We would advise you to adopt the programme drawn up by Comrade Roy for the national-revolutionary movement

in India." It calls upon the youth to get the support of the left wing of the swaraj movement for this programme.

It calls upon the youth to participate in all the legal mass organisations and in cultural and other activities of the youth while at the same time building "illegal national-revolutionary youth organisations". It calls upon the youth to come forward for Hindu-Muslim unity and "to explain to the masses whose interests are served by these antagonisms".

## 1. COMMUNISM AND NATIONALISM

### A STATEMENT OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

The "Bolshevik Conspiracy Case" is over. The Allahabad high court has upheld the verdict of the Kanpur session court, and the four accused must serve four years each in jail. It is remarkable how very little interest the nationalists took in this case. The issue involved in this trial was much greater than the liberty of four men. Communism, all that it stands for and those professing it were on trial. They were tried and condemned by those who did not know anything about the principles involved, and who put malicious interpretation on them purposely. Much more still. The existence of a people's party having for its object the separation of India from the British empire has been declared "illegal". Nevertheless the nationalists maintained an attitude of indifference to this trial.

Apart from the natural class prejudice of the upper classes, other factors contributed to the determination of the nationalist attitude. These factors were the successful attempts of the government to misinterpret our programme and activities with the object of terrorising the nationalists. Not only has the programme of the Communist Party of India been flagrantly misinterpreted, but we have been held responsible for pronouncements that we never made. The government has done this because it knows that a people's party organised on the basis of the programme advocated by us will be a formidable force to contend with; that the revolutionary nationalists, belonging to the exploited middle classes, which have small reason to favour a compromise with imperialism, will eventually adopt the programme proposed by us; and that the adoption of this programme is sure to draw the overwhelming majority of the population actively into the political struggle for national liberation. The desire of imperialism is to hold us up as the enemy

of the nationalist movement, while the case is just the contrary.

The crux of the case was the allegation that we not only conspired against the British government but preached a wholesale confiscation of property. The prosecution counsel informed the high court that "the government Roy wanted in India was of the Russian kind". The judgment of the high court dismissing the appeal contains the following passages :

"British rule, government by upper and middle class Indians alike were to be swept away, the confiscation of property was to be wholesale . Violence and destruction of property were to be encouraged and conflicts to be precipitated... The revolutionaries proposed to sweep away all Indian political groups and labour organisations which did not come into line. The power of upper and middle class Indians was to be destroyed by taking from them all that they possessed."

This sums up all the allegations against us in addition to that of "conspiracy to deprive the king-emperor of this sovereignty". To the charge of challenging the sovereignty of any foreign monarch over India, we plead guilty. That our programme calls for the establishment of an independent Indian republic replacing the present British government, we openly admit. But this does not constitute a "conspiracy". We do not "conspire" against British sovereignty. We openly contest its legality, and boldly advocate the perfectly constitutional right of the Indian people to replace it by a free national-democratic government. This aspect of the case will be argued at length on a subsequent occasion.

Now we propose to show that the allegations like those cited above are mere figments of imagination. They are advanced with the purpose of demonstrating to the nationalists that the communists are not only hostile to imperialism, but deadly inimical to them. Without making any secret of the fact that as communists we stand for the abolition of private property and the termination of all forms of government based upon class-domination, we propose here to show that nowhere in our programme have we advocated for India at this period of her history dictatorship of the proletariat, wholesale confiscation of property and violent suppression of the upper and

middle classes. It is not that we consider these measures generally inapplicable to India, but because we recognise the fact that the present politico-economic state of India does not call for those measures. The realisation of our ultimate goal—the transformation of civilised society from a state based upon the exploitation of man by man to a cooperative commonwealth—demands the evolution of the Indian people through successive stages of political and economic progress. The first of these stages is the liberation from the exploitation of foreign capital, backed up by a formidable political power. The establishment of a democratic national state, free from all outside domination, will mark the attainment of this preliminary stage. Then the Indian people will stand on the threshold of free socio-economic evolution, and the grave problems of capitalist contradictions and class antagonisms inherent in every civilised social organism at a given period of development will be raised and solved in the order in which they present themselves. But the attainment of the startingpoint of a free national political existence, which will permit an unrestricted play of all the forces of social-economics, is conditional upon a successful struggle against foreign domination. Therefore the communists are just as much interested in the immediate question of national freedom and democratic government as the nationalists. We have formulated our programme, determined our tactics and built up our organisation predominantly from this point of view. Thus the issues of the dictatorship of the proletariat or the wholesale confiscation of property or violent suppression of classes could not be raised at this moment. These are issues utterly premature at this period of our history and would therefore be positively harmful to the cause of the working class whose conscious vanguard the communists are.

Had the nationalists not fallen neatly in the trap laid by wily imperialism and had they followed closely the documents produced in the Kanpur trial to establish the prosecution case, it would not be necessary for us to prove that the allegations against us were totally groundless. As it is, it becomes necessary however that all the misgivings and mistrust on the part of the nationalists, in consequence of the malicious falsifications of our case by the government, should be removed; because the success of the struggle against imperialism depends

upon the ability of the revolutionary nationalists to understand the point of view of the working class and to appreciate the preponderant part the latter is destined to play in the drama of national revolution. As communists we propose to rally the workers and peasants under the banner of national revolution, as understood from the viewpoint of their class interest. We hold that this is the only way of mobilising the entire popular energy, which alone can and will break down imperialist domination. This being the case, our programme cannot be hostile to the interests of the nationalist movement; it is positively helpful to it. There is no reason, therefore, for the revolutionary nationalists to be afraid of the communists and their tactics of direct action on the part of the militant masses. The interests of our class, the producing majority, demand the immediate overthrow of imperialism, and the establishment of a national-democratic state. The nationalists, except those few who desire to exploit the Indian masses in conjunction with British capital, also want the overthrow of imperialism and the inauguration of a democratic government, protecting and furthering the interests of the people. This identity of interests between the nationalists and communists cannot be forgotten except to the detriment of the movement for national liberation, and to the benefit of imperialism.

All the allegations of the government against us are based upon a number of letters produced in the Kanpur trial. These letters are not private correspondence exchanged between "conspirators". They are mostly public documents, containing the general outlines of the programme that we published on the eve of the Gaya congress. In our central organ, the *Vanguard*, as well as in other publications, this programme has been extensively written about. The letters produced at the Kanpur trial dealt with the various aspects of the Indian movement from the point of view of this programme. They were published regularly in the *Vanguard* before the Kanpur Case began. On the eve of the trial, they were published as a pamphlet entitled *Political Letters*. A perusal of the original programme, of articles dealing with it in the *Vanguard* and of the *Political Letters* will prove that the government counsel, the session judge and the high court all lied maliciously when they attributed to our programme the dictatorship of the pro-

letariat, wholesale confiscation of property and violent suppression of the upper and middle classes.

In the programme published on the eve of the Gaya congress, and which we have all along stood by, we declared in favour of the "establishment of the federated republic of India and the election of a national assembly by universal suffrage". This is neither a soviet system nor dictatorship of the proletariat. The upper and middle classes would have a full share, even the lion's share, in such a form of government.

As to the scare about "wholesale confiscation", nothing akin to it occurs in the programme. "Nationalisation of public utilities" is not wholesale confiscation. Our own nationalists are strongly in favour of state-ownership of railways as against company-ownership. If the railways are better state-owned, the same thing can also be said about the waterways. Post and telegraph are owned by the state in many a country. Neither is nationalisation of mines a "bolshevik" measure. The British Labour Party and a large section of the Liberal Party are partisans of such a measure in England. Besides as long as the state will be controlled by all the classes, as it ostensibly is under a democratic system, nationalisation of public utilities does not mean the expropriation of the upper and middle classes. The proposed nationalisation of the mines is more than compensated by the next point of the programme, which provides for "the development of modern industries with state-aid". Since no question as regards the ownership of these industries has been raised, this clause obviously is in favour of the upper classes whom we are supposed to be massacring at the first opportunity. Profit-sharing in the big industries and the social legislation for the protection of the labouring classes, as stipulated in our programme, cannot very well be taken exception to without giving the lie to the anticapitalist professions of our nationalists. Such measures are considered very harmless in practically all the enlightened capitalist countries.

The sore spot is the land question. We stand for the abolition of landlordism. The confiscation involved in this clause of our programme is no "bolshevism". It is not abolishing property, but replacing an antiquated form of landholding by a new form, conducive to higher production and the consequent increase of national wealth. Besides it is always argued by our

nationalists that the present system of tax-farming is not indigenous; it has been imposed upon us by the British. Further the abolition of landlordism will deprive an infinitesimal minority (8 million, including dependants) of the absolute possession of 52 per cent of the land. This measure is essentially necessary for the progress of the nation, and can be condemned neither on economical nor on moral grounds. In the *Vanguard* we have written extensively to explain why the welfare of the entire nation as well as that of a particular class demands a radical change in the present landownership.

The publication of our programme on the eve of the Gaya congress created a great sensation. The National Congress acted just as British imperialism desired it to act. Taking their cue from the official press, the nationalist journals adopted a frankly hostile attitude towards our propositions which were condemned as "bolshhevik" measures. Class-consciousness determined the attitude of the upper class leaders; while the rank and file were simply scared out of their wits by the bogey of bolshevism raised by the government. Consequently a programme, which alone could have saved the nationalist movement from the subsequent decomposition and reformist deviation, was not even discussed. Writing to warn the nationalists of the trap they were falling into, we defined our question in the light of the programme as follows:

"Our first object is to secure national freedom for the people of India. We will fight as a part of the National Congress, by fearless criticism, vigorous agitation and constant propaganda we will endeavour to push the middle-class nationalists forward in the struggle, we will cooperate with every social element that is objectively antagonistic to imperialist domination and we will stand shoulder to shoulder with every political party so long as they carry on the struggle against foreign domination. Our watchword is 'No Compromise'. We will expose mercilessly all attempts to betray the national cause under such pretexts as "equal partnership", "change of heart" and the like. We will force the Congress to declare boldly for a republican India, completely separated from imperialist domination" (*Vanguard*, 15 February 1923).

So much from the programme which determines the tone and terms of all our writings, doings and declarations. Now

let us disprove the allegations by extracts from the very letters produced by the government to establish its case. The intentions attributed to us by the prosecuting counsel and the trying judges can nowhere be found in the documents produced.

One of the exhibits, a letter dealing with the possibility of nonviolent mass action, has the following passage: "A party of workers and peasants must necessarily fight for complete national freedom and the establishment of a republic... To define clearly that our political programme calls for the complete separation from all imperial connection and the establishment of a national republican government does not by any means lead to the committing of futile acts of terrorism, or even to an immediate armed revolt" (*Vanguard*, 1 June 1923).

In criticising the programme of the so-called Labour Kisan Party, Roy wrote: "Whatever this phrase ('labour swaraj') may mean, it cannot be the programme of our party. What is meant by labour swaraj? How is it to be attained? How can we speak of labour swaraj, which means, if anything serious is meant by it, the dictatorship of the proletariat, when the very question of swaraj, that is national independence, remains unsolved?... Our slogan should not be the vague one of labour swaraj, which cannot be realised for a long time yet, but for a national-democratic government based upon universal suffrage, with as much protection as possible for the working class" (*Vanguard*, 1 August 1923).

The same programme of the Labour Kisan Party was criticised by Dange, one of the accused in the Kanpur Case, in his paper, the *Socialist*. Dange disapproved of the Labour Kisan Party programme, because it did not deal with the question of private property and advanced a counter-programme which was criticised by us as follows:

"Such questions as the abolition of private property, etc. need not be included in the minimum programme. Why then talk of such a far-off thing as labour swaraj. It does not come within the purview of immediate necessities. It is certainly out of the realm of practical politics... The programme proposed by the *Socialist* calls for 'classless swaraj', which according to the definition given is something like a socialist commonwealth. It is certainly a far-fetched programme just at this moment. There are much nearer goals to attain. It is a long

jump from medieval feudal-patriarchy to a socialist commonwealth. . . Socialism does not overlook the various stages of political existence through which a given community must pass before socialised production, distribution and exchange is reached. The Indian masses will still have to go through not a few of these economic and political stages. Is it not premature to talk of the socialisation of the means of production, when production itself is yet far from being socialised? Therefore we need not fix our gaze so high up in the air. A political institution, which is necessary for carrying our people through the intervening stages of economic development, should be our immediate goal. To lead the working class for the conquest of that goal is our task" (*Vanguard*, 1 September 1923).

The above quotations are typical of the general lines of our propaganda. The dictatorship of the proletariat, wholesale confiscation and violent suppression of classes are not only absent from our programme, we always opposed any deviation in that direction. Our object in making this statement is to warn the revolutionary nationalists against the sinister motives of imperialism. A militant nationalist movement can be organised only upon the programme advocated by us. The majority of the people, whose grievances can never be removed by any kind of patch-work, will eventually rally under this programme. The revolutionary nationalists belonging to the middle class are included in this majority. By raising this bogey of class-hatred and confiscation, the government seeks to prevent the union of the revolutionary nationalists with the workers and peasants in a people's party. This design of imperialism may succeed in winning over to its side a thin upper stratum of our population, because the struggle for national liberation cannot be successfully prosecuted without some readjustment in the existing socio-economic relations. But the great majority has no reason to be frightened by a programme which clearly makes for national liberation, and the possibility for the free economic progress for the entire people.

1 January 1925.

## 2. A MANIFESTO OF THE YOUNG COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL TO THE BENGAL REVOLUTIONARY ORGANISATION OF YOUTH

Dear Comrades,

The executive committee of the Young Communist International, in the name of the organised worker, peasant and intelligentsia youth, heartily greets you, brave fighters for the emancipation of India from the yoke of British imperialism and internal reaction. The heroic struggles of the toiling masses of India for their national, and social liberation, the fight against British imperialism and the landlord-feudal rulers and other reactionary forces which follow the lead of British imperialism, awakens the greatest sympathy among the tens of millions of worker and peasant youth throughout the whole world, who today are conducting a determined struggle for the abolition of exploitation and for the right to rebuild the whole world on a socialist basis.

In the revolutionary struggle for national liberation, the revolutionary youth of the orient plays a most important part. In China, Egypt and other oriental countries, the revolutionary students, jointly with the workers and peasants, are conducting a severe and stubborn fight against the oppression of foreign capitalists. In India also the role of the students in the national-revolutionary struggle is a very important one.

Sacrifices, the deaths of your brothers, will not turn you from the path of fighting against British imperialism. The blood-thirsty British bourgeoisie does not understand that in the place of the hundreds who have gone down, thousands will rise, and in the place of thousands, millions. The sanguinary struggle of the toiling masses for the emancipation of India will be carried on to a victory.

In spite of your heroic efforts, however, you have not been able to drive out the foreign capitalists; you have not been able even to obtain any considerable concessions. Does this mean that your fight is hopeless? No! A thousand times no! It merely shows that you have not yet learned the proper methods to apply in the fight, you have not yet properly understood what social classes must conduct this fight to a victori-

ous finish. You have not yet studied your own historical experience, nor those of other countries, particularly of Russia.

The process of development and decay of the Gandhi movement is most instructive. The call which Gandhi issued to the mass of the Indian people in 1919, to rise against the British, fell on willing ears. Millions of Indian peasants and workers merged into a national movement. But instead of directing the revolutionary energy of the masses towards an open and ruthless struggle against Anglo-Indian bureaucracy, Gandhi exerted all his efforts to avoid this fight. Gandhi thought that it would be sufficient to fill all the government prisons with sincere nationalists clothed in khaddar to call down swaraj from heaven. But the famine-stricken Indian peasant does not need a spinning wheel; he requires sufficient amount of land to enable him to maintain himself and his family; he requires the reduction of the burden of rents and taxes which break his bent back. The Indian people require neither philosophy nor violence, but genuine emancipation from imperialist oppression. Gandhi refused to inscribe this slogan on the banner of the Congress. Consequently, as soon as the masses realised the treacherous character of the doctrines of Gandhism they abandoned the Congress. Deprived of the support of the masses, the Gandhi movement began to decline. The November agreement between Gandhi and Das which dropped the programme of "noncooperation" has put the finish on Gandhism.

Equally, the swarajists led by Das have shown their inability to take up the revolutionary fight for the emancipation of India. In addition to the tactics of obstructing the government in the legislative councils, the programme of the Das party contains also proposals for the establishment of workers' and peasants' unions for the purpose of rallying the masses of the toilers of India to the national struggle. The Swaraj Party has failed to carry out its programme. On entering the legislative councils, it began to compromise with the government in the interests of the "right" of native capitalists like the firm of Tata. After a short period of parliamentary fireworks and radical phrases to deceive the revolutionary intellectuals, the Swaraj Party has at last come out openly in favour of giving up all resistance to imperialism. It has developed itself in favour of accepting, on certain conditions, ministerial posts. These swa-

rajists have entirely forgotten the workers and peasants. The leaders of the swarajists are dragging the party along the path of petty constitutional reforms to be obtained by acting peacefully as "his excellency's opposition". Hence, the examination of the events that have taken place during the last few years leads to the conclusion that the leading political groups which today stand at the head of the nationalist movement are incapable of leading the Indian people along the path of real emancipation..

*The fight which you are conducting is a fight against the yoke of the British capitalists, for the revolutionary emancipation of the whole of the people.*

*Who represents the majority of this people?*

Even C. R. Das has admitted that 98 per cent of the Indian people is composed of workers and peasants. Who made up the rank and file of the revolutionary fights in India during the last few years? Workers and peasants. Who brought about the revolution in Russia? Workers and peasants. Who brought about the revolution in Europe and took the most active part in it during the course of the 19th and 20th centuries? The masses of the workers and peasants.

*The Turkish people were able to overthrow the domination of the British, to save its country from complete enslavement, retake possession of Constantinople and Thrace, only because the masses of the Turkish peasantry rose in a war of liberation against the alien oppressors.*

The experience of the history of Europe and Asia teaches that only the active participation of the broad toiling masses of the people, i.e. the workers, peasants, the revolutionary intelligentsia and all sections of the people, ready to fight for the liberation of their country, is the guarantee of victory.. Your attitude today as well as that of the Russian intelligentsia, in the period prior to the first Russian revolution in 1905, and of the European intelligentsia in the corresponding period in Western Europe, shows that at a certain stage of revolutionary development the intelligentsia regards itself as being destined to bring about the revolution and destroy the enemies of the people and that toilers, the workers and peasants, are only employed in this as a second-rate force. In their view, the masses of the toilers were ignorant and illiterate, and therefore incapable of playing any

important role. They regarded them as the "unfortunate masses" who were to be pitied and aided after victory is achieved.

Nothing can be more erroneous, dangerous and harmful to a revolutionist than views like these. The experience of all revolutions and all national-liberation movements is an incontrovertible proof that the real revolutionary struggle can only be carried on by the workers. In all countries where capitalism flourishes and with a considerable working class, the proletariat plays the leading role in the revolutionary movement. It is the only class which is revolutionary to the end, which never stops half way and which fights for the complete emancipation of all workers. It stands at the head of the revolutionary struggle, its position in society and the conditions of its social liberation make it a determined fighter against all forms of political, national, social and economic oppressions.

The revolutionary intelligentsia of itself, keeping to its own narrow social circle and severed from the working masses, especially from the proletarian masses—trying to carry on an independent struggle—cannot and does not represent a formidable force. But when the revolutionary intelligentsia goes to the proletarian and peasant masses with the intention of helping them to carry on the political and social struggle it succeeds in creating a really great movement. It gains enormous importance through its successful, rapid and correct development of the revolutionary-liberation movement. This is the path on which it is destined to play its historical role.

The Indian students have had considerable experience and on the basis of this, and also on the experience of other countries, they must convince themselves that the fundamental factor in the revolutionary emancipation of India is the toiling masses. It is necessary, therefore, to set to work to organise and rally them on the basis of a revolutionary programme which would meet their economic and political needs. Sincere revolutionaries, those who dream of the revolutionary emancipation of India from British capitalism and establishment of a democratic republic, those who detest the doles grudgingly given by the blood-thirsty imperialists, must direct all their efforts to rally the masses for real revolutionary struggle.

The study of the conditions of the peasantry, of the workers and the artisan class reveals how hopeless is their fate under the present system which offers nothing but death from slow starvation, a drab bestial existence and it is this which makes it certain that the workers and peasants will support a fight which, while solving national problems, will also improve their material condition.

But the starving Indian peasants and the exploited Indian workers will refuse to follow you if they see that they are doomed to remain the helpless victims of the landlords, usurers and manufacturers. Only when the Indian peasants and workers will see that the slogan of the emancipation of India is bound up with the satisfaction of their everyday economic needs, will give them political liberties equally with the rest of the population of a free democratic republic of India, only when they see not mere vague phrasemongering, but the real solution of pressing questions, will they become a powerful revolutionary force which will actively rise in the determined struggle against British and Indian feudalism and crush it and jointly with you solve the national and social problems confronting the toiling masses of India.

The Indian National Congress under the leadership of Gandhi frequently called on the Indian workers and peasants to the fight, but at the first critical moment he deserted the field of the battle and left the deceived masses at the mercy of the British imperialists and native exploiters. The tax strike in Gujarat and the United Provinces, the Bombay and other strikes of 1920 and 1921 have taught the workers and peasants a great deal.

The toiling masses of India now have confidence in the leadership only of those who prove that they will not betray their interests, who have really made their interests their own, those who will help them and take part in the everyday fight both against the alien and native exploiters.

It is necessary to take an active part in all the political and economic mass actions of the peasantry and the working class.

To sum up :

The revolutionary emancipation of India can be brought about only if the broad masses (the working class, the peasantry and the intelligentsia) take part in it, and can be successful only

as a revolution of these masses, i.e. the revolution must solve their political and social problems.

To solve these problems, it is necessary to have a mass organisation consisting not only of students. This applies particularly to the Bengal Revolutionary Youth Organisation.

Your organisation must consist of worker, peasant and intellectual youth, who participate in the everyday struggle of toilers, and who have set themselves the aim of the revolutionary emancipation of India and the solution of economic and social questions.

Realising the necessity of organising the worker, peasant and intellectual youth, we must also point out the nature of such an organisation.

A youth organisation must be formed on the basis of centralism and discipline.

Members of the youth organisation must dedicate themselves to the cause of revolution and the liberation of the toilers from imperialist and feudal oppression, not heeding the difficulties, the conditions and the character of the work which they must accomplish.

Members of the youth organisation must have close contact with the youth masses; participating and leading them in their daily struggles. The youth organisation must become the real leader of the Indian youth and avoid the dangers of becoming a sect.

The work among the youth masses, to organise and to give them revolutionary enlightenment, and at the same time to train themselves to become real fighters in the Communist Party of India—leaders of the revolutionary mass movement in the country—these are the tasks which the youth organisation must fulfil and which also determine the nature of the organisation.

This is the first and fundamental conclusion which must be definitely kept in mind.

The role of the students is of exceptional value. You will fulfil your historic mission by carrying revolutionary ideas among the masses of the toilers, by developing their revolutionary consciousness, and by establishing a political organisation, which will include workers and peasants, i.e. the elements of the real struggle for the emancipation of India.

The second important conclusion that can be drawn from the study of the experience of your work and the experience of the revolutionary movement in other countries is the harmful character of individual terror as a method of the struggle.

We have the most profound respect for the heroism of the hero-terrorist who sacrifices his life for the cause of the liberation of the people. Our sympathy goes out to him entirely. A revolutionary who is fighting for the cause of the people has the moral right to remove the executioners and the garroters of the people. But individual terror cannot serve as means of emancipating the Indian people, for the reasons: (1) a terrorist act directed against an individual does not remove the whole system: in place of the one who has been removed the British imperialism will appoint another; one official merely takes the place of another, but the system of oppression remains intact; (2) terror demands a tremendous expenditure of effort and diverts attention from the fundamental tasks of rallying, organising and revolutionarily educating the masses.

*Individual terror is the usual method of fighting adopted by groups of intellectuals who do not understand the significance of mass fighting, who have no confidence in the possibilities of this form of fighting and who believe that a small group of intellectuals is able to bring about the revolution without the active participation of the masses of the toilers.*

Instead of sacrificing our best forces on acts of terror, these should go right in among the masses of the people, in order to rouse them for the fight. All your efforts should be directed towards organising the masses for the fight; the whole experience of Russia and of other countries, and your own experience, teaches this. Lenin's elder brother was a terrorist and was executed for his attempt to assassinate the tsar. On the death of his brother, Lenin vowed to fight to the end for the same cause, but by other and more certain methods. He did not take up the method of single combat adopted by the intellectuals. He set to work to rally the masses for the heroic struggle for liberty, and he led the masses of the toilers to victory. You too learn to reply to the tyranny exercised by the British executioners over Indian revolutionaries in a manner that will have the greatest effect upon the tyrants, namely, by recruiting the millions of the toilers of India for the fight.

The false views as regards the usefulness of individual terror must be combated, in order to divert the revolutionary zeal spent in this direction towards the broader channels of political action. To condemn individual terrorist action is not the same as the negation of the necessity of armed uprising at the suitable moment. But the task of organising a revolution requires you to understand and then to explain the significance of the revolutionary struggle to the masses, of the necessity to organise them and give them revolutionary education.

It is interesting to observe that the British bourgeoisie, which has enormous experience in exploiting and oppressing the masses of the toilers, got its first shock when in 1919 and 1920 it saw the menacing waves of the rising nationalist movement. It was not the terrorist acts which commenced in 1907, but the agrarian disorders and the labour strikes which scared British imperialism. Hence their attempts by reforms and doles (Workers' Compensation Act, Trade Union Registration Act and some assistance to the cooperative movement) to divert the movement.

It is true that the Indian government, which represents the interests of the British capitalists and protects the native exploiters, by its very nature is incapable of solving these problems. Its reforms are merely a bone thrown to a dog, and no more.

The above arguments should interest you to the extent that they indicate how serious is the significance of the toiling masses and how their spontaneous movements caused by their impoverishment compel even the oppressors to make concessions in order to postpone the revolution. They understand the significance of the masses, you must understand it also.

The third conclusion to be drawn is the necessity to combat the idealistic theories and particularly the theological non-resistance philosophy of Gandhi. The counterrevolutionary character of the theory of nonresistance and the idea of universal love for your oppressors clearly proves that such a theory can serve the interests only of the British capitalists and the native upper classes. Instead of calling for the revolutionary overthrow of imperialist oppression and for the fight against reaction, Gandhi advocates patience and love for the guns and the whips of the British capitalists. To speak of serenity to the starving toiling masses of India, who are suffering from the

unrestrained exploitation of the landlords and usurers, means to shut one's eyes to the slow death of the tenant-farmer, means to ignore the enormous profits made by the manufacturers by the exploitation of the workers which is leading to the degeneration of the working class, it means to ignore the intolerable conditions of the life of the masses of which mention is made even in the columns of official publications, it means in fact to be a champion of British imperialism and internal reaction. How pharisaical sounds this talk of love, brotherhood, etc. etc.!

It is true that the fight against these doctrines is not an easy one. First of all it is necessary to study the materialistic conception of history, to study the natural sciences, particularly Darwinism, etc. It is extremely necessary to take up the study of revolutionary Marxism, to form study circles and to study all the available literature.

To the main conclusions we have drawn in this letter should be added a few general remarks outlining future work.

One of the fundamental principles in the programme of the Young Communist International and the Comintern is the close inseparable union of the national-revolutionary movement in India with that of the other oriental countries and with the revolutionary proletariat of England and of other industrially developed countries.

At the Second Congress of the Comintern, on the proposal of Comrade Lenin, a resolution was passed which defined this union as one of the fundamental principles of our work and programme. This is quite explicable. The national-revolutionary movement in India and in other colonies, as well as the revolutionary movement of the proletariat in industrial countries, has a common enemy in the shape of world imperialism.

Imperialist capitalism is the worst enemy of British, French, German, Russian and other workers. It is true that not all workers understand this yet. The work of explaining this is only just proceeding, but everywhere we see how the importance of the communist parties is rapidly increasing. It is natural therefore that the revolutionary alliance against world imperialism is necessary and inevitable. Complete mutual support is one of the principles of the Comintern. During the last general election, the Communist Party of Great Britain put forward the demand for the right of complete separation for

India and secured the election of an Indian comrade to parliament. The interests of the British labour movement and the national-revolutionary movement in India form a common basis for this union, and on the basis of this union the fight should be conducted for the emancipation of India and the emancipation of the British proletariat from capitalism.

We would advise you to adopt the programme drawn up by Comrade Roy for the national-revolutionary movement in India in the *Vanguard*. We support this programme, and would advise you to get it distributed as widely as possible. The Communist Party of India put forward this programme for the national-revolutionary movement for those elements who are earnest in their desire to fight for the revolutionary emancipation of India. Your fundamental task must be to support the organisation of the radical elements, particularly those of the leftwing of the swaraj movement, who will adopt this programme.

The Bengal National Revolution League should fight shoulder to shoulder with the Communist Party of India. The communist party alone in all countries has proved to be the champion of the interest of the majority of the people. The actions of the communist party never differ from its programme, which always expresses the real desires of the masses. All the sections of the Young Communist International are proud of the leadership of its elder brother, the communist party. We call upon you to fight side by side with the Indian communists in the hope that in the future you will take up an honourable position in the ranks of our heroic militant leagues.

A very important task to which you must devote your attention is to remove the differences between Hindus and Mohammedans and to rally all the revolutionary forces into a single revolutionary organisation. It is perfectly clear that these antagonisms, this split in the revolutionary movement, only serve the interests of British imperialism and all the reactionary forces in the country and is frequently provoked by them. Frequently the outbreak of Hindu-Mohammedan conflicts is, due to economic causes, i.e. to the antagonism between a Mahomedan workman and a Hindu employer, or between a Mohammedan peasant and a Hindu landlord and usurer, or vice versa. Where the revolting masses and the exploiters belong to different reli-

gions, it is very easy to sidetrack the movement by religious antagonism. The violence committed against the Hindus during the Moplah rising reflected the hatred of the Moplah peasants towards the Hindu landlords and usurers. Every effort must be exerted in order to unite the revolutionary movements into one whole, into a single organisation, and to explain to the toilers whose interests are served by these antagonisms among the masses of the toilers.

The last question with which we would like to deal is that of legal and illegal forms of work.

The necessity for increasing the illegal organisation and illegal work is clear and undisputed. But illegal work alone will not render it possible to extend influence over the whole of the youth, to organise it and to develop its revolutionary consciousness.

Hence it is necessary to take an active part in all legal organisations like sport, literary and also economic organisations and in these to spread revolutionary ideas, to form fractions and to obtain not only influence but the leadership. By developing this legal work, by forming new organisations, convening conferences, etc., and by conducting intensive revolutionary educational work, you will be able to extend your influence over the whole of the youth, organise them and lead them. The best elements in the legal organisations should be invited to join the illegal national-revolutionary youth organisations.

This then is the advice and the conclusions which the Young Communist International, on the basis of its experience and the knowledge of the conditions in your country, would recommend to you.

We would suggest that you discuss these points among yourselves and spread these ideas among your revolutionary students. At the same time you must commence to study the conditions of the worker and peasant youth and take an active part in their movement.

It would be a good thing for you, as far as possible, to work in the schools and workingmen's clubs, in order to establish connection and as a beginning to conduct at least ordinary educational work.

It is with extreme pleasure that we greet the Indian Youth League and we hope that very soon the Indian League will occupy an honourable place in the ranks of the Young Communist League. For the role of India in the approaching fight of oppressed humanity against the yoke of economic and political slavery is very great indeed. We call upon you to join the fight for the complete abolition of all exploitation throughout the whole world.

Hearty revolutionary greetings to our brother league, the National Revolutionary Youth League of Bengal, which is entering the fighting ranks of the army of the toiling youth, fighting for the emancipation of toiling humanity.

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE YOUNG  
COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

(*Masses*, Vol I, No 7, July 1925)

## 2. Birkenhead's Challenge and Nation's Reply

### INTRODUCTION

The year 1925 was a year of continued stalemate of national struggle. "Politics of 1925 largely centred round council work" is the comment of the official history of the Congress.<sup>1</sup> This had emboldened the imperialist government as we have seen to launch a round of repression against the rising national-revolutionary (terrorist) movement. They proceeded further to challenge the national movement, particularly the Swaraj Party which was for the last two years keeping up the resistance inside the legislature. Lord Birkenhead, the then secretary of state for India, was arrogantly telling the nationalist leaders that no further advance of administrative reforms in India could be achieved by threats of violence. Not until they gave up non-cooperation and turned to cooperation with imperialism would the doors to reform be opened. The articles and documents in this section, which are all from the Masses of India from April to August 1925, deal critically with this Birkenhead's challenge and the reply the national movement gave.

We have referred earlier to the all-party conference set up in 1924 with the object of giving a concrete shape to the na-

1. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol I, p. 280.

tional demand for swaraj. This conference met again in Bombay on 23 January 1925 under the presidentship of Mahatma Gandhi. It appointed two subcommittees: (1) Swaraj subcommittee; and (2) Hindu-Muslim unity subcommittee. These subcommittees met in the early months of 1925, but could not arrive at any agreement on the main questions of the revision of the Lucknow pact and the method of representation on the legislative and other bodies. Later a statement was published under the signature of Gandhiji and Motilal Nehru. This statement said: "The swaraj scheme<sup>2</sup> framed by the subcommittee under Mrs Annie Besant was before the committee. Dissenting notes are being received by us from the members of that committee. In view, however, of the meagre attendance and because of the failure to reach a decision on the Hindu-Muslim problem, the scheme could not be considered. So it was decided that the proceedings of the subcommittee be adjourned sine die."<sup>3</sup>

On 28 June 1925, some 40 leaders issued a memorandum urging the necessity of passing this "commonwealth of India bill". Among the signatories were, apart from independents and liberals, also Mrs Sarojini Naidu, the then president of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee, and swarajist leaders from Maharashtra, viz M. R. Jayakar, M. S. Aney, G. S. Kharparde and M. Deshmukh. But this did not represent either the consensus of Indian opinion or the official stand of the Congress or the Swaraj Party.

Another development was C. R. Das's manifesto issued on 29 March 1925. This was issued mainly to allay the apprehension raised by the swarajist leaders' support to the Gopinath Saha resolution that his party was supporting the activities of the "terrorists". While dissociating himself from the revolutionary movement, C. R. Das at the same time warned the imperialists that "repression will not stop political assassination, it will only encourage it". To "Young Bengal" he made the appeal "to fight hard, fight incessantly and fight clean, to disarm all obstruction and win swaraj".<sup>4</sup>

2. This swaraj scheme was the "commonwealth of India bill" sponsored by Mrs Besant.

3. *Indian Annual Register*, Vol 1, 1925, p. 77.

4. *Ibid*, p. 87.

It is this statement by C. R. Das and his speech at the Bengal provincial conference at Faridpur on 3 May 1925, which has been criticised in the documents produced in this section as a "new orientation" and a "climb-down" of the swarajist leaders. When Lord Birkenhead, in response to the first statement, challenged C. R. Das to "go forward and cooperate with the government in repressing the violence he so deprecated" (31 March 1925), the swarajist leader again reiterated his warning that repression can never solve the generation of revolutionary activities and violence (3 April 1925).

At the Bengal provincial conference, C. R. Das clearly stated that the Congress and Swaraj Party were prepared to cooperate with the government provided immediate steps were taken to establish swaraj. He also defined the conditions precedent for India to agree to a swaraj within the empire: The resolution adopted at the conference defined the national ideal of swaraj in general terms as well as the conditions. It stated "that the national ideal of swaraj involves the right of Indian nation to live its own life, to have opportunity of self-realisation, self-development and self-fulfilment and the liberty to work for the consolidation of the diverse elements which go to make up the Indian nation, unimpeded and unobstructed by any outside domination". The resolution further said that "if the British empire recognises such right... this conference calls upon the Indian nation to realise its swaraj within the British commonwealth". The conference also passed a resolution calling upon the government to "release all the political prisoners and to allow those who are in exile to return to India".

C. R. Das in his Faridpur speech makes three points. Firstly, he discusses the question of swaraj within or without the empire and opts for the former. He says: "The answer which the Congress has always given is 'within the empire' if the empire will recognise our right and 'outside the empire' if it does not. We must have opportunity to live our life, opportunity for self-realisation, self-development and self-fulfilment. The question is of living our own life. If the empire furnishes sufficient scope for the growth and development of our national life the empire idea is to be preferred. If on the contrary, the empire like the car of Jagannath crushes our life in the sweep of its

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imperialistic march there will be justification for the idea of establishment of swaraj outside the empire,"<sup>5</sup>

C. R. Das not only stood for "swaraj within the empire" but went into panegyrics about the "empire idea" and about dominion status! He said: "Empire idea gives us vivid sense of many advantages. Dominion status today is in no sense servitude. It is essentially an alliance by consent of those who form part of the empire for material advantages in the real spirit of cooperation."<sup>6</sup> C. R. Das was of course putting forward what was the official stand of the Congress and the Swaraj Party then.

Thirdly, dissociating himself from the revolutionary movement in Bengal, he called upon the young men of Bengal to desist from such thoughts and appealed to "the Bengal provincial conference to declare clearly and unequivocally that in its opinion freedom cannot be achieved by such methods". He dealt with the question at considerable length. He traced the origin of the Bengal revolutionary movement and gave a revealing chronology of leading events in India from 1905 to 1909 on this question. While partly attributing the Indian unrest and the revolutionary mentality among the youth to the government's policy of repression and tyranny, he said: "But one is bound to admit that the success of the Japanese over the Russians in the bloody war about the end of the century, and the consequent reawakening of the country; the guerilla campaign of the Egyptian nationalists and the activities of the Irish republicans, and the subsequent foundation of Soviet Russia with its worldwide bolshevik propaganda and lastly the success of the Ankara government in bringing the English and the Greeks down to their knees have contributed not a little to the conviction that India's freedom must be won by whatever means possible."<sup>7</sup>

national work, on the lines we have pursued for the last two years so that it may become impossible for the government to carry on the administration of the country except by the exercise of exceptional powers. Some say we are prepared to go still further and advise the country not to pay taxes. My answer is that I want to create the atmosphere for national civil disobedience which must be the last weapon in the hands of the people striving for freedom." His illusions were expressed in his words: "I hope the time will never come. I see signs of a real change. I see signs of reconciliation everywhere."<sup>8</sup>

While the Bengal Congress and the Swaraj Party at the Faridpur conference sharply condemned government repression of all political prisoners detained without trial, it also spelt out the terms of cooperation in case decisive steps were taken to establish swaraj. Meanwhile, the Swaraj Party used its voting strength in the Bengal legislative council to vote down the budget, refused to sanction the salaries of ministers in charge of the "transferred subjects" and thus exposed the whole farce of the so-called dyarchy. The council session reassembled on 17 March 1925. The newly-appointed Indian ministers in charge of the transferred subjects took their seats on the treasury benches. C. R. Das spoke on 23 March on the swarajist amendment refusing the salaries to the two ministers. He said:

"The system is bad, the system is wicked, and as honourable men, as honest men, we cannot cooperate with the government under this system. That is the position of the swarajists. We are asked what we will do next if this motion is passed, if it is accepted. There are only two courses open to the government, either take back the transferred departments for which I shall be glad. Then all the iniquities of this system, the responsibility of this system, will be on the government who started it. If on the other hand they order a dissolution, I shall be equally glad, because that means, as I believe, that swarajists will come back in overwhelming majority."

The amendment for the total refusal of the ministers' salaries was put to vote: 69 for the amendment, 63 against. The amendment was carried.<sup>9</sup>

There was another significant clash in the council on 25 March. In the course of discussion on police grant, S. C. Banerjee (nationalist) said, "the activities of the police department were more in evidence in manufacturing evidence than in detecting crime". Hugh Stephenson, the home member, demanded the withdrawal of these words. The president of the council asked for the same. The nationalists and swarajists refused and walked out. Later C. R. Das and B. Chakravarty submitted a joint letter to the president in which they said: "Your order to withdraw those words is an infringement of liberty of speech."

On 8 May 1925, the viceroy certified the rejected budget grants. On 13 June 1925, the government of India gazette extraordinary announced that with the sanction of the secretary of state in council, the decision of the government that the transfer of all transferable subjects in Bengal "is suspended with effect from that day till 21 January 1927, i.e. for the life-time of the present council". The resolution of the government explaining this said:

"The present Bengal council has on three occasions decided to provide no salaries for ministers." The occasions were cited as follows: (1) 24 March 1924, (2) 26 August 1924, (3) 24 March 1925. "In these circumstances, the government of India and the secretary of state for India have no alternative but to accept the thrice expressed desire of the... council." For this reason "the suspension of the transfer has been directed".<sup>10</sup>

On 16 June 1925 Deshbandhu C. R. Das passed away. The man who spoke of swaraj for the 98 per cent, who understood the need for freedom and further economic and democratic demands, who befriended the revolutionaries and fought against repression was no more. The country had lost a militant and far-sighted national leader. Gandhiji was in Calcutta at that time. The whole country mourned the loss. Glowing tributes were paid to the memory, to the life and work of the Deshbandhu. The Bengal Deshbandhu Memorial Fund was started. Very soon eight lakh rupees were collected. This was later used for starting a women's hospital in C. R. Das's old home which he had donated to the nation.

A striking tribute to the memory of the Deshbandhu came from the international peasant organisation—the Krestintern. Its presidium tendered profound condolences to the central committee of the Swaraj Party, as well as to the people of India on the demise of the founder and leader of the Swaraj Party. The message further “declared that the cause of the founder and leader of your party for the creation of favourable conditions for the political, economic and cultural development of the 100-million mass of the people of India, for which, regardless of severe bereavement, your party is continuing to struggle, to be also the cause of the Krestintern”. The message ended, “The Krestintern welcomes the decision of your congress at Faridpur regarding the need of immediately proceeding to the organisation of the largest masses of the Indian peasants for the fight in the swarajist cause.”

A copy of this letter was also sent to Shapurji Saklatvala and is part of the documents seized by the British police when the arrest of 12 communist leaders and the search of party offices took place in London on 12, 14 and 21 October 1925. These documents were printed as *Communist Papers*<sup>11</sup> and presented to the British parliament. They were also filed in the Meerut Conspiracy Case as exhibit P. 2376. Quotations are taken from the text of the letter in this exhibit.

The statement of Lord Birkenhead, which is referred to in most of the documents in this section, was made in the House of Lords on 7 July 1925. As the secretary of state for India in the tory cabinet which came to power in Britain after the general election at the end of 1924, Lord Birkenhead was making a statement on the Indian policy of the British government.

After the Bengal deadlock, the governor-general, Lord Reading, went to London for consultations with the secretary of state and the latter was informing the parliament of the results of these discussions. It was an arrogant pronouncement of an imperialist statesman, who was determined to “discharge the responsibility” that devolved upon Britain when it emerged

<sup>11</sup> Documents selected from those obtained on the arrest of the communist leaders on the 14th and 21st October 1925, cmd. 2682 in 1926.

the supreme power in India in 1765. In discharging the "high obligations" of that responsibility, said the haughty lord, "We shall not be diverted by the tactics of restless impatience. The door of acceleration is not open to menace; still less will it be stormed by violence."

Paying hypocritical tribute to India's art, civilisation, literature and philosophy, Lord Birkenhead asserted: "To talk of India as an entity is as absurd as to talk of Europe as an entity. Yet the very nationalist spirit which has created most of our difficulties in the last few years is based upon the aspirations and claims of a nationalist India. There never has been such a nation." Denying India's nationhood, he emphasised "the communal differences" and stated, "If we withdraw from India tomorrow, the immediate consequences would be a struggle à outrance—I choose my words carefully—between the Moslems and Hindu population." In the defence of Britain's right to rule India by the sword, he asserted that no responsible Indian had ever demanded "the withdrawal of British troops from India". He told "their lordships" that "an immediate repudiation of our responsibilities in India would be at least as fatal to the interests of India itself as in any year since 1765".

Indirectly referring to the Swaraj Party, he called it "the most highly organised political party in India" which "wasted its energy in the futile attempt to destroy" the Montford constitution which he described as "a generous experiment". But he had to admit that the same Swaraj Party by its strength in the Bengal legislative council had left the government of India "no option but to suspend the transfer of subjects in that province". It was patent to everyone that the dyarchic constitution had failed but the imperial lord prevaricated: "It has neither altogether succeeded, nor has it altogether failed."

Turning to Indian leaders, he said: "There will be—there can be—no reconsideration until we see everywhere among the responsible leaders of Indian thought evidence of a sincere and genuine desire to cooperate with us in making the best of the existing constitution." On the other hand, he challenged "the critics in India" to "produce a constitution which carries behind it a fair measure of general agreement among the great peoples of India".

Dealing with India's demand for "a national army" as a corollary to its demand for "a responsible government" he evaded the question, by talking of "gradual Indianisation" as an experiment of eight units" and of the proposal for "the creation of an Indian Sandhurst". When he said: "No sane government will allow its army to become the toy of political parties", what he meant was that the imperialist army of occupation was not to be allowed to be toyed with by nationalist parties.

He foreshadowed the appointment of a royal commission for constitutional reform, which came later as the Simon commission against which a powerful mass boycott movement was unleashed. He spoke of "the revolutionary outbreak in Bengal" and justified "the adoption of exceptional repressive measures". Immediately thereafter he spoke of the presence in India of "70 million Mohammedans, martial in their traditions and virile in their qualities" not because of his sympathy for the downtrodden Muslim masses but with the fanning of "the efflorescence of communal differences" and "disturbances", in mind. He next talked of the reactionary allies of imperialism, "the ruling princes of India", of "their generosity, their loyalty and their courage" and pledged to them that "we shall never fall short in our obligations to those who have shared our perils and never despaired of our imperial destiny".

Lord Birkenhead acknowledged his obligations to the 8½ millions who "voted in the last election" and won considerable success in some provinces and at the centre against the imperialist government. But he also acknowledged his "obligations in respect of the 250 millions in British India, of whom we are the responsible guardians, and in a less degree in respect of the 70 millions in the Indian states". But who was responsible for the fact that there were only 8½ million voters in those days out of "250 millions in British India", and 70 millions in the princely states were disenfranchised and had no vote? Of course, Birkenhead and his kind, the then imperialist feudal rulers of India—the self-appointed "responsible guardians"! There was no adult franchise in British India; a certain amount of property and education was needed to qualify oneself for franchise; and in the princely states it was a case of personal rule and there were hardly elected representative institutions there. Birkenhead was of course determined to maintain this imperialist-feudal

rule and, that is why in concluding his oration, assured the lords that "there is no 'lost dominion'; there will be no 'lost dominion'" until, of course, British empire itself is "splintered doom".<sup>12</sup>

Birkenhead's speech was an arrogant challenge and warning of British imperialism to India's national movement and its leaders. We have reproduced here the main parts of that speech so that the reader can understand how the national movement and its left wing sought to reply to it. Birkenhead's statement coming soon after the passing away of Deshbandhu C. R. Das had created a new situation for the Congress. Mahatma Gandhi immediately took stock of this change. At the Belgaum congress, as we have seen, a division of labour was arrived at between the Indian National Congress on the one hand and the Swaraj Party on the other. The Congress was to concentrate mainly on the so-called constructive programme—charkha and khaddar, etc., was to be mainly a spinning association, while the Swaraj Party was to carry the politics of "noncooperation" into the legislature and provincial councils. Gandhiji now felt that this has to change. In a letter addressed to Motilal Nehru dated 19 July 1925, he wrote :

"And I have come to the conclusion that I should absolve the Swaraj Party of all obligations of the pact of last year. The result of this act is that the Congress need no longer be predominantly a spinning association.

"I recognise that under the situation created by the speech the authority and the influence of the Swaraj Party need to be increased. I would fail in my duty if I neglected a single step within my power to increase the strength of the party. This can be done if Congress becomes a predominantly political body.

"Under the pact, the Congress activity is restricted to the constructive programme mentioned therein. I recognise that this restriction should not continue under the altered circumstances which face the country. Not only do I personally absolve you from the restriction but I propose to ask the forth-

12. All quotations from the full text of the speech printed as Appendix IV in *India in 1925-26*, an official annual report prepared by J. Coatman,

coming meeting of the AICC to do likewise and place the whole machinery of the Congress at your disposal so as to enable you to bring before that body such political resolutions as you may consider necessary in the interest of the country. In fact, I would have you regard me at your disposal in all such matters in which I can conscientiously serve you and the Swaraj Party."<sup>13</sup>

Simultaneously, Mahatma Gandhi gave a public reply to Birkenhead. This came in *Young India* dated 23 July 1925. It was a point by point reply. Gandhiji wrote :

"Lord Birkenhead thinks the British government are trustees of our welfare. We think they hold us in bondage for their benefit.

"His lordship says we cannot be a nation with our 9 religions and 130 languages. We contend that for all practical purposes and for protection from outside, we are one nation.

"He thinks that noncooperation was a dreadful mistake. The vast majority of us think it alone awakened this sleeping nation from its torpor, it alone gave the nation a force whose strength is beyond measure.

"Birkenhead thinks that in Hindu-Muslim dissensions, the British government kept its hand unsullied. It is the earnest belief of almost every Indian that the British government are principally responsible for these quarrels.

"Birkenhead thinks we must cooperate with them. Deshbandhu has shown the way out. His offer stands."

Concluding, Gandhiji wrote, such a cooperation can only be on the basis of equality. "Let us gather that force, the non-violent force of civil resistance, and we shall be equal. This is no threat, no menace. It is a hard fact."

Thus, while rebuffing the challenge and threat of Birkenhead, the Congress and Swaraj Party leadership at the same time spelt out their terms of cooperation if concrete and serious steps were taken to establish swaraj. Gandhiji referred to the offer made by Deshbandhu. On 16 July, the Swaraj Party adopted a resolution stating their willingness to cooperate on honourable terms. On 22 August 1925 when Vithalbhai Patel, the swarajist leader, accepted to be elected the speaker of the

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... legislature he expressed the same sentiments in his first opening speech:

... the swarajists are often described as critics, destructive critics, and it has therefore, become their duty, whenever an honorable opportunity offers, to show not only to this house but to the whole world that if they know how to destroy, they know how to construct. They have to show when real responsibility comes to them they are ready to discharge the duties placed upon their shoulders."<sup>14</sup>

Having given a connected account of the political developments to which the documents in this section refer, we now turn to the documents themselves.

(1) "The Flight of the Bankrupts" and "Hindu-Muslim Problem" are comments in the April issue of the *Masses* on the all-party conference which met at the beginning of 1925 and appointed two subcommittees, one swaraj subcommittee and the other Hindu-Muslim one to consider Annie Besant's "commonwealth of India bill". They came to no conclusion. A joint statement of Gandhiji and Motilal Nehru confirmed this. The comment on this is that "the parties comprising the Congress are taking a retreat all along the line".

stand on the Gopinath Saha resolution to Fardpur when they are condemning "revolutionary crime" and are talking of "freedom within the commonwealth", the swarajists are in retreat. Both Gandhiji and C. R. Das are sharply condemned for selling the people's birth-right for a mess of pottage.

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"The swarajists are often described as critics, destructive critics : and it has, therefore, become their duty, whenever an honourable opportunity offers, to show not only to this house but to the whole world that if they know how to destroy, they know also how to construct. They have to show when real responsibility comes to them they are ready to discharge the duties placed upon their shoulders."<sup>14</sup>

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14. *India in 1925-26*, Appendix v, p. 367.

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made an application for passport with a view to come over to India. A British passport office letter dated 23 July 1925 says: "Clemens P. Dutt wishes to make journey to India September next to meet relatives in Calcutta—mother and father will accompany him, both have valid passports." An order passed on this application in August 1925 states: "Secretary of state for India recommends that an endorsement on his passport for travel to India should be refused."<sup>16</sup>

We find this confirmed by a CPGB document. This is R. W. Robson's report on a colonial conference held at Amsterdam on 11 and 12 July 1925, seized by the British police when 12 British communist leaders were arrested and later printed in *Communist Papers*. In this report, which is reproduced in full in a later section and commented upon, we have the following: Robson was reporting about the proposal "of sending Dutt to India for the work there" on which "Roy said that he had been instructed to go ahead with the question of Dutt being sent to India in the absence of any objection from the British party and from Dutt himself".

The question of C. P. Dutt going to India came up because he was, as a communist, already doing political work among young Indians, mostly students in England. This work he was doing under the CPGB and in close cooperation with M. N. Roy who was then in charge of the Eastern Bureau of the Comintern. Firstly, C. P. Dutt was a member of the Indian Bureau, an organisation of leftwing Indian patriots the core of which was communists. Apart from Dutt, there were Dr A. C. Banerji, Upadhyaya, P. C. Nandi and others in the Indian Bureau. Among the activities of the bureau was the organisation of an Indian Seamen's Union, consisting of sailors and khalasis working on boats plying between England and India. Upadhyaya was leading the union. C. P. Dutt was active in the Workers' Welfare League of India which was started with the express purpose of helping the rising organised trade-union movement in India. Besides he was also helping to circulate the organs of the CPI such as *Vanguard* and later *Masses* among Indians and also assisted in organising their study circles. Dutt was also helping Roy to run the journals and arranging

16. Home-Pol. F 99/xi, 1925.

their dispatch to India via France as well as through seamen via England. Thus we see that Dutt was not only working among Indians in England, but was also sharing with Roy the work of organising the Communist Party in India. We shall see later that he attended the Amsterdam meeting where this work was reviewed. Still later we find that Dutt together with Mohammad Ali and M. N. Roy were the three-man Foreign Bureau of the CPI as defined in its constitution.

Reviewing the political scene in India after the passing away of C. R. Das, the article focuses attention on the work of the Swaraj Party. It points out how its obstructionism in the assembly and in the councils is now tempered by its decision to serve on government's steel protection committee and "to vote for the steel protection bill granting an enormous bounty to the Tata steel interests without a thought to the conditions of the exploited steel workers". But it points out that though the aim of the leaders of the Swaraj Party has become to strike a bargain with the government for the "reform of the reforms", the rank and file are already alienated and not interested in parliamentary manoeuvrings. The situation is heading towards a split in the Swaraj Party while in the Congress itself "the yarn-spinning franchise" is arousing a revolt. The writer then goes on to refer to the Indian Labour Party which Lala Lajpat Rai and others were trying to float at that time. But it is pointed out that this Labour Party cannot take the place of a nationalist organisation, based as it was on trade union movement, which was then in the hands of reformists and liberals.

The article concludes by stating that what was needed "was a workers' and peasants' party, which will base itself on a social, economic programme for remedying the present disabilities of Indian labour". It states further that "Such a party... must be a mass nationalist party."

The workers' and peasants' party is here represented as being organised independently, as alternative to the Congress and the Swaraj parties and with its own mass base among workers and the toiling masses. That it also works within the broad national movement is understood and gets clarified later as the idea of the united anti-imperialist front is worked out in practice.

## 1. POINT OF VIEW OF THE MASSES

### THE PLIGHT OF THE BANKRUPTS

*It is now three months since the National Congress, assembled at Belgaum for its annual show, exhibited once again its utter and fundamental bankruptcy by failing to give the necessary lead to the vital elements in the nationalist movement—elements which, being closer to the masses, were interpreting the need for courage and realism in the stiff fight against British imperialism. We remember how the "great-souled" Gandhi himself—recreant to the aspirations of many millions—could do nothing better than express himself in childish petulance against the revolutionaries and put forward as his own original contribution a scheme of swaraj which, in its studied lack of political vision, was in the actual circumstances nothing less than a calculated insult to the intelligence of his countrymen.*

The bankruptcy exhibited at Belgaum has been rendered more glaring and incontestable—if that were indeed possible—at Delhi where the committees appointed by the Bombay All Party Unity Conference held their sterile meetings recently. It will be remembered that the Congress, in its incurable incapacity to face the urgent issues of the hour, had abdicated its proper function at Belgaum, and had condemned itself to marking time in waiting for the decisions of these committees. It had even gone beyond and bespoken its acceptance in advance of these decisions, whatever they might be. There could be no more damaging proof of self-stultification. As a matter of fact it is the logical consequence of the loss of contact with the living currents of the movement.

Now these committees have met and deliberated. The result is—confusion worse confounded. Even the emasculated and meaningless phrases and formulas which the Congress was expecting from the Delhi committees are not forthcoming. The state of advanced decomposition of the existing parties could not be better registered than by the admitted failure on the

part of these committees to offer any solution whatever for the questions referred to them. It is even said that there was insufficient attendance at the meetings held respectively by the two committees; the centre of political gravity is obviously transferred elsewhere. However the particular committee—or to be more exact subcommittee—charged with the drawing up of the "future constitution of India", which really meant whittling down the conception of swaraj to dominion status, did put in some amount of work under the inspiration, as it seems, of Mrs Annie Besant, who has left preoccupation with the beatitudes of Hindu philosophy for the more urgent task of assuring British domination in India under some form or other. Apparently she has not been able to inspire among her fellow-members of the committee that love for "the British connection" with which she herself is consumed, for following upon the publication of her scheme of the Indian constitution, "dissenting notes are being received from the members of the committee", as a statement issued by Messrs Gandhi and Motilal Nehru declares. The fiasco of the whole affair is apparent from the same statement, which says that the committee is adjourned sine die. It is one more demonstration, if indeed any was needed, that the parties composing the Congress—it is unnecessary to mention the others outside—are beating a retreat all along the line. They have practically and formally given up the fight for the freedom of the country—a fight to which they were momentarily harnessed by the impenous revolutionary elan of the masses; they have degenerated into parliamentarians and reformists—the more miserable at that, because there are no "parliaments" to speak of in India and there are no "reforms" which their wordy agitation could secure for them, unaided by the menacing momentum, increasing from day to day, of the revolutionary forces operating in the vast social background beyond.

#### THE HINDU-MUSLIM PROBLEM

The Hindu-Muslim problem, as it exists today, is principally the creation of Congress politics of the last few years. One of the Delhi committees we are speaking of was charged with finding a solution ostensibly for this very problem. It has found

none; and the failure is so self-evident that it had to be admitted in so many words. The Gandhi-Nehru statement, from which we have already quoted, says in this connection "in our opinion there was, moreover, no material for coming to any definite conclusions nor is there a likelihood of any being reached in the near future".

There is nothing surprising in this. The members of the committee to judge from their earlier commitments either know nothing about the Hindu-Muslim problem or—which is more likely—they shut their eyes deliberately to its real nature. It may even be said, particularly of Maulana Mohammed Ali and Swami Shraddhanand, that having themselves by their nefarious propaganda created the problem, they are not in a hurry to solve it. And the members of this committee—like other committees and conferences before this—met, not really to bring Hindus and Muslims together, but to extend Hindu-Muslim differences still further, namely to the legislatures and the local bodies. In other words the Hindu and Muslim members of the committee set before themselves the task of exploiting, for their own purposes of narrow political chicanery against each other, the riots and quarrels which the Hindu and Muslim sections of the masses are provoked by a false and artificial propaganda to engage in.

We need not take very seriously the bland admission of Messrs Gandhi and Motilal Nehru that there is no "likelihood of any conclusion being reached in the near future" so far as the real question of the unity of the Indian masses is concerned. The workers and peasants of India, irrespective of what religion they profess, constitute one social class whose economic interests are identical. The reactionary bourgeois leaders of the existing political parties may succeed for some time in inciting the masses to fight among themselves—just as the workers and peasants of Europe were egged on to kill each other by the lying propaganda of their respective bourgeoisie during the late war. But this propaganda cannot succeed, either in India or in Europe, for all time. The developing consciousness of the masses of India will give the lie to the disunion that is sown among them in the name of religion by the band of maulanas and swamis, acting as the agents of the existing social system of oppression and exploitation. Nowhere perhaps is it truer

than in India that "religion is the opium of the people", and the virulence of this kind of opium-poisoning in the body-politic of India, as seen in the bloody series of "religious" riots, shows to what extent the dealers of this dope have been active.

## NOTES AND NEWS

### SWARAJISTS WITHIN THE EMPIRE

Mr C. R. Das, according to a Reuter cable of 29 March, has published a manifesto in the name of the Swaraj Party in which it is stated that the policy of that party is not to encourage violence, but to seek cooperation with the government under such conditions as will permit it to work honourably for the country and to win for India eventually a place among the free nations of the British empire. Mr Das advises his countrymen to fight for this cause, but to fight loyally.

(*Masses*, Vol 1, No 4,  
April 1925)

## 2. NEW ORIENTATION OF MR DAS

Judging from statements issued at Patna in the beginning of April Mr Das has felt the necessity of declaring his full identification with the policy of "law and order" upheld by the moderates and by the right wing of his own Swaraj Party. But he has gone much further than mere repudiation of violence and terrorism—a repudiation already made on several different occasions and scarcely necessary for any except the most unreasonably diehard. Mr Das has definitely aligned himself and his party on the side of compromise and negotiation as opposed to resistance and obstruction for the attainment of that form of swaraj which he has now openly announced to be not independence but home rule within the empire.

The surprise and delight with which his words were hailed by government authorities both in India and Britain were

manifested by the public speeches of various officials of which the statement by Lord Birkenhead was most noteworthy. Mr Das's overture was met by smooth phrases that were a distinct invitation to continue his progress towards cooperation and understanding. Rumours of an invitation to London to confer with the viceroy and secretary of state for India were rife but nothing has come of it all. In response to a question in the House of Commons it was said that no statement could be made on the subject of a possible invitation to Messrs Das and Gandhi on the occasion of Lord Reading's visit to London. So far the new orientation of Mr Das has reaped nothing but fair words and smooth phrases which may have tended towards the creation of a "better atmosphere", but which have certainly not resulted in any concrete gain for the cause of swaraj.

One thing seems certain that obstructionist tactics so heroically proclaimed at the time the Swaraj Party adopted the slogan of council-entry are being gradually abandoned and that futile hopes are being nurtured of an "understanding" between the spokesmen of Indian nationalism and tory arbiters of British imperialism for some kind of superficial concession which will save the faces of Indian leaders and concede in some sort their utter failure to meet the new policy of force and repression by resistance and courage. New leaders must be found to continue the fight.

(*Masses*, Vol 1, No 5,  
May 1925)

### 3. C. R. DAS AT FARIDPUR

The Bengal provincial conference held its annual session at Faridpur in the first week of May. Its last session were held last year at Sirajgunj where, on the initiative of Mr C. R. Das, the famous resolution was adopted paying homage to the intention, if not to the act, of the Bengal terrorist, Gopinath Saha, who had shot down an Englishman in the streets of Calcutta. The Gopinath Saha resolution almost created history. It pro-

voked in Mahatma Gandhi a fresh and a more violent exhibition of his pathological susceptibility to the all-sufficing beatitudes of nonviolence. The more go-ahead and advanced elements in the swarajist rank and file found ranged against them the opportunist and the pacifist-reformist elements. While the watchdogs of British imperialism in India chose to see in the swarajist canonisation of the martyred Gopinath a sign that the Swaraj Party was being led by Mr C. R. Das towards the long-dreaded revolutionary orientation which the chronic chaos of the political situation had made inevitable.

But today it is a long cry from Sirajgunj to Faridpur. Many events have taken place in the intervening period. Not the least of these is the definite emergence of the Swaraj Party—now authoritatively representing the Congress by mandate—as a reformist party of mere parliamentary opposition (not even of obstruction, as the swarajist election manifesto of 1923 had proclaimed). And indeed if the Faridpur conference did not in so many words recant the mild militancy of the Sirajgunj programme, it did something else, equally, if not more, self-stultifying—it registered and approved—so far as Bengal is concerned—the final evolution of swarajism into reformism, hardly distinguishable from liberalism and moderatism which had been branded as the most heinous political adharma and driven into the farthest background of national life not so very long ago in the heyday of noncooperation.

As a matter of fact the swarajists assembled at Faridpur—not happily quite unannounced, as the unreported 'dissensions of the subjects committee show—agreed with the president of the conference, Mr C. R. Das, that "provided that some real responsibility is transferred to the people, there is no reason why we should not cooperate with the government". The principal resolution adopted by the conference further said that "...this conference calls upon the Indian nation to realise its swaraj within the British commonwealth". It is no wonder that Bepin Chandra Pal of the Bengalee, who for months past has been writing egregious nonsense about "revolutionary criminalism" and the dangers of "isolated sovereign independence", welcomed the turn events took at Faridpur with a rhapsody only tempered by incoherence.

In the presidential address Deshbandhu C. R. Das applied

himself to defining once again "the national ideal of freedom" which remains so persistently beyond the reach of the Indian people that an attempt, even at this hour of the day, to envisage more clearly what it means and to define more rigorously the method of attaining it must be welcome. It is more than ordinarily welcome and interesting when it is Mr C. R. Das who attempts this excursion into the domain of intellectual clarity. For, is it not he who has been inconsistent with remarkable consistency and has undergone sensational metamorphoses since the Gaya congress when he ushered in—with the assistance of Motilal Nehru—the Swaraj Party on the political arena with slogans of battle against British imperialism—slogans which breathed the ardour of revolt such as India knew and felt in the fateful years of 1921-22? One remembers that in those days Mr C. R. Das used to speak feelingly of "swaraj for the 98 per cent". He seemed to abhor that ideal of freedom which would merely substitute indigenous for foreign exploitation of the masses; as he put it in his own chromatic phraseology, his idea of swaraj was not the replacing of the "white bureaucracy" by a "brown bureaucracy". Since then Mr Das has been caught into the meshes of a pseudoparliamentarism which can only lead, by a curious irony, precisely to the regime of the very "brown bureaucracy" before which his imagination had recoiled. His political conduct and that of his party under his direction have given the lie to these early formulas. The masses of India do not now figure—even as a figure of speech—in the discourses of Mr Das; it would almost seem that so far as the political purposes of Mr Das and his party are concerned they—the masses—have ceased to exist.

Now that his apostasy from his earlier faith has turned full cycle, how does Mr Das define swaraj and the method of attaining it?

It is in the context of the circumstances that immediately preceded the Faridpur conference that one can understand the full significance of the definitions which Mr Das attempted in his presidential address. The circumstances can very briefly be resumed here: Considering the country to be on the eve of a revolutionary orientation, the government of Lytton in Calcutta launched a policy of exceptionally severe repression by the promulgation of the infamous "Bengal ordinance". The

policy has materialised in the imprisonment without trial and for indefinite periods of militant workers in the nationalist cause in Bengal; it was designed by the British authorities to operate as a separating wedge between the most compact political party, namely that of the swarajists and the revolutionaries who were gaining ground on all sides ideologically and concretely in the propitious atmosphere of the moral and material collapse of nonviolence of Gandhism on the one hand and the futile parliamentarism of the swarajists on the other. As designed, the tactics succeeded; the swarajists were manoeuvred into a position of isolation from the revolutionaries, they were cut off from liaison and contact with the combatant effectives. A bolder generalship would have met the situation by a more intimate liaison and a more permanent contact, leading to an eventual open juncture of all the available forces on a chosen terrain from which to deliver battle to the enemy. As it is, a blunder as monumental as the retreat of Bardoli was committed again. At Bardoli a position rich with immense offensive possibilities of carrying the battle into the enemy's ground was given up in favour of a catastrophic retreat, the demoralising consequences of which are not yet exhausted. Today in the situation created by the Bengal ordinance—the situation of a tremendous attack by the enemy to divide our forces—a powerful defensive position—whence alone the attack could be successfully contained—has been abdicated. In the active battle-front, across which the forces of Indian liberation face the forces of British domination, there is no such moment as can be called a truce or an armistice, as there is no single position which can be considered stationary. If we are not attacking, we shall be attacked; if we are not advancing, we shall retreat. The history of our struggle from Bardoli to Faridpur is an illustration. Our great offensive failed at Bardoli; ever since we have been retreating—giving up position after position—under the pressure of the enemy offensive. Today the enemy has carried the battle into our own ground and seems effectively to have divided our forces by the latest tactics of the "Bengal ordinance".

But, as said above, the position can at no moment be stationary. For the British tacticians, the question now remains of rounding up the unhappy swarajists. The Faridpur conference met in the midst of the rounding-up process. If for the

phrase "honourable terms of cooperation", which figured in the recent manifestos of Mr Das, one simply substitutes the phrase "honourable terms of surrender", one will see the sort of pre-occupation with which the swarajist leaders met at Faridpur. They were indeed in the miserable position of an outmanoeuvred general-staff met together on the morrow of a crushing defeat to think out a formula of surrender which the victorious enemy might accept. But the swarajist rout has been so complete that it would be more accurate to say that Mr Das and his lieutenants met at Faridpur, not indeed to choose between this and that formula, between dominion status and deferred swaraj, but really to hide behind a camouflage of seeming discussion of terms their abject readiness to accept whatever terms or lack of terms Reading and Birkenhead may consider in their current joint consultation in London as applicable to the situation.

As preparatory to Faridpur there had even been an exchange of "gestures" between the secretary of state for India in London and Mr C. R. Das. After obscure negotiations with the local representatives of British imperialism in Calcutta; Mr Das hoisted the white flag in the shape of a preliminary manifesto. As a sign of his return to grace, he rebuked the revolutionaries for their misguided zeal; he asked timidly for a "change of heart" on the part of the government; and finally he offered swarajist cooperation to the government in the formation of a "stable ministry" in Bengal, if the present legislative council were dissolved for fresh elections, if the political prisoners were released or brought to trial, and if some tentative steps were taken towards the granting of provincial autonomy. There never was a more ignominious climb-down. But it was not considered enough by Birkenhead. The swarajist cup of humiliation had yet to be drained to the dregs. In his answering "gesture" from London, Birkenhead asked Das to go further, and as an earnest of his desire for cooperation, to help the government in the stamping out of what is called "revolutionary crime". The native qualities of Mr Das's imagination must have helped at this moment to conjure up a vision of himself as the prime minister of an autonomous Bengal, going about the country to stamp out in the name of patriotism the nefarious band of youthful disturbers of law and order. He was however

seriously thinking of going to London to "close up" with the offer of Birkenhead; for, did he not broadcast the news of his impending visit to Europe for reasons of health? The fates have however been very unkind to Mr Das; instead of recovering his health in the antichamber of Lord Birkenhead in London, Mr Das is now, according to reports, bound for the more prosaic health centre Ootacamund.

It was fresh from these negotiations that Mr Das went to Fardpur to deliver his presidential address. It was then no wonder that he spoke of mass civil disobedience only as an after-thought and at the tail-end of his speech, almost with an apologetic air. It is no wonder too that, after a long circumlocution, he defined the "national ideal of freedom" as swaraj, and he defined swaraj as something which could be and should be achieved within the British empire. It would seem that Mr Das had no love for "mere independence", indeed independence "gives us no positive ideal" and "may be the negation of swaraj". On the other hand "the empire idea gives us a vivid sense of advantages"; and "dominion status today", Mr Das has discovered, "is in no sense servitude". The idea of the British empire is "specially attractive" to Mr Das because of "its deep spiritual significance". The man who must have specially appreciated this part of Mr Das's speech must have been Mahatma Gandhi who was present in the conference and perhaps remembered that in far-off heroic days he had called the British empire "satanic". However so overwhelmed was Mr Das by the spiritual and other significances of "the great commonwealth of nations called the British empire" that he hurriedly conceived it as being synonymous with "the federation of the human race". After that Mr Das triumphantly proved that "it is for the good of India... that India should strive for freedom within the commonwealth".

Traitors before this have bartered away the birthright of peoples for a mess of pottage; in this sordid commerce, as practised by C. R. Das with Mahatma Gandhi holding up the candle, there is something overwhelmingly and indescribably odious. Traitors they are; and their treason is against the interests of the vast impoverished and exploited millions of India. These millions, stricken with chronic misery, are at last conscious of their strength and are ready to break the fetters that bind them

to the "British commonwealth"; they are impatient to venture forth by their main strength into the larger life of freedom and abundance. And here is a Mahatma, corrupt to the core with a false ideology, stepping into the breach to hold them back in the name of the worn-out shibboleth of non-violence; and there a Deshbandhu comes in the guise of a false friend, preparing to sell in the open market-place the birth-right of the millions for the interests of the few hundred-thousands who constitute his little class.

The class-origin of C. R. Das's treason becomes evident when we come to that part of his speech where he urges his reasons against "the addiction to revolutionary methods". We reserve for our next number an examination of these reasons. We must however say here that the "revolutionary methods" against which C. R. Das inveighs are not exactly ours. We also notice that in speaking of the revolutionaries, he not only confuses them with terrorists, but also practises his professional trick as a lawyer of stating a case badly, the better to condemn it. From reading his address, one would imagine that revolution is exhaustively defined by deprecatory references to the use of the bomb and the revolver and that the latest thing in revolutions is the taking of the Bastille in 1789. Evidently the Indian revolution, when it takes place, would be a surprise to Mr C. R. Das, because its means would be other than the bomb and the revolver and its achievements more than the storming of the Alipur Jail.

(Masses, Vol 1, No 6,  
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## INDIAN POLITICS: AN ANALYSIS

CLEMENS DUTT

PRESENT TENDENCIES IN INDIA

The death of C. R. Das, the leader of the Swaraj Party, came at a critical moment. For India at the present time stands before a new stage of political development. That is

the explanation of the present spectacle of confusion in Indian politics, a confusion not merely obvious to outsiders but apparent and alarming to the central figures on the Indian political stage. During the crowded experience of the postwar years many changes have taken place which have served to demonstrate clearly the nature of the class forces involved in the play of Indian politics and which have culminated in the present position of complete bankruptcy of Indian nationalist politics on existing lines. The collapse of the noncooperation movement as led by Gandhi marked the end of one stage in development. The crisis which is now threatening the Swaraj Party which took the place of Gandhi's movement as the representative movement of Indian nationalism marks the end of another stage. Much to the surprise of the swarajists themselves the logical conclusion of their policy is showing itself to be a relapse to liberal politics. It has been apparent to all that C. R. Das was recently angling for a possible reconciliation with the British government. His policy was supported by other rightwing leaders such as Mr Motilal Nehru and there were even faint indications of response from Great Britain in so far as a modification of the Indian constitutional reform scheme was the chief point at issue. Meanwhile the rank and file of the Indian nationalist movement stand aghast before the collapse; while new forces, in particular, the slowly-growing force of organised labour and the more rapidly-growing appreciation of its importance, indicate that an entirely new situation is gradually emerging.

#### THE ECONOMIC BASIS

To obtain a proper appreciation of the various factors which have determined the present situation, it is essential to examine the economic basis of Indian politics. In the light of such knowledge the development which has caused such confusion and uncertainty in the minds of the chief protagonists stands clearly explained and it is found indeed that the whole history of the last 5 years including Gandhism and its inevitable collapse and "swarajism" and its relapse into moderatism could all have been predicted with astonishing accuracy. In spite of the vaunted "spirituality" of India and on the mysticism which is

supposed to be such a feature of the Indian mind, the effects of economic factors seem to be more clearly demonstrable in India than even in materialistic Western Europe. The reason for this is perhaps to be found in the very evident economic exploitation that has always been the background of British domination in India and in the consequent tug-of-war of various British and Indian commercial interests, which is so largely responsible for the reality of Indian politics.

These various interests can be roughly characterised as follows. On the British side we have a practically united front in defence of British interests. The prime concern of British administration in India and of British capitalist politicians at home is naturally the protection of the interests of British imperialist capitalism in India. Sir Michael O'Dwyer in an illuminating phrase recently spoke of "our duty to our imperial position, to our kinsfolk in India and to a thousand millions of British capital invested in India". Behind British rule therefore stands British capitalism and the concern of the one is the interest of the other. That phrase of "a thousand millions of British capital invested in India" is worth noting also by those Indians whose conception of British capitalism and its relations to India seems to be limited to the competition of the Lancashire textile industry. In the present stage foreign capitalist investment is playing a far more important part than is the dumping of foreign manufactures or draining of raw materials.

On the Indian side two great bulwarks of British domination have always been, firstly, the passive acquiescence of the vast mass of 300 million ignorant exploited workers and peasants; and secondly, the active support of the few million titled-tyrants and mercenaries constituting the Indian landlord class and aristocracy with its hangers-on. Besides these, a number of new forces have gradually come into prominence and it is of course just this continuous development of new social classes and the antagonism resulting therefrom that renders any hope of establishing a state of equilibrium in the tug-of-war of interests such as to allow of the perpetuation of the status quo.

First in class consciousness, if not ultimate importance, is the rising Indian capitalist class. They are already strong

enough to challenge successfully the British claim to exclusive exploitation of India but they fear their own workers too much to dare risk and attempt to throw off the British connections. Next comes the ever increasing educated middle class, professionals, intelligentsia and petit-bourgeoisie with much less to lose and much more to gain from a thoroughgoing policy of India for the Indians. As a social force, however, they count for little, for taken as a whole they are weak, incapable of self-reliance, hesitant and timid. The crucial factor of the present-day is the emergence of a class-conscious working class. The capitalist transformation of India creates out of the masses a modern homogeneous proletariat in defiance of the traditional limits and differences of castes, sects and races. They form the advance guard of a movement which will eventually put an end to the dumb passivity of the peasant millions. More and more of the latter, whose poverty and exploitation continually increases, are day by day thrown into the ranks of the wage labourers.

#### THE POLITICAL PARTIES

As yet the working class is practically unorganised. The various political parties, however, reflect pretty accurately the economic needs of the other sections we have mentioned. Thus the liberal or moderate party voices the interests of the landlords and more substantial Indian capitalists. At one time they dominated the National Congress, but they were soon swamped by the swelling influx of the petit-bourgeoisie. During the rapid period of development during the war and immediately after, British capitalism was ready to make big sacrifices to secure the loyalty of the moderates. As a matter of fact, very little was required; the promise of assistance for the development of Indian industry and the Montagu-Chelmsford scheme of constitutional reform sufficing for the purpose. The reforms drew off the big bourgeoisie from the National Congress which was left in the hands largely of the petit-bourgeoisie. The latter under the leadership of Gandhi with his banner of non-violent noncooperation attempted to put themselves at the head of the growing movement of the masses but as in so many analogous cases in European history they succeeded, of

course, only in betraying it. The final collapse of Gandhism took place in February 1922 when the Bardoli conference renounced mass civil disobedience but for two years afterwards Gandhi's followers conducted a losing struggle for the old negative programme. The revolutionary crisis however was passed, direct action was out of the question and the active nationalists could less and less content themselves with preaching Gandhi's version of Tolstoyanism. The important bourgeois sections that had not been rallied to the moderate banner by the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms were determined to use the councils as a new field of activity. They formed the Swaraj Party in December 1922 in defiance of the Gandhist majority in the National Congress but in the course of the next two years, they obtained the ascendancy also within the Congress itself.

#### THE SWARAJ PARTY

The history of the Swaraj Party is an illuminating chapter in the history of Indian nationalism. It illustrates the development of a peaceful, constitutional opposition, an ordinary "Redmondite" nationalist party from a bellicose party which entered the councils with the sole intention to obstruct, to wreck and to destroy. In this transformation, the Swaraj Party has shown itself true to the character of its leadership and the nature of the electorate it serves. It is definitely a bourgeois-nationalist party and its prominent figures are practically all connected with capitalist and landlord interests. The electorate constitutes a small fraction of relatively well-to-do elements numbering hardly 2 per cent of the population and in enlisting their support, a task which the swarajists found more difficult than they expected, little attention could be spared for the desires and needs of the remaining 98 per cent.

The Swaraj Party was formed with a view to the elections held at the end of 1923. Just in the nick of time, they received the benediction of the National Congress at a special session of the latter. Naturally their first programme was a radical one, thunderous in its demand for responsible government and declaring in the actual words of the text, for "uniform, continuous and persistent obstruction within the councils with

a view to making the government through the councils impossible". Except in the Central Provinces, however, they did not obtain the majority and this simple objective had to be abandoned. Their first step was to bargain for the support of a section of the liberals. By the terms of this bargain, the 43 swarajists in the central legislative assembly received the support of some 24 liberals on condition that obstruction should only be resorted to if there was no response from the government after a reasonable time to a resolution demanding the reform of the constitutional machinery. This demand was moved and carried in the legislative assembly in February 1924 by 76 votes to 48. There was of course no response and obstruction was at last entered on by refusal of supplies, the throwing out of the budget. The rejected measures were of course all restored by the use of the viceroy's power of certification. Even this obstruction however proved too unconstitutional for the liberal "independents", who had entered into coalition with the swarajists. This year, when the time for the annual display of obstruction came round, the independents discovered that it was not logical to refuse supplies when the vote was rendered powerless by the viceroy's prerogative unless it was backed up by recommending to the people not to pay taxation. Accordingly this year the independents refused to vote with the swarajists and the finance bill was passed.

The renouncement of the original swarajist policy of obstruction is naively explained in an official statement of the party issued in May 1924. It states: "Our position is really not so much one of 'obstruction' in the parliamentary sense, as that of resistance to the obstruction placed in the path of swaraj by the bureaucratic government."

A transparent cloak for the concession that they returned to the paths of ordinary constitutional opposition.

A further change of policy also took place of considerable interest as laying bare in the clearest possible way the class character of the Swaraj Party. Originally the party was pledged not to accept office, to serve on committees or to move resolutions and introduce bills. This was an unnecessary limitation for a constitutional party representing capitalist interests. Thus we find that the manifesto abovementioned declares that the swaraj policy "must in future be more and more effectively

directed to the varying needs and problems of our national life". Accordingly the programme was modified so as to allow of the introduction of "resolutions, measures, and bills necessary for the healthy growth of our national life".<sup>1</sup>

No clearer proof is required that by national interests the Swaraj Party understands Indian capitalist interests than to note that the use made of the above decision was for swarajists to serve on the government's steel protection committee and to vote for the steel protection bill, granting an enormous bounty to the Tata steel interests without a thought for the conditions of the exploited steel workers.

#### THE BRITISH LABOUR GOVERNMENT

It should not be forgotten that some measure of responsibility for stultification of the Swaraj Party lies at the door of the British labour government. For years India has been ground down in suffering under the political oppression of tory imperialism. Some Indian nationalists were disposed to see signs for hope in the coming of a labour government. But an ominous presage was the letter of Mr MacDonal rightly interpreted as a threat, the meaning of which was to be made clear in the 9-month regime that followed. The British labour government changed nothing at all. It was made clear that there was to be no advance towards self-government, no freedom for the thousands of political prisoners, no introduction of political liberty, no relaxation of military autocracy, no amelioration of the lot of millions of workers and peasants. It demonstrated the complete identification of the British labour government with the interests of British capitalism. Further the labour government was responsible for the addition of two measures of the first importance to the long list of crimes against Indian political freedom. The first was the Kanpur Communist Trial (in which a pioneer group of Indian communists were convicted on a charge of "waging war against the king" for the crime principally of receiving political letters from Mr M. N. Roy) which struck a blow at the very possibility of working-class political

1. Here ends the first part published in *Masses* No 7, July 1925—and continued in the next issue—G.A.

organisation. The second was the Bengal ordinance, the virtual introduction of martial law in Bengal, which served as an excuse for the arrest and imprisonment without trial of the left-wing leaders of the Swaraj Party. The effect was twofold. It finally killed the possibility for "civil disobedience" and in so far assisted the swarajists. But it made the Swaraj Party itself helpless before the ascendancy of the right wing. The swarajists were driven into the hands of the capitalists and into the paths of barren constitutionalism. Nor has there been any real change since the fall of the labour government in the British labour's attitude. In spite of the hopeless bankruptcy of the sham constitution Lord Olivier still maintains that there was "no *prima facie* case" for the labour government even going so far as to set up a royal commission. Col Wedgwood in a letter to Lajpat Rai speaks as if the swarajists had betrayed the Labour Party rather than the reverse. He notes that there is in the Labour Party: "A growing feeling of being completely out of touch with the swarajists and out of sympathy. 'Just another set of self-seeking bosses' is the feeling prevalent."

The Indian nationalist press could perhaps be pardoned for hunting that the same description might be more aptly applied to their experience of the British labour government.

#### THE REVERSION TO LIBERALISM

At the present time the Swaraj Party clearly stands before a crisis. Its relapse into moderatism means that there is now very little difference between swarajists and liberals. This is evident in such accession to the party as Mr P. C. Ray, secretary of the Calcutta National Liberal League, who recently declared: "I don't now find any material difference between me and Mr C. R. Das in regard to our political objective or in the methods of obtaining them." The fact also that such a typical loyalist as the Rt Hon'ble Srinivas Sastri could say that he "was very near the end" of his membership of the Liberal Party and was "inclined to be a swarajist" throws a clear light on the present tendency of the party. The only point in reality that separates the two parties is that of obstruction on principle. If the swarajists were only to give that up, the last distinction would be gone and the liberals and swarajists together could cooperate with the British administration in secur-

ing law and order, promoting measures for "the healthy growth of the national life". But for such docility, the swarajist leaders would expect some tangible rewards, notably positions of great responsibility that can be given by the present puppet councils. It is to this bargain with the government that the swarajist leadership is now tending. Mr C. R. Das in particular was advancing step by step in this direction and at the end it seemed that very little would suffice for a complete "reconciliation" between him and the British government. To show his readiness he had not merely emphasised the ideal of dominion status as the whole goal of nationalist movement, he had not only taken every opportunity to denounce violence and all forms of revolutionary activity, but he went out of his way to utter panegyrics on the British empire (that "free alliance" and "great commonwealth of nations" as he called it at the recent Faridpur conference), and to declare how little was wanting for him to undertake to begin to cooperate with the government. Speaking in the Bengal legislative council in March 1925, on the motion for the rejection of the ministers' salaries, he declared: "I am not opposed to cooperation but cooperation is not possible under this system. Honest cooperation cannot be offered now because the system does not allow it. It can be done when you have improved your system, when there is real give and take, when there is anxiety on the part of government to relieve the distress of the people, to recognise the rights of Indians."

Again at the Bengal provincial nationalist congress, he declared with regard to the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms: "If there was a chance for self-government under it, I would cooperate. If some real responsibility were transferred, I would cooperate."

And he affirmed his confidence that he could see "signs of a real change of heart" on the part of the government.

It is clear that the major aim of the Swaraj Party, under the leadership of Das, became to strike a bargain with the government for the reform of the reforms. Up to now the government has only gone so far as to appoint a committee, the Muddiman committee, which has issued two reports, a majority and a minority report, both of which provide a clear exposure of the unworkability of the act. Lord Birkenhead encouraged Mr Das with the proposal that he should cooperate in putting

down revolutionary violence and it is currently reported that the question of a possible modification of the reform schemes is one of the objects for which the viceroy has made his present visit to Great Britain. This is about the sum total of the signs of government's "change of heart" and there is no reason to believe that the government will see any need to hurry to secure another support for its rule in India by rallying the swarajist leaders. But a bargain of some sort is inevitable whether in the near future or not and with it the reversion of the swarajists into the liberals of 1914 will be complete. But there will be this difference. The rank and file of the Swaraj Party and the mass of active nationalists up and down the country who have passed through many experiences since 1914 will no longer follow their leaders blindly. The rank and file are already alienated. They are not interested in the parliamentary manoeuvring. Hence a widespread feeling that the nationalist movement is at a standstill which is not confined to the masses. The *Bombay Chronicle* speaks of a "general paralysis and stagnation"; Lala Lajpat Rai of "chaos and confusion". "The political situation is anything but hopeful and encouraging", he declares. "The people are sunk in depression. Everything—principles, practices, parties and politics—seem to be in a state of disintegration and dissolution."

There is therefore an admitted failure of the nationalist movement on all sides. Gandhi's political influence has been destroyed. He has admitted the swarajists "defeated and humbled him". His yarn-spinning franchise for membership of the National Congress is arousing a final revolt. At the recent Maharashtra nationalist conference, he was openly requested to retire from politics. But the swarajists are not much better off. A pact between them and the government would be an open betrayal of the nationalist movement and a split in the Swaraj Party would be inevitable. It would be the old story over again, British imperialism winning the allegiance of a new set of leaders only to find that they have not the masses behind them.

#### THE LABOUR PARTY

So far the masses, the millions of illiterate workers and peasants, have been entirely left out of account. True, it has

become fashionable to recognise their existence. Even Mr Das was once insistent on the need of 'swaraj for the masses and not for the classes'. But events have proved that this is nothing but a verbal trick and means nothing in practice. Several of the swarajist leaders however have been genuinely dismayed at the absorption of the party in bourgeois interest to the utter neglect of interests of even ordinary labour welfare questions. With experience of contact with British Labour Party leaders in their minds, the result has been the sudden new formation of an Indian Labour Party. But there are many features connected with this Labour Party, which give rise to serious doubts as to its future as an organised movement. In the first place, it appears to consist only of leaders and they, all members of the legislative assembly. Further these leaders are mostly personalities already well known as bourgeois nationalists whose personal rivalries with the nationalist leaders and general standing in the nationalist movement are unaffected by the fact that they appear as leaders of a Labour Party. Starting under these handicaps the party is almost poisoned at birth and could almost be written down as a mere parliamentary manoeuvre. But the need for attention to labour economic questions, not to speak of political organisation of labour, is so urgent that it would be strange if the new party could give no help in this direction. But whether it can ever become a party of the masses and a political organisation too is another question. With the present bankruptcy of the nationalist politics, the stage is set for a regrouping. Supposing however the Swaraj Party splits as indicated above, will the rank and file go into the new Labour Party? It is extremely unlikely. The new Labour Party cannot take the place of a nationalist organisation. It must be concluded that its function must be limited to the representation of the needs of the youthful trade-union organisation. Even so, if it is to become a live organisation representing working class interests, its impetus must come from below and not from above. If it limits itself to solid work in assisting trade-union organisation, the political careerists will leave it, the real trade unionists will come to the fore and it could develop into a body of real value and significance.

It must be remembered that labour organisation is still at a very elementary stage. In many respects labour conditions are

notoriously the worst in the world. Labour legislation is as backward or more so than in China or Japan. Legislation legalising the existence of the trade unions is still only pending. Not unnaturally therefore trade unions are only weakly developed and the Indian Trade Union Congress has negligible power. Labour is disgracefully unrepresented in the legislative assembly and provincial councils, while existing labour leaders are only too often merely bourgeois philanthropists or even middle-class careerists bent on obtaining public notice or government recognition.

#### WANTED—A WORKERS' AND PEASANTS' PARTY

Any Indian party which would avoid the fiasco of present nationalist politics must base itself on a social economic programme for remedying the present disabilities of Indian labour. Demands for adequate labour legislation, including the establishment of the rights of trade organisations must find a prominent place in its programme. It must concentrate its attention on housing, education and social conditions of the people. It must fight the rent oppression of the landlords and work for the improvement of peasant conditions. So far these things have been dropped, because they have been against the interests of the Indian capitalists and landlords. It will be remembered that even Lajpat Rai, now heading the Labour Party, spoke more of the danger of hurting Indian industries than of helping Indian labour. The nationalist leaders have refused to advance any such programme as we have indicated because they will not countenance an invasion of their positions as capitalists or landlords. Mr Das called for help from public funds for the Bengal peasants. But he must have known that such help would only be swallowed up by the rack-renting landlords and that the real help must come from a revision of the present oppressive rights of the landlords. A popular party based on a real social-economic programme would lose the present nationalist leaders, but it would have the masses behind it. In championing the cause of the masses, it would inevitably be thrown into the struggle against imperialism. British imperialism is the biggest exploiter of the Indian workers and peasants, and the native capitalists and landlords look upon it as their ally in exploitation. Such

a party therefore must be more than a labour welfare party; it must be a mass nationalist party. It is along these lines alone, the lines of a workers' and peasants' party, that a new nationalist party can rally the whole country to its support and achieve national independence.

(*Worker*, Vol 1, No 7.

July 1925 &

No 8, August 1925)

### 3. Working-Class Struggles of 1925

The first document "A Labour Party for India" is not a direct comment on the fifth session of the AITUC held in Bombay on 14-16 February 1925, but on an important decision taken or announced at that session. The session was presided over by D. R. Thengdi—a trade union leader of Nagpur who was later associated with the foundation of the workers' and peasants' party in Bombay and was subsequently one of the Meerut Conspiracy Case accused. In the printed copy of the presidential address of Thengdi, which was a prosecution exhibit in the Meerut Case, there is no mention of the proposal to form a labour party; but he puts forward general workers' demands such as 8-hour day, right to work, housing, old age pension, adult suffrage, and the abolition of landlordism and land to the tiller.

Mrs Sarojini Naidu, who was then associated with the leadership of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee, also attended the session and is reported to have made a speech in which she said: "Labour's aloofness from politics was fatal." Among the resolutions passed at the session was one on the demand for 8-hour day and another directing the general secretary to forward to the government of India the views of the AITUC on the trade union registration bill which was before the legislative assembly then. By another resolution, the session recommended the name of N. M. Joshi as a workers' delegate and those of Thengdi, M. N. Dande and Dewan Chamanlal<sup>1</sup>

advisers to the ILO conference, which was meeting at Geneva that year.<sup>1</sup>

The AITUC session, it appears, passed no resolution on the organisation of a labour party for India though, as stated in the article, one was launched and formally announced during that session. The April issue of the *Masses* contains a newsitem "A Labour Party—Real or Sham?" which refers to a preliminary conference to form a labour party for India and to the declarations made by nationalist leaders there. This newsitem states that on 2 February 1925, i.e. some two weeks before the AITUC session, some nationalist leaders connected with trade unions formed a subcommittee to prepare to launch a labour party for India. The president of the subcommittee was Lala Lajpat Rai. "He is a fine specimen of a nationalist but a most shaky labourist." The newsitem said further: "He not only indulges in the usual rightwing trape, asking them not to talk in loose terms about communism, internationalism, etc." but he said: "Labour work was difficult especially as inopportune pressing of the labour point of view may only help foreign capitalists." The report further stated that the proposal to affiliate the Labour Party in India with "labour research department"<sup>2</sup> in England was dropped. The concluding comment is: "It is greatly to be feared that a very weak reproduction of the rightwing British labourism is being planned by a handful of moderate persons and nothing like Indian unity will be achieved by it."

The launching of the Labour Party is recorded in the *Indian Annual Register* (1925, Vol. I) but that excellent compilation of the record of nonofficial activities and documents of Indian national life does not contain any document of the Labour Party. Probably none was issued. The chief among the sponsors of the new venture were militant nationalists like Lala Lajpat Rai and Dewan Chamanlal from the Punjab, Devaki Prasad Sinha from Bihar, N. M. Joshi from Bombay—long asso-

1. Home-Pol. F 112, 1925. Letter from Montgomerie to Crerar, dated 2-7 March 1925.

2. The LRD was initiated by the Independent Labour Party to supply statistical material about wages and conditions of workers to trade unions and labour organisations scientifically worked up from the class-struggle and class-exploitation point of view. Communists were working in it.

ciated with welfare work among the textile workers of Bombay on behalf of the Servants of India Society and was connected with the AITUC from the very beginning, and Sir Sankaran Nair from Madras. "Labour Party" was a discredited name in India because when in 1924 the Labour Party came to power in Great Britain its performance both on the question of India's demand for national independence and on the question of the wages and working conditions of Indian labour was hardly different from that of the imperialist tory party of Britain.

In naming this party Labour Party its sponsors were obviously wishing to demarcate themselves from the above trend. That is why in their preliminary speeches they emphasised moderation and caution, wanted to eschew class struggle and, above all, wanted that organised labour should not jeopardise the interests and the profit greed of the Indian capitalists.

The Masses in this article correctly forewarned that the new Labour Party, with such reformist inhibitions, would be still-born. But at the same time it emphasised the need in India of "a real party of the working class and peasantry".

1925 was rocked by two long-drawn strikes—the great North-West Railway workers' strike and the Bombay textile workers' strike (September-December, 1925). They form a transition between the spontaneous strike-wave of 1918-24 and the consciously-led strike upsurge of 1927-29 out of which the militant red-flag trade-union movement is born. These strikes of 1925 were transitional in the sense that though essentially spontaneous outbursts, they at the same time had some of the features of the consciously-led strike upsurge of 1927-29. For instance, in the North-West Railway strike the red flag appears for the first time in a big way. About the bonus strike of the Bombay textile workers, the official *India* in 1924-25 wrote that no trade unions were involved.<sup>3</sup> But in the case of both the NWR strike and the Bombay textile strike, the AIRF and the AITUC leaders intervened for negotiations though at a later stage. Then again, it is on record that the Bombay strike was probably the first to receive financial assistance of the international trade-union movement.

3. *Ibid*, p. 418.

About the NWR strike, the *Labour Monthly* of July 1925 wrote as follows: "It was the biggest strike in India since the general strike of Bombay mill workers in the spring of 1924—the biggest railway strike ever in India." The immediate occasion for the strike was the dismissal of a prominent member of the North-West Railwaymen's Union from the Rawalpindi railway shed. Men of the shed went on strike in protest. The management retaliated by declaring a lockout on 28 March. And 1200 men were locked out. When all efforts at negotiation on the part of the union were of no use, it gave a call for a general strike on 10 April. To begin with the strike was partial but by the end of April, 20,000 men were on strike which continued throughout May and June. The total number involved according to the Railway Union was 40,000 out of a total staff of 100,000. The main demands of the strikers were: (1) recognition of the union, (2) an all-round 25 per cent wage rise, (3) abolition of arbitrary funds and punishments, (4) investigation of other grievances. The NWR workers had a union formed several years ago by Mr Miller—a former railway guard. Miller was associated with one Mr Hall and M. A. Khan.<sup>4</sup>

The management sought to break the strike by forming a rival union and by using the apathy of European and Anglo-Indian guards and station staff against the strike. The Railway Union issued an appeal to them to give one day's pay for the relief of the strikers and support the same. The members of the Association of the European and Anglo-Indian Railway Employees who were better paid and had other privileges rejected the call. On 1 June the AIRF appealed to the chief commissioner of the railways for the appointment of a conciliation board. The AITUC executive committee also made a similar effort and appointed C. F. Andrews to mediate. But the railway authorities remained adamant and by the end of June the strike was called off. It was a defeat for the workers but they were able to hold out for two months, without help from any quarter, because of the militancy and unity of the striking workers and also because a large number of them went away to their village homes.

This account of the strike, based on the contemporary report in the *Labour Monthly* of July 1925, tallies with that

4. See "Who's Who" in D. Petre's *Communism in India, 1924-27*.

given in two articles in the *Masses* of the period. The *Masses* pinpointed another historic fact: "In processions of strikers in Lahore and Karachi, there were paraded flags dyed red with blood of the self-inflicted wounds of the strike leaders: 'With the object of demonstrating their determination to hold out for their demands and to go to extreme lengths if they are not conceded.'"

The great Bombay textile workers' strike of 1925 began in a small way by mid-September and became total by the end of the month. It continued for two and a half months up to December and ended only when the government of India announced its decision to abolish the cotton excise duty, which was to be operative from January 1926. Over one and a half lakh of workers went on strike and it was by far the most serious that textile industry had experienced up to then. It resulted in the loss of 1,10,00,000 mandays. The highest figure of mandays lost in the last four years 1921-24 was in 1924 and that was 87,30,918 for the whole of India, the major part of it was due to the big Bombay mills' strike of 1924.

We have already described the strike struggle of 1924. The workers at that time rose in struggle against a wage-cut which the millowners sought to enforce. As a result of two months of bitter struggle waged by the workers, the wage-cut was reduced. After a year, the millowners again resumed their offensive. On 31 March 1925, the Dinshaw Petit Mill was closed by the owners. Later some other mills were also closed. Towards the end of July, the Millowners' Association met to consider "the crisis situation". In this meeting they decided to cut the dear food allowance from 70 and 80 per cent to 50 and 60 per cent or close the mills from 1 September 1925. This amounted to a reduction in the total average wage of the mill workers by 11.5 per cent. The preliminary closure of some mills by the owners was to show to the public that the mill industry was in crisis, their profits were reduced and they had no alternative but to close or reduce the wages.

Thus the Bombay millowners' threat to close the mills precipitated a crisis. On 10 August, representatives of the AITUC waited upon the governor and asked for a small commission to investigate into "the plight of the Indian cotton industry".

They also demanded that the governor should ask the mill-owners to suspend the wage-cut notices meanwhile. On 24 August, the millowners' deputation met the governor and demanded: (1) abolition of the cotton excise duty of 3.5 per cent ad valorem on the cotton textiles produced in India and (2) measures to prevent the dumping of Japanese goods in India. The cotton excise duty was imposed by the British government to counterbalance the import duty which Lancashire imports into India had to pay, and thus to help the British imports of cotton textiles. Actually it helped the Japanese imports also. The nationalist movement had been agitating against the cotton excise duty and the legislative assembly with its swarajist-independent majority had passed a resolution for such an abolition in March 1925. On 8 September, 37 members of the legislative assembly appealed to the Bombay millowners to arrange a conference of mediation with the workers' representatives "to arrest the disastrous consequences" of the proposed wage-cut. On 12 September, the millowners wired to Pandit Motilal Nehru that there was no alternative but a cut in wages. The strike began on 17-18 September when 56,000 were already on strike.<sup>5</sup> By the end of September 1,25,000 men were out. Thousands of millworkers left for their village homes. Hardly three mills were nominally working.<sup>6</sup> On 5 October the municipal corporation appealed to the government to suspend the cotton excise duty.

The alleged "depression in the textile industry" was trotted out by the owners as a "pretext of continually reducing the starvation wages of the mill-hands". The total profit made by the Bombay millowners in the three years 1918-20 was Rs 36.41 crore, while the total invested capital in the industry was Rs 20 crore. The present yearly loss of the entire industry was Rs 28 crore. Even this "loss", as pointed out by N. M. Joshi in his speech in the legislative assembly in September, was fictitious as the "managing agents" of the textile companies were taking huge agency commissions which were unaffected by the profit and loss shown in the balance-sheets.

5. Home-Pol. F 52/v, 1925.

6. *India in 1925-26*, p. 58.

As against this, what was the position as far as the wages of the workers were concerned?

These facts bring out the character of the strike. The capitalists had launched an offensive to maintain their high profits by depressing the already low living standard of the workers, who were fighting a defensive battle.

The Bombay strike ended with the withdrawal of the notices of reduction of wages on 1 December, which followed government's announcement of 30 November that the cotton excise duty would be suspended. The strike which lasted 10 weeks was the cause of intense sufferings to the 150,000 workers engaged in it.

It is the extraordinary solidarity and determination of the workers which finally compelled the labour leaders to take steps to render concrete assistance to the striking workers. Thus, towards the end of October, a committee of assistance was organised representing the chief labour organisations in Bombay with N. M. Joshi at the head for providing relief to the destitute and starving workers. Thus hundreds were enabled to leave Bombay for their villages, while of those who remained behind, some of the most needy could be provided some assistance. Towards the end of the strike, over 5000 strikers in Bombay were being given grain allowance daily from 19 different distributing centres. The total expenditure per day was Rs 800. Donations came almost entirely from the trade-union movement in western countries, in the Soviet Union and the labour leaders organising relief got a small amount from the nationalist or Congress sources.

This is perhaps the first big strike in India which received token fraternal assistance from the trade unions in the west. "A message of greetings" was sent by the central committee of the Textile Workers' Union of the USSR to the textile workers on strike in India and a donation to the strike fund. The break-down of the amounts received from different sources is £1000 each from the Soviet Textile Workers' Union and the Workers' International Relief (RILU), a total of £1200 from the British Trades Union Congress and the European labour unions affiliated to the IFTU (Amsterdam). The amount raised from Indian sources was equivalent to £100.

When the Bombay textile strike was on, Mahatma Gandhi made two speeches, one in Jamshedpur some time in August 1925 and another in Ahmedabad a few days later. In these speeches he did not comment on the Bombay strike but, addressing the workers in the two working-class centres, he dealt with the question of capital and labour. The Masses commented on these speeches in two articles. In "Mahatma and Capitalism", the Masses (October 1925) shows the contradictions in the views of Gandhiji on industrialisation and on the relations between capital and labour. On a moral and ethical plane he condemned industrialisation, but as a practical bourgeois politician he supported national industrialisation on capitalist lines. His views on capital and labour are summed up in his famous slogan "Capitalists are trustees!", which shows that he stands on the side of the capitalists. He is quite frank about it.

It appears that when he visited Jamshedpur in 1925, the Tatas got the Mahatma to bless the company union formed by them. The agreement was that the Tatas will recognise the union if the membership subscription is deducted from the wages by the company which was also to control the union fund. Gandhiji asked the workers to accept this "generous conciliation". The meeting took place on 9 August 1925.<sup>7</sup> Gandhiji was replying to the address presented to him on behalf of the Labour Association. Twenty thousand attended the meeting. As stated above, advantage was taken of Gandhiji's presence in Jamshedpur to bring to a conclusion the negotiations and friction that were going on between the Jamshedpur Labour Association and the Tata company. The issue at stake was the demand of the workers for the recognition of the Labour Association and their right to collective bargaining. The rejection of this just demand by the management had led to a general strike in September 1922, which however was suppressed by the company by victimising the leaders of the Labour Association, including G. Sethi, the secretary. In 1924 nationalist and labour leaders intervened in the dispute and formed a conciliation committee which included C. R. Das, C. F. Andrews,

7. Searchlight of 14 August 1925 quoted in *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 28, p. 55.

Dewan Chamanlal and N. M. Joshi. The association itself was affiliated to the AITUC. However it was only in August 1925 that the company agreed to recognise the union, when it was reorganised with C. F. Andrews as president.<sup>8</sup>

The *Searchlight* reported that Gandhiji announced this agreement in the public meeting:

“Mr [R D] Tata agreed that the Labour Association with officers duly elected would be recognised by the company, and that the company would be prepared to collect subscriptions of the members of the Labour Association from their pay” and further that “Mr G. Seth...and Mr Thomas...would be offered reemployment at the company’s works”.

In the course of his speech Gandhiji expressed the hope that the Labour Association would devote its energies for the welfare of the labourers and that the concessions made would end the cause of friction between the company and tens and thousands of workers.

Actually the Tatas had made no concessions. They had forced a surrender. They agreed to recognise the Labour Association only when it was reorganised according to their dictates. This was before the Trade Union Act (1926) came into operation. This gave the workers the right of association and trade unions organised according to this act became legal entities. But the act did not oblige the owners to recognise the unions thus formed by the workers in their factories and mills. This had to be won in the bitterly fought mass strike struggles of 1927-28 in the textile, jute and other industries. But the Mahatma sought to dissuade the workers from just this path of resistance.

In September 1925 the Ahmedabad textile workers like their Bombay fellow workers were faced with a wage-cut. But the advice which Gandhiji gave to the assembled 20,000 workers of Ahmedabad on 6 September was amazing: “He (Gandhiji) was glad that the millhands recognised the difficult situation of the millowners at the present moment. He said ‘I am glad you recognise this. You cannot ask for more pay when they are going through serious difficulties. A time might

8. *Indian Trade Union Movement*, Chamanlal Revri, pp. 108-9.

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8. *Indian Trade Union Movement*, Chamanlal Revri, pp. 108-9.

come when loyal labourers may have to come forward with an offer to serve without any wages in order that mills may not have to be closed down.'"<sup>9</sup>

It is necessary to record here that in Gandhiji's conception of swaraj, the relations of feudal as well as capitalist class exploitation and class domination were to remain. Only they were to be "purified" by the concept of "trusteeship". For instance, in his presidential address at Kathiawar political conference in Bhavnagar on 8 January 1925, he said :

"I have, therefore, often said that the liberation of British India spells the liberation of the states as well. When the auspicious day of the freedom of British India arrives, the relation of ruler and ruled in the Indian states will not cease but will be purified. Swaraj as conceived by me does not mean the end of kingship. Nor does it mean end of capital. Accumulated capital means ruling power. I am for the establishment of right relations between capital and labour, etc. I do not wish the supremacy of the one over the other. I do not think that there is any natural antagonism between them. The rich and the poor will always be with us. But their mutual relations will be subject to constant change. France is a republic, but there are all classes of men in France."<sup>10</sup>

The advice given by Mr Satyamurty, the swarajist leader, to the textile workers in Bombay on the same day, 6 September 1925, was exactly the opposite.

Commenting on his speech, the Masses said that he took this stand because he remained true to C. R. Das's slogan "Swaraj for the 98 per cent".

9. *Collected Works*, Vol 28, p. 167  
1925 and *Bombay Chronicle*, 8  
10. *Collected* Vol 7

See also *Young India*, 10 September  
1925.

## I. A LABOUR PARTY FOR INDIA

Responding slowly to the pressure of events and the spirit of our age, a Labour Party has been launched in India and formally announced during the session recently concluded of the All India Trade Union Congress. Its sponsors are Messrs Lajpat Rai, Sir Sankaran Nair, Chamanlal, D. P. Sinha, N. M. Joshi and other well-known leaders of the Indian labour world. Reference has been made in a previous issue to the nature of the declarations made by these leaders in the preliminary conferences which led to the formation of the Labour Party. The prevailing spirit was that of opportunistic nationalism seeking a new outlet and a new instrument to further its own purposes, rather than the creation of a truly working-class party which would reflect the genuine interests and aspirations of the Indian proletariat. Moderatism and excessive caution marked the speeches of these pioneers of an Indian Labour Party. The sentiment was expressed by one of them that "an Indian capitalist was preferable to a British one", and it was further declared by another that the newly-formed party should not "overemphasise the labour point of view". It is considered undesirable by these new-found champions of the Indian working class to introduce into India the doctrine of the class struggle, or to create such a party which will in any way jeopardise the interests and ambitions of Indian capitalism.

In such hands the new Labour Party will not go very far. The birth of a political organisation of the Indian workers is a still-birth, and no amount of theoretical schemes on paper will succeed in breathing the breath of life into this defunct embryo.

Yet the growth of an Indian Labour Party is an historical necessity, already long overdue. The position of India as the seventh on the list of industrialised countries of the world and her aggregate total of 20,000,000 proletarian workers prove that some organisation to express the economic and political

workers must come into being sooner or later. The deviation of Indian nationalism have so far hindered rather than helped the growth of labour conceptions and labour ideals, for the masses have obediently followed those self-appointed leaders, who have been drawn invariably from the educated middle class, and who have been linked closely in sympathy and interest with the Indian bourgeoisie. It is the Indian bourgeoisie, in which has been the backbone of the of British capitalism, which has been the backbone of the Indian nationalist movement, furnishing both its ideological direction and the means of war in the shape of necessary funds. It is but natural therefore that the programme of Indian nationalism was subordinated to the needs and interests of this class.

But the noncooperation movement succeeded, in one thing — in diffusing the idea of emancipation with all its manifold implications among the masses of the Indian people. An expression was provided for an unrest which had hitherto remained dormant and selfconscious among the ignorant and illiterate workers and peasants. Strikes and hartals, adopted as the instruments of further potential strength and the power of action on a large scale. The national dumb millions of India confined to a small sect of the rich that lies in coordinated action to the revolutionary student groups of the masses.

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The inevitable slump and disintegration of the militant nationalist movement since the abandonment of mass action in favour of the "constructive programme" and council-entry has become patent to all. The consequent policy of repression launched upon by the Indian government, with the consent of the labour government in Britain as well as of its successor the present tory administration, has become bolder and more far-reaching. The incipient reversion to terrorism on the part of the young revolutionaries, who had held themselves in check during the course of the noncooperation campaign, was anticipated by the government with unerring prescience, and measures taken to check it before it could get under way. The employment of agents-provocateurs to push the rash and inexperienced youth of the country to acts of terrorism, previously unmasked to the police by their vile hirelings, the publication of false documents inciting the country to violence, and the organisation of "inspired" parties of terrorism, led by government spies, are but a few of the methods employed by the most unscrupulous and cunning police-system in existence. These provocative measures were taken and broadcasted throughout the world in order to justify the policy of unrestricted repression launched upon since the collapse of the noncooperation movement.

The only reply to such methods is the reorganisation of the national forces along new lines, conforming to the interests and desires of the Indian masses. But so strong is the spirit of class-interest, and so selfish the leadership of the movement,

needs of this vast mass of workers must come into being sooner or later. The deviations of Indian nationalism have so far hindered rather than helped the growth of labour conceptions and labour ideals, for the masses have obediently followed those self-appointed leaders, who have been drawn invariably from the educated middle class, and who have been linked closely in sympathy and interest with the Indian bourgeoisie. It is the Indian bourgeoisie, in conflict with the inordinate monopoly of British capitalism, which has been the backbone of the Indian nationalist movement, furnishing both its ideological direction and the sinews of war in the shape of necessary funds. It is but natural therefore that the programme of Indian nationalism was subordinated to the needs and interests of this class.

But the noncooperation movement succeeded, in one thing—in diffusing the idea of emancipation with all its manifold implications among the masses of the Indian people. An expression was provided for an unrest which had hitherto remained dormant and unselfconscious among the ignorant and illiterate workers and peasants. Strikes and 'hartals,' adopted as the instruments of the noncooperation campaign, taught the dumb millions of India their potential strength and the power that lies in coordinated action on a large scale. The nationalist movement, from being confined to a small sect of the rich and propertied class, or to the revolutionary student groups of different provinces, became for the first time a nationwide movement of the toiling masses.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to lull to sleep those forces, once awakened to consciousness. But it is very easy to mislead those forces by false programmes and tactics. Mr Gandhi, once the undisputed leader of one of the mightiest movements known to history, abdicated ignominiously before the battle array of British imperialism and the prospects of meeting force with force, and now heads a small faction which seeks to lead the Indian movement along the channels of social reform, on a programme of the boycott of foreign cloth, Hindu-Muslim man unity, the production and use of homespun khaddar, and the abolition of untouchability and the drunk-evil. The sole message which he gives to the demoralised and dispirited country is that of the charkha (spinning-wheel).

Mr C. R. Das, head of the swaraj faction which succeeded to the control of the Indian National Congress at Belgaum in December 1924, has given another slogan to the nation, that of council-entry "for the purpose of mending or ending" the present system of government. He has led his own particular faction back to the folds of safe and sane constitutionalism, away from the stormy seas of mass action envisaged in the original programme of noncooperation. Both he and Mr Gandhi have repudiated all forms of direct action, including civil disobedience and nonpayment of taxes, and thus they have cut off from themselves automatically the very backbone of the great mass movement that shook the country from 1919 to 1922—the Indian workers and peasants.

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The only reply to such methods is the reorganisation of the national forces along new lines, conforming to the interests and desires of the Indian masses. But so strong is the spirit of class-interest, and so selfish the leadership of the movement,

that the prospects of freedom are deliberately jeopardised by a policy of compromise and concession. The Indian bourgeoisie is selling the birth-right of the Indian people for a mess of pottage, secured to themselves by bargaining with the imperial overlord. Both the Indian upper classes and the British ruler have combined to prevent and stifle the growth of a united national movement based upon a programme of social and economic liberation for the toiling masses, along with political freedom. The movement is divided, disintegrated and moribund for lack of that programme and those tactics which correspond to the crying needs of the overwhelming majority of the population—the abolition of landlordism, reduction of taxation, an eight-hour day and minimum wage for labour, protective social legislation, the nationalisation of public utilities and profit-sharing in large industries. Instead of rallying the nation to the cry of political independence and the establishment of a democratic federated republic based upon universal suffrage, Mr Das and the swarajists join with Mr Gandhi and his followers in repudiating national independence, and accepting "home rule within the empire".

Meanwhile the economic condition of the Indian working class grows steadily worse as wages are forced down and hours of work increased to enable Indian capitalism to compete with its British rival. The deadly competition of Indian sweated labour with British labour in the metropolis is becoming a real fact; wages in Great Britain are being forced down to the level of "coolie-labour" in the colonies, before the constant threat of unemployment and "the dole". Hence the new cry in British labour circles for the organisation of Indian labour to protect itself and its British confrere from extermination between the upper and nether millstones—British and Indian capitalism. Hence the new alliance between the British Labour Party and certain leaders of Indian nationalism who pretend to see farther than the rest.

But what is needed in India is a real party of the working class and peasantry, which will reflect the vital needs and interests of their class, irrespective of the complex and often conflicting interest of Indian nationalism, and of certain privileged sections of the British labour bureaucracy. Until such a party is formed, under a leadership which unhesitatingly places itself

in the service of the Indian proletariat, upon a programme which corresponds with their fundamental needs and desires, no mass movement is possible in India, and without a mass movement no success can be achieved in the realisation of the demands put forward.

The new Labour Party under its present leadership will be a pale reflection of British labour at its most reactionary and conservative stage, strongly adulterated by the questionable influences of Indian bourgeois nationalism. It may be the herald of the dawn; it cannot usher in the splendid day of the birth of Indian labour to its heritage of power as an organised and revolutionary factor in Indian national life. What is needed is a *People's Party*, embracing the vast masses of India, led by men and women with a revolutionary vision, who can bring the Indian movement for social, economic and political emancipation into line with the world movement for social revolution.

(*Masses*, Vol I, No 5,  
May 1925)

## 2. MAHATMA AND CAPITALISM

"To the Editors, *Masses of India*

Dear Comrades,

There is a belief abroad that Gandhi is against capitalism. This misplaced belief is obviously the result of his fanatic tirades against the "satanic civilisation of the west". The antics of his economic theories must have also contributed to this belief. You need not be told how groundless this belief is. But a few passages quoted from the speech he made recently to the workers of Jamshedpur (Tata Iron Works) will show up Gandhi in his true character to those who still have illusions that the Mahatma is a sort of Indian Saint Simon.

Before quoting the words dropping from the lips of the Mahatma let me relate a quaint incident. The Mahatma came to Jamshedpur to deliver a sermon to the discontented workers

at the request of the Christian gentleman Mr Andrews who has made it his life-job to kill the Indian workers by kindness. The Mahatma came to Jamshedpur as the guest of the Tatas. He was received at the station by all the heads of the Tata Works and taken to their official residence in motor car. The capitalists are more sophisticated than our average nationalists. They know that even mahatmas are not above bribery if the bribe is given in a clever way.

Well, the mass meetings of the workers opened with an address to the Mahatma. The address was printed on a piece of silk khaddar (handmade silk cloth) which was contained in a casket made of steel plates manufactured in the Tata Iron Works! In receiving the curious object the Mahatma glorified the Tata Iron & Steel Works as a great national monument and congratulated the founder and owners of the concern for their great services to the country. The Tata Iron & Steel Works are the greatest industrial centre in India employing well over 40 thousand workers. If the "satanic industrialism of the west" has made any inroads upon the sacred bosom of mother India Jamshedpur is the spot where the ugliest wound is to be sought. But the khaddar fanaticism of the Mahatma does not prevent him from hailing this monster of capitalist industrialism as the national monument. Can you beat this hypocrisy?

Now the Mahatma's views on capitalism. I will quote the choice passages from his Jamshedpur speech. The readers will draw their own conclusions. Gandhi said among other things :

"Throughout my public service of 35 years, though I have been obliged to put myself up against capital, capitalists have in the end regarded me as their true friend. And in all humility I may say that I have come here also as a friend of the capitalist—a friend of the Tatas...

"I hope that relations between this great house and labourers who work under its care will be of the friendliest character... My ideal is that capital and labour should supplement and should help each other. They 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 for the welfare of the labouring masses under them.

"We are sick of the feud raging between man and man and it is our ambition to win mankind from the use of brute force and convert it to that of soul force for the settlement of differences and disputes. It is to this end that he (Mr Andrews) invited me to come here. If you have chosen him (Mr Andrews) as your president you may be sure that he will help you in such a way as to avoid all conflict with the Tatas. . .

"I do hope you 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.

"I have sought the friendship of the capitalist in order that they may earn money only for the benefit of the poor. Today capital is afraid of labour and labour is afraid of capital, I want to obviate that state of things."

In conclusion it can be noted that the "generous reconciliation" is recognition of the union by the Tatas who will control the union fund because henceforth union fees will be deducted from the wages by the company! Fine "reconciliation"!

Calcutta

2 September 1925.

(*Masses*, Vol 1, No 10,  
October 1925)

### 3. POINT OF VIEW OF THE MASSES

(*Gandhi's Speech to Ahmedabad Textile Workers*)

His quixotic quarrel with the "satanic government" having ended in a miserable fiasco, the Mahatma has found a new mission. His new mission is to teach the workers the virtue of submission and obedience to capitalism. The Mahatma obviously believes that capitalism (which is the basis of the "satanic western civilisation" he denounces so fanatically) will cease to be satanic when it will flourish on the sacred soil of India.



are the trustees for the welfare of the labouring masses under them.

"We are sick of the feud raging between man and man and it is our ambition to win mankind from the use of brute force and convert it to that of soul force for the settlement of differences and disputes. It is to this end that he (Mr Andrews) invited me to come here. If you have chosen him (Mr Andrews) as your president you may be sure that he will help you in such a way as to avoid all conflict with the Tatas. . .

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at the request of the Christian gentleman Mr Andrews who has made it his life-job to kill the Indian workers by kindness. The Mahatma came to Jamshedpur as the guest of the Tatas. He was received at the station by all the heads of the Tata Works and taken to their official residence in motor car. The capitalists are more sophisticated than our average nationalists. They know that even mahatmas are not above bribery if the bribe is given in a clever way.

Well, the mass meetings of the workers opened with an address to the Mahatma. The address was printed on a piece of silk khaddar (handmade silk cloth) which was contained in a casket made of steel plates manufactured in the Tata Iron Works! In receiving the curious object the Mahatma glorified the Tata Iron & Steel Works as a great national monument and congratulated the founder and owners of the concern for their great services to the country. The Tata Iron & Steel Works are the greatest industrial centre in India employing well over 40 thousand workers. If the "satanic industrialism of the west" has made any inroads upon the sacred bosom of mother India Jamshedpur is the spot where the ugliest wound is to be sought. But the khaddar fanaticism of the Mahatma does not prevent him from hailing this monster of capitalist industrialism as the national monument. Can you beat this hypocrisy?

Now the Mahatma's views on capitalism. I will quote the choice passages from his Jamshedpur speech. The readers will draw their own conclusions. Gandhi said among other things :

"Throughout my public service of 35 years, though I have been obliged to put myself up against capital, capitalists have in the end regarded me as their true friend. And in all humility I may say that I have come here also as a friend of the capitalist—a friend of the Tatas...

"I hope that relations between this great house and labourers who work under its care will be of the friendliest character.. My ideal is that capital and labour should supplement and should help each other. They 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 for the welfare of the labouring masses under them.

"We are sick of the feud raging between man and man and it is our ambition to win mankind from the use of brute force and convert it to that of soul force for the settlement of differences and disputes. It is to this end that he (Mr Andrews) invited me to come here. If you have chosen him (Mr Andrews) as your president you may be sure that he will help you in such a way as to avoid all conflict with the Tatas. .

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In the last number of the *Masses* we published a letter containing the most characteristic passages from the speech made by the Mahatma at Jamshedpur. A few days later, in addressing the workers of Ahmedabad, he gave expression to the same sentiments. At Jamshedpur, it was as the honoured guest of the Tatas that the Mahatma sermonised the labourers on the virtues of slavery and on the spiritual effects of semistarvation. At Ahmedabad, he appeared in a public meeting of the Labour Union in the distinguishing company of a number of mill-owners and mill agents. To the assembled 20,000 workers thus spake the Mahatma :

"You could not redress one of your grievances by finding fault or by giving threats to the mill agents. You can achieve a great deal by being courteous and truthful... You should know that there is trade depression and that the mills have to fight with the government. At such a time it is your duty not to expect high wages. Faithful servants serve their masters even without pay. There is much mutual distrust. The burden of dispelling this distrust lies on your shoulders."

It should be noted that this oration was delivered on 6 September, that is, just at the moment when 150,000 employees of the Bombay mills were on the point of being thrown out to starve in the streets because of their refusal to accept a wage-cut which was universally condemned. The Mahatma championed the capitalist right to exploit labour not only on moral ground (as all the representatives and servants of god on earth have done in all ages), but on economic ground as well. He mentioned trade depression. What happened to his sense of justice? Why did he not advise the capitalists to disgorge a part of what they had accumulated in the boom period to tide over the period of depression? During the years 1919-22 the millowners made a profit of 200 per cent. But after all the Mahatma cannot outgrow the traditions of his caste (on the authority of *Bhagvat Gita*). His business instinct is very strong. He believes in the right of capital to accumulate; and since accumulation of capital is not possible except as the result of unpaid labour, the Mahatma, on the authority of the scriptures, lays down: "Faithful servants must serve their masters even without pay."

The Mahatma rebuked the workers for complaining against

the treatment they received from the mill managers. He told them that it was easy to point out the defects of the mill agents. If the workers gave up their own defects, they could impress the mill agents and others. In other words, what are these "defects" of the workers? Their inability to be exploited with a smiling face; their incapacity to ignore the elementary requirements of the flesh; and their desire to live and be treated not like animals. These defects are human. If all the workers of Ahmedabad were mahatmas, they would tour in luxurious motor cars as honoured guests of the millionaires.

The Mahatma had not a word to say against the usurers who exact 200 to 400 per cent interest from the workers, who are driven into debt by the insufficiency of their wages. Touching the indebtedness of the workers, the Mahatma expressed his surprise at the inability of the workers to live on their wages. The average income of the mill workers is less than 20 rupees per month per family of 4!

The Mahatma seems to be determined to atone for the sins he committed against god capital in the debauchery of words that he indulged in during the last few years. Indian capitalists can never find a better spokesman. The new mission of Mahatma exposes Gandhism in its true character.

(*Masses*, Vol I, No 11,  
November 1925)

#### 4. POINT OF VIEW

(*Satyamurty and Bombay Mill Workers' Demand*)

##### A DIFFERENT VIEW

When the Mahatma has been sermonising the workers of Jamshedpur and Ahmedabad on the virtues of slavery, quite a different view on the relations between capital and labour was expressed by Mr Satyamurty. On his return from Europe, the latter addressed a big demonstration of the Bombay mill workers on 6 September, i.e. on the same day the Mahatma held

forth in Ahmedabad. Among other things, Mr Satyamurty said the following .

“The cause of the Bombay mill workers is right and just. You are fighting against the capitalists who have already exploited you and will do so in future. It is not proper to make such unjust, arbitrary and cruel inroads on the means of subsistence of the millworkers I want to tell you that the world is now for the labourers and peasants and the masses, and not for the capitalists. The action of the millowners is high-handed and unjust I am surprised at the moderation of the workers’ demand and more surprised at the callousness and the heartlessness of those who, in the face of their (workers’) starvation, urge them to remain silent. The proposed wage-cut will bring the workers down to the abyss of starvation. The millowners have made huge profit”

Mr Satyamurty concluded his speech by calling upon the leaders of Bombay to espouse the cause of the workers and help them in their hour of need. We hope there will be a sincere response to Mr Satyamurty’s appeal. The issue raised by him is more fundamental than that of sympathy for the Bombay workers. It is the issue of the conflict between capital and labour. In Jamshedpur and Ahmedabad (not to mention the innumerable previous occasions), Mr Gandhi frankly advocated the interests of the capitalist class and advised the workers to suffer and starve so that the capitalist interests could be advanced. The entire nationalist movement is represented by the Mahatma when he adumbrates this theory of class domination. The nation is identified with the small minority composed of the landowners, capitalists and rich intellectuals. The masses are called upon to suffer and sacrifice for the national freedom and national prosperity but are not given any consideration in the scheme of this freedom and prosperity.

As a member of the Swaraj Party, Mr Satyamurty recollected some words of the late Mr Das, which have been clean forgotten by his colleagues and followers. On the eve of the Gaya congress, Mr Das declared to a startled country that swaraj should be for the 98 per cent and not for the 2 per cent of the people. Not only the Swaraj Party but Mr Das himself forgot all about their revolutionary-democratic slogan. We wish Mr Satyamurty success in his attempt to make the Swaraj

Party the party of the 98 per cent who, as he said in his Bombay speech, "are the workers and peasants". The slogan—"Swaraj for the 98 per cent"—alone can inspire a powerful nationalist movement. When everyone else abandoned the slogan of popular freedom, we alone have kept it before the country all this time in the face of enormous difficulty. But Mr Satya-murty and those other members of the Swaraj Party who are partisans of the popular freedom envisaged by this slogan should not have illusion. A single party cannot defend the interests of the 98 per cent and the 2 per cent at the same time. Their interests are antagonistic. The Swaraj Party forsook the 98 per cent because of its eagerness to win the good graces of the 2 per cent, it has gone so far in that road that it will be impossible to bring it back. The party of the exploited and expropriated 98 per cent still remains to be organised.

(*Masses*, Vol 1, No 11,  
November 1925)

## 4. Communist Party of India and the Communist International in 1925

### INTRODUCTION

The documents produced in this section enable us to see how the activities of the Communist Party of India were reflected in the discussions and documents of the Comintern in 1925. All the documents except one are articles from the *Masses of India*. The main events reflected in them either directly or indirectly are as follows: (1) death of Sun Yat-sen on 11 March 1925; (2) enlarged meeting of the executive committee of the Comintern (18 March to 14 April 1925); a conference called by the Comintern at Amsterdam to discuss the colonial question and India (July 1925); (3) the republication for the first time of Marx's articles on India.

The article on the death of Sun Yat-sen in the *Masses* gives details of his biography. A more detailed biographical sketch appeared in the *Labour Monthly*.<sup>1</sup> The estimate of Sun Yat-sen quoted in this article is from an article by G. Zinoviev, entitled "The Death of Sun Yat-sen" which had appeared in the *Inprecor* slightly before.<sup>2</sup>

As has been stated there, Dr Sun "reorganised the old Kuomintang Party, this time as a mass party of workers and

1. Vol 7, No 5, May 1925—the article is by Tang Chun Che.

2. Vol 5, No 21, 26 March 1925.

peasants, inspired by communist ideas". It was natural that the central committee of the Kuomintang sent a telegram to the Soviet government on the demise of Sun Yat-sen in which it said:

"The national revolutionary movement has lost today by the death of Sun Yat-sen its leader who devoted his whole life to the creation of a party which could free the masses of the people of China from capitalist and imperialist exploitation.

"We are convinced that you as true disciple of Lenin will fight along with us, the heirs of Sun Yat-sen."

This telegram was replied to by J. Stalin on behalf of the central committee of the Communist Party of Russia and by G. Zinoviev in the name of the Communist International.<sup>3</sup> The telegram signed by Stalin was dated 14 March.

The ECCI issued a manifesto on the death of Sun Yat-sen and also an appeal to the people of China.

The *Masses* article concludes by giving the full text of the message addressed by Sun Yat-sen to the central executive committee of the Soviet Union. The article also quotes from his last message to the Kuomintang Party. This was not just his message but his "last will and testament" to the Kuomintang as he himself described it.

In the early and late twenties, the freedom movement of China and India proceeded side by side and the former had a considerable impact on the Indian freedom movement and its left wing.

The death of Sun Yat-sen was deeply mourned and widely commented upon despite the attempt at suppression and distortion of the news by British imperialist newsagencies. *Modern Review* (April 1925) in its "Notes" wrote that Reuter killed Sun Yat-sen three times. The latest news of his death is without any information regarding his funeral or tribute to his memory. It refers of Sun Yat-sen as "the maker of modern China, who overthrew the Manchu dynasty, set up a republic and did not covet the office of the president of the Chinese Republic". *Modern Review* (May 1925) quotes from *Japan Weekly Chronicle* which referred to Sun as one of Asia's three

3. *Ibid*, Vol 5, No 20, 19 March 1925.

moderns together with Gandhi in India and Mustafa Kemal in Turkey. It said, he united the Chinese revolutionaries the world over into a band of revolutionaries for the final struggle in China.

The Indian National Congress sent a representative to China in 1929, when the remains of the great leader were deposited in the mausoleum in Peking after a five-day-long national mourning from 28 May to 1 June 1929. This is recorded in an article in *Modern Review*: "Striking among the many guests was Rev Ottama, the special representative of the Indian National Congress, accompanied by two members of the Indian Revolutionary Party in China. They were the only representatives of the oppressed peoples dressed in the simplest and the cheapest clothing—they were the representatives of the struggling Indian people." The same report says further, "Outstanding among those who stepped forward to pay their last respects to one of the greatest leaders of Asia's struggle for emancipation were three simply clad Indians, two Sikhs and one representing the Indian National Congress"<sup>4</sup>

The next two documents, Stalin on the Indian situation (May 1925) and W. Robson's report on the Indian situation at the conference at Amsterdam to discuss revolutionary work in the colonies (July 1925) have to be taken together and in the context of the fifth enlarged plenum of the ECCI held between 21 March and 6 April 1925 which, among other things, heard reports on India and took some decisions on the work of the communists there. The main document adopted by this plenum which met in Moscow was the "Theses on the Bolshevisation of the Parties of the Communist International". A printed English report of this session was brought out by the CPGB<sup>5</sup> and it reached India and was seized by the police from the Meerut Case accused when they were arrested in March 1929. The booklet is now among the Meerut Case papers in the National Archives of India.

At the session, 34 sections were represented and there were present 104 comrades with a right to vote and 140 with voice but no vote; in all 244 comrades were present. M. N. Roy was

4. *Modern Review*, August 1929, p. 169—article by Agnes Smedley.

5. *Bolshevising the Communist International*, CPGB, 1925.

elected to the presidium. On the presidium from the Soviet Union were Zinoviev, Bukharin and Stalin; from France, Semard and Cachin; from Czechoslovakia, Hakon and Zapotocky; from Great Britain, Gallacher; from Ireland, Jim Larkin; and personally Clara Zetkin. Roy was also on the colonial commission and was its secretary.

It is on record that Roy made a brief speech in the course of discussion on the report of the ECCI. This was when one day the students of the Communist University for the Peoples of the East came to meet the ECCI. Roy was in the chair and he made the following speech on behalf of the presidium:

"Comrades, I certainly express the sentiment of all of you and of the masses of the revolutionary proletariat that you represent, in welcoming the students of the Eastern University before this session of the enlarged executive of the Communist International. In this session the significance of the revolutionary movement of the oppressed peoples in relation to the struggle against capitalism has been very clearly drawn out. The ability to form organic relations with this very powerful ally in the colonial and semicolonial countries will to a great extent determine the development of the world revolution in the future. Judging from the spirit and understanding with which the communist parties of the world are approaching this great problem of international significance, we can well hope that the revolutionary forces will be organised under the banner of the Communist International. Together they will go to the final battle against world imperialism and complete the task which has been started by our Russian comrades under the leadership of Lenin and Marx."<sup>6</sup>

The *Outline History of the Communist International* points out that at this enlarged session of the ECCI "the national question was dealt with in detail... The proposals outlined in the course of the discussion on this question at the Fifth Congress were concretised." "The plenum discussed the experience of communists' participation in the national-liberation movement and on 6 April (1925) adopted a resolution evaluating the political situation in India, Indonesia and Egypt and offering to the communists of these countries a number of

6. *Ibid.*, p. 125.



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6. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

recommendations on programmatic and tactical questions.”<sup>7</sup>

The *Outline History* sums up the recommendations of the abovementioned resolution on India in the following words:

“The plenum stated that ‘the hardening repressive policy of British imperialism against communist elements, the labour movement and consistent nationalists, on the one hand, and the contradictions within the national movement, on the other, temporarily weakened the organised resistance of the Indian masses to British imperialism’. Considering this state of affairs to imply neither defeat nor breakdown of the national-liberation movement in the country, but merely a temporary crisis within the existing national parties, the plenum found that ‘one of the most important tasks for our comrades in India at the present time is to work actively towards shaping the national-liberation movement on the basis of a determined struggle for India’s independence’. The communists of India were recommended to continue working in the National Congress Party—the biggest mass national organisation in the country—in order ‘to create a mass national-revolutionary party and an all-India anti-imperialist bloc’, and find a way ‘to make the Indian bourgeoisie wage a more vigorous political struggle and support its every act of resistance to imperialism on the basis of a united anti-imperialist front’. The plenum regarded it as the major task of the Indian communists ‘to work to unite the communist groups and elements into a strong party of the working class—the Communist Party’.”<sup>8</sup>

On the work of the colonial commission the report published by the CPGB says:

“Comrade Dorsey made a very short report on the work of the colonial commission. The commission heard extensive reports from China, Turkey, India, Java, Egypt and the American colonies.

“The commission adopted resolutions on the following colonial countries—India, Java, Egypt and the American colonies. These resolutions were endorsed by the political commission.”<sup>9</sup>

7. *Outline History of CI*, pp. 229-30.

8. *Ibid*, pp. 230-31.

9. *Bolshevizing the CI*, p. 135.

The resolution on India adopted on 6 April 1925 is given thus:

"In India the reports of the delegates show that the movement is now in the process of transition, finding new forms and tactics to correspond with the real basic revolutionary nationalism in India. The old Gandhi movement of nonviolence and noncooperation has collapsed and was followed by the Swaraj Party with its policy of parliamentary obstruction. This party has come to the point of collapse and is now tending to decompose into small centre groups between the big bourgeois parties on the one side and the revolutionary mass movement on the other. The masses of India are discontented with swarajist programme of self-government. They are demanding separation from the British government.

"The commission proposes the following policy for India: 'The commission is of the opinion that it is now necessary for the communists to continue work in the National Congress and in the left wing of the Swaraj Party. All nationalist organisations should be formed into a mass revolutionary party and an all-India anti-imperialist bloc. The slogan of the people's party having for the main points in its programme separation from the empire, a democratic republic, universal suffrage and the abolition of feudalism—slogans put forward and popularised by the Indian communists—is correct.'

"In its resolution, the commission instructs Indian communists to direct their efforts towards securing the leadership over the masses of the peasantry and to facilitate and encourage the organisation and amalgamation of trade unions and to take over the leadership of all their struggles."<sup>10</sup>

The Masses did not report this important fifth plenum of the ECCI nor give the resolution it adopted on India. But the May issue contains under the title "In the International" the brief text of the speech of M. N. Roy which we have quoted above. In the *Inprecor* which gives the reports and resolutions adopted at the enlarged executive in detail, we get Dorsey's short report of the colonial commission together with the resolution on India exactly as reproduced above. Dorsey in his report stated that "the resolutions were only adopted

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 135-36.



question<sup>12</sup>; and (3) consolidation of the communist party on an all-India basis and its taking initiative to develop workers' and peasants' struggles and organisations. The authoritative *Outline History of the Communist International* also sums up the analysis as well as the tasks of the communists given in the resolution on the same lines.

"Stalin on Indian Situation", from the *Masses* of June 1925, reproduced here, is an inaccurate, slightly tendentious summary of the first portion of the second part of Stalin's speech to the students of the University of the Peoples of the East (Moscow) delivered on 18 May 1925. The full speech entitled "Political Tasks of the University of the Peoples of the East" is available in English in the earliest English edition of Stalin's *Leninism*,<sup>13</sup> which is a translation of the Russian original—*Problems of Leninism* (Moscow, 1926). We are giving here for ready reference the full text of the portion from the above which the *Masses* has summarised.

It is necessary to clearly understand how Stalin and Roy concretely visualised the application of the tactic of building the united anti-imperialist front formulated in the "Theses on the Eastern Question" by the Fourth Congress of the CI and the directive of the fifth enlarged plenum of the ECCI to India's national-liberation movement, in the context of a certain measure of development of capitalism in the country and how they visualised the role of the national bourgeoisie in the same. This is all the more necessary because Stalin has given the same analysis of the Indian situation in his report on the fourteenth conference of the CPSU made to party officials in Moscow a little earlier on 9 May 1925; Stalin concludes his analysis with the remark:

"This is the meaning of the resolutions adopted by the enlarged executive of the Comintern concerning the problem of colonies and dependencies."<sup>14</sup>

In the portion of Stalin's speech before the University of the Peoples of the East, this analysis falls into two parts. In the first part Stalin outlines the salient features of the political

12. See Volume One, pp. 546-59.

13. Published by Modern Books, London, 1928, Vol 1, pp. 267-82.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 235.

give the communist cal directions. All the where the commission felt it necessary to the commission and parties a statement of policies and practice." 11 resolutions were adopted unanimously in the fifth ECCI plenum were endorsed by the political commission led by Roy, who was

The resolution on India adopted by the commission but its secret was obviously based on the report presented of the contemporary not only a member of the colonial committee of the Indian communist. The resolution gives an analysis very different than what Indian situation and sets forth the tasks laid by clarity and precisionists, which, though they were not verbatim reproduced in the was appearing in the *Masses*, was marked month later (18 May sion. As stated earlier, this resolution was given a strikingly different analysis of the Indian situation than that given in the ECCI 1925), which was reproduced, appears in detail.

ferent analysis of the Indian situation makes is that the resolution. This part needs to be dealt of transition and there The first point which the ECCI resolution tactics which correspond Indian national movement is in a state of transition in the country. Secondly, is need to find forms of movement appropriate movement had collapsed pond to the real revolutionary situation involving stresses and strains, in 1925, when the noncooperation movement, the resolution points and the Swaraj Party itself was undergoing a part of the National particularly after the death of C. R. Debbarth of a centrist position, out that the Swaraj Party (which was the Liberal Party) on the Congress at the time) was in some sort of a primary movement of the between the big bourgeois parties (i.e. party) on the other. one hand and the emerging revolutionary movement there is mass discontent left wing (including the communist Party).

Thirdly, the resolution states that the transition, corresponding with against the Swaraj (and the Congress) led to the formation of a

The tasks laid down by the resolution, party or as later, work- the analysis of the situation, were: (1) complete independence broad mass revolutionary party (people's party); (2) formation of ers' and peasants' party) fighting for the program already put forward with an antifeudal democratic program; (3) theses of the eastern anti-imperialist bloc (or front), a slogan by the CI at the Fourth Congress in 1925, p. 513.

question<sup>12</sup>; and (3) consolidation of the communist party on an all-India basis and its taking initiative to develop workers' and peasants' struggles and organisations. The authoritative *Outline History of the Communist International* also sums up the analysis as well as the tasks of the communists given in the resolution on the same lines.

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situation in the soviet republics of the east. In the second part he deals with the situation in the colonies and dependencies in the east, which are under the yoke of imperialism and draws deductions from the same. Starting from these deductions, he formulates the immediate tasks of the communists in these lands and sums up the arguments.

As for the first part, the *Masses* summary is inaccurate in parts and deviates from the text as given in *Leninism*. Thus the main thesis that "as the revolutionary movement in these countries grows, the local bourgeoisie begins to be divided, its lower strata becoming revolutionary and its higher strata turning more and more towards a compromise and an entente with the imperialists" (the *Masses* summary) is more accurately stated in the version in *Leninism*—"the national bourgeoisie" of these countries "tends to divide into two sections, a petty-bourgeois section, which is revolutionary, and a great-bourgeois section, which aims at compromise".

In the *Masses* version, there is a tendency to underplay the division of the national bourgeoisie and to present the matter as if the "local bourgeoisie" as such has come to a compromise with imperialism. Thus in formulating a deduction from the thesis, the *Masses* version puts it thus: "(2) The progress of the revolutionary movement in the colonies is only possible along the lines of the isolation of the local bourgeoisie which is coming to an understanding with imperialism, the detachment of the revolutionary middle classes from this bourgeoisie, the hegemony of the proletariat, and the organisation of the advanced elements of the working class in a communist party."

The same para appears in the *Leninism* version as follows:

"(2) If the advent of revolution is to be hastened, if complete independence of capitalistically developed colonies and dependencies is to be achieved, the compromising section of the bourgeoisie must be isolated, its influence upon the revolutionary section of the bourgeoisie must be annulled, the leadership of the proletariat must be ensured, and the advanced elements in the working class must be organised in an independent communist party" (emphasis added).

This tendency to slur over the division of the national bourgeoisie into compromising and revolutionary sections and of lumping the whole class in the camp of imperialism is all the

more striking when it comes to applying the deduction to the case of India itself. Thus in the *Masses* version, we read :

"In British India, the indigenous bourgeoisie has come to an understanding with alien imperialism, fearing a revolution more than hating British imperialism, it has become deliberately counterrevolutionary."

The corresponding passage in *Leninism* is as follows :

"Somewhat different is the situation of affairs in a country like Hindustan. Here we find, not only that the native bourgeoisie is severed into a revolutionary fraction and a compromising or reformist fraction, but, in addition, that on all important issues the reformist fraction has already rallied to the side of imperialism. This section of the native bourgeoisie dreads revolution more than it hates imperialism, it is more concerned about its money bags than about the interests of the fatherland..."

Thus we see that the *Masses* version of Stahn's speech, while emphasising the split in the national bourgeoisie, when it is speaking of the general situation in the colonies and dependencies, underplays it in the para specifically referring to India. Similarly, while both the versions emphasise the fact that a revolutionary bloc of workers and peasants and the middle classes, i.e. the anti-imperialist bloc or front, may take the form of a single party as in the case of Egypt and China, the *Masses* version, in the case of India, states that "here the anti-imperialist front cannot take on the form of a single party, the autonomy of the communist party having acquired an importance of the first order". In the *Leninism* version, the corresponding sentence runs thus : "The (revolutionary anti-imperialist) coalition may (there are alternative possibilities) take the form of a single, united party of workers and peasants voicing a joint programme. But the advanced communist elements will need to insist upon the independence of the communist party in such lands..."

It is not our purpose to read much into the fact that the *Masses* version, as distinct from the *Leninism* version, underplays the split in the national bourgeoisie. Actually Roy was of this view in 1922 already. The main point to note is that the *Masses* version reflects Roy's position in that the main sections of the national bourgeoisie have gone over to imperialism and

his contraposition of the national movement to the newly-emerging revolutionary movement of workers and peasants. Stalin in his reference to India in this report on the 14th conference of the CPSU has made both the points but in more guarded and precise words.

Stalin's report on the 14th conference of the CPSU (9 May 1925) had a section entitled "Immediate Tasks of the Communist Elements in the Colonies and Dependencies", which was a part of the introductory international part of the report. Detailing "new facts in this connection", the report says: "(a) The ever-increasing export of capital from countries of high capitalistic development . . . leads to the growth of capitalism in colonial lands. . . bringing about the disruption of the old forms of social and political relationships, and creating new ones in their stead." After referring to (b) the growth of the proletariat of these lands—at an accelerated speed—and to (c) the growth of the revolutionary movement of workers and the revolutionary crises growing apace there, the report goes on to say .

"(d) At the present moment, the wealthier and more powerful of the native bourgeoisie, which dreads revolution far more than imperialism, favours compromise with the imperialists rather than the liberation of the motherland from the foreign yoke. Thus they betray the country to the advantage of imperialism. (Consider, for instance Hindustan, Egypt, etc, in this connection.)"

"(e) In view of such facts, the rescuing of these lands from the oppression of imperialism can only be accomplished by an attack upon the native bourgeoisie."

The conclusion drawn from this in the report is as follows :

"Until quite recently, the nationalist movement has been looked upon as a combined effort towards freedom, sweeping every element of the community (reactionary bourgeois and revolutionary proletarian alike) into the current of revolt against those who turned their native land into a colony or a vassal state. Now that the nationalist bourgeoisie has split into a revolutionary section and an antirevolutionary section, the picture of the nationalist movement has a different aspect. Side by side with the revolutionary elements in the nationalist

movement, there are now consolidating themselves, within the bourgeoisie, certain conciliatory and reactionary elements which would rather conclude a pact with foreign imperialism than fight for the emancipation of their native land.

"Hence the need for the communist elements in the colonies to combine forces with the revolutionary elements of the bourgeoisie and, above all, with the peasantry in a concerted attack upon imperialism and the bourgeois compromisers in their midst, in order, under the leadership of the proletariat, to march forward to a genuine revolutionary struggle for emancipation from the yoke of imperialism."<sup>15</sup>

Two things here must be noted. Firstly, the compromising section of the national bourgeoisie is not described as having finally gone over but "would rather conclude a pact with imperialism". Hence the tactic implicitly suggested is, in the united anti-imperialist front, the communist elements organising the working class must unite with the peasantry and the revolutionary section of the bourgeoisie and defeat the game of "the bourgeois compromisers in their midst" (emphasis added), i.e. in the national movement, "to march forward to a genuine revolutionary struggle for emancipation from the yoke of imperialism", "under the leadership of the proletariat". This corresponds to the practical tactic suggested in the ECCI resolution on India which we have quoted.

Roy in his report at the Fourth Congress, introducing the theses on the eastern question had expressed the view that "the bourgeoisie was divided into two parts—the upper layer, which was developed industrially and owning big industrial and commercial interests interlinked with imperial capital, found it dangerous for their extension, and therefore went over to the imperialists thus constituting itself a positive obstruction to the revolutionary nationalist movement".<sup>16</sup> The other section, according to Roy, though it is with the movement, betrays it, while according to Stalin it is revolutionary. Further the denial of the possibility of the anti-imperialist front or bloc taking the form of a single party under the plea of defending the autonomy of the communist party is tantamount to the contraposition

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 233-34

16. See Volume One, p. 541.

between the national anti-imperialist movement and the new rising revolutionary movement of workers and peasants led by the communist party. The version in *Leninism* does not contain such a sharp contraposition.

The point we want to make is that the political line in Stalin's speech generally in both the versions and more so in M. N. Roy's version differs somewhat from the line in the resolution of the fifth extended plenum of the ECCI. This resolution, though it talks of a differentiation in the national bourgeoisie, does not make the formulation that a section of the same has gone over and compromised with imperialism. It calls upon the Indian communists to work inside the Indian National Congress and in the left wing of the Swaraj Party. The resolution also made clear distinction on the three tiers or fields of work, viz (1) the building of an anti-imperialist front or bloc; (2) the organisation of a mass revolutionary party—a workers' and peasants' party which on the one hand popularises the platform of national revolution—complete independence, socioeconomic demands of the masses—mainly the abolition of feudal landlordism, land to the tiller and the democratic rights of workers and peasants and on the other hand took up the task of organising the workers and peasants on a class basis; (3) the organisation of the communist party of India—a party of the working class and of scientific socialism, seeking to solve the problems of the struggle and unity of the toiling masses in that light.

As stated in the resolution, at that time (1925) there were three tendencies in the Swaraj Party. On the extreme right stood people who wanted to accept office. When Tambe from CP & Berar accepted to become a nominated member of the governor's executive, Motilal Nehru condemned his action as a violation of party's policy. On the extreme left stood leaders like Subhas Chandra Bose and his colleagues who were in close touch with the revolutionaries in Bengal. In November 1924, more than sixty such leaders with Subhas at their head were arrested under the ordinance. The main leadership of the Swaraj Party headed by Motilal Nehru after the demise of C R. Das took a centrist position. They continued the obstructive tactics in the legislatures, at the centre as well as in the provinces, and muster-

ed majorities in them to reject all repressive and antipeople measures of the imperialist government.

In the latter part of 1925, after C. R. Das's death, there was agreement between Gandhiji and Motilal Nehru and the Swaraj Party was recognised as the parliamentary wing of the National Congress and Gandhiji agreed to support the Swaraj Party in its effort to implement Congress policy on the legislative front.

Thus the ECCI resolution gave a fairly clear analysis of the class situation in the Indian national movement and correctly posed the practical tasks. The resolution, however, while noting the growing differentiation in the ranks of the national bourgeoisie in India, had not given its verdict on the question whether the national bourgeoisie in India or its leadership as a whole or in part had gone counterrevolutionary and compromised with imperialism.

At the same time, the guiding line given by the Fourth Congress of the Comintern in the theses on the eastern question remained: united anti-imperialist front of all the forces of the people fighting for national independence of the country from imperialism. In the measure that the movement embraces the entire Indian people and becomes militant in that measure it prevents any section of the national bourgeoisie going over to imperialism and compromising with it. The question of the role of the national bourgeoisie in the independence struggle was more thoroughly discussed at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in July-August 1928 and the conclusions were incorporated in the theses it adopted, "The Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semicolonies". The theses did not draw the conclusion that the national bourgeoisie as a whole or its leadership or its part had gone counterrevolutionary. It very correctly pointed out: "Independence of the country is to the advantage of the whole colonial people and corresponds also to the interests of the national bourgeoisie." It further pointed out that independent rule, a future of "free" independent capitalist development, hegemony over an independent people—this imperialism will never voluntarily yield to the national bourgeoisie. "In this respect, the contradiction of interests between the national bourgeoisie of the colonial country and imperialism is objectively of a radical character."

The next document is W. Robson's report at the conference of the representatives of the British, Dutch and German communist parties together with the representatives of the Comintern. It was a secret meeting, probably called by the Eastern Bureau of the ECCI, and Sneevliet (i.e. Marang of the Dutch party) and M. N. Roy were in charge of it on behalf of the ECCI. We have not been able to check up this report from the official records of the Comintern, nor have we found any reference to it in the published documents of the CI available to us. The text produced here is from *Communist Papers*<sup>17</sup> published by the British government after the arrest of 12 communists and for the "Trial of the Twelve".

These arrests were a part of British employers' offensive against the British working class, which was to culminate some months later in the great British miners' and general strike of spring 1926.

In Britain, the *Communist Papers* were produced before the parliament as part of the government's offensive against the working class and in an effort to discredit the arrested communists and isolate them from the labour masses. In India the British government brought Scotland Yard police officers all the way from London to Meerut to testify to the authenticity of the document in the conspiracy case. Here the British government were using the document to show that the Comintern and the Communist Party of Great Britain were "conspiring to foment communist and working-class movement" in India.

However the document is useful to us as it enables us to see how Roy on behalf of the CI was keeping in touch with the communist movement in India with the help of the Indian communists in Britain and Europe and of the CPGB. It throws light on four developments, viz (1) Percy Glading's visit to India; (2) the work of Indian Bureau in England; (3) attempt to hold an oriental conference in London; and (4) Roy's Indian Bureau in Europe.

We have more information on Percy Glading's visit to India from other sources. A member of the CPGB and a member of the EC of the National Minority Movement, Percy Glading

17. See *Inprecor*, Vol 5, No 86, 10 December 1925, p. 1301. Also *History of the CPGB* by James Klugmann, Vol 2, pp. 67-68.

was sent out to India by the CPGB. M. N. Roy was informed but had probably no opportunity to brief him properly and that is why he says that the visit was "arranged in haste". In the "Report on Colonial Activities" submitted by the colonial department to the central executive committee some time in September 1925, we have the following about Percy Glading's visit to India.

"In the early part of the year, the department concluded that in order to establish real connection of a healthy character in India, it is essential that a party representative should visit there. This was duly arranged, and for four months our representative devoted his attention to moving about from place to place ascertaining facts regarding the movement in India and its possibilities, and also enquiring into the possibility of promoting contacts. This visit was extremely useful indeed. Our representative was able to attend the All India Trade Union Congress, and held many conversations with representatives there. These conversations and the congress itself enabled him to secure a good picture of the situation. He was able to supply us with a very good report of the congress and with copies of the most important resolutions which were otherwise not available... Unfortunately for us, the visit of our representative had to terminate much earlier than we desired, so that while much may have been done as a result of this visit yet our work is only in its infancy."<sup>18</sup>

K. N. Joglekar in his reminiscences writes that "at the 5th session of the AITUC in Bombay in 1925, Comrade Percy Glading was also present as a fraternal delegate and a guest".

According to the confidential reports of the government of India as summarised in D. Petrie's *Communism in India 1924-27* Percy Glading arrived in India in February 1925 and attended the AITUC session in Bombay, then went to Delhi where he contacted Deoki Prasad Sinha, I. B. Sen and Lala Lajpat Rai and discussed with them the idea of forming a labour party. Thereafter he went to Calcutta and then returned to Bombay, where he met F. J. Ginwala, then secretary of the Textile Workers' Union, and R. B. Lotwala.<sup>19</sup>

18. *Communist Papers*, p. 96.

19. D. Petrie, *Communism in India, 1924-27*, pp. 285-86.

The detailed intelligence report of "his activities" shows that he came under the surveillance of the British-Indian police and was asked to quit by the police on the pain of arrest. Though not mentioned anywhere in government records available to us, this can be surmised from the British party's report quoted above stating that "he had to terminate his visit much earlier than desired". D. Petrie says Glading was sent by Roy. This is not correct as we have stated above. Further the government's surmise that Glading was behind the proposal to form a labour party mooted at the time of the AITUC Bombay session is also doubtful. As we have seen that move was later sharply criticised by M. N. Roy.

Robson's report mentions Indian Bureau or Indian group functioning in England under the CPGB and which was also in touch with M. N. Roy. Clemens Dutt, A. C. Banerji, Khan and Upadhyaya were its leading members in 1925. According to the "Report on Colonial Activities", a document of the CPGB quoted above, a special Indian group composed of Indian residents in England was organised to conduct propaganda amongst the Indians. It circulated literature and did organisational work among Indian seamen and students in the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Khan and Upadhyaya were active among Indian seamen. Indian seamen's strike gave them opportunity to organise seamen's meetings at the London dock-gates and to formulate their demands of equality with British seamen. Later on an Indian seamen's union was organised which was to be affiliated to the AITUC in consultation with N. M. Joshi. A. C. Banerji was mainly active among the students while Clemens Dutt was in overall charge of the work. This was probably the beginning of the work of the CPGB amongst Indians in England—students as well as seamen—which was to develop later and supply important cadres for the CPI in the thirties.

We get more information about this work among Indian students in England in 1925 from another document in the *Communist Papers*. This is a letter from the colonial department of the CPGB to Shapurji Saklatvala, dated 23 June 1925, asking him to meet some Indian students at Oxford who were returning to India soon. This was accompanied by a memo on "the composition of Indian Majlis at Oxford" drafted by two British communist students. This states that there were forty-

six Indian students in the Majlis at Oxford, divided into political categories as follows: "moderates 18; swarajists 11; socialists 5; unclassified 12." It further states that Vanguard literature was distributed amongst the socialists and swarajists and that there were five socialists, but their names are not mentioned.<sup>20</sup>

Another and a fuller version is available in a government file: "Communist Propaganda among Students at Oxford".<sup>21</sup> The whole file consists of letters and papers found in London at the time of the arrest of twelve communist leaders. Some of the documents given here appear to be the originals of those produced in the *Communist Papers* in an edited form. Thus we find here the same letter and report regarding the Indian Majlis at Oxford and it contains exactly the same political categorywise breakdown of the Indians there as given above. We find here the names of the British communists working in the Indian Majlis as Thomas and Stephenson. Of great interest are the names of the five socialists in the Indian Majlis at Oxford in 1925 and some information about them given here. The names of the socialists are:

1. K. V. Gopaldaswamy, son of K. Venkata Reddy, Madras.
2. Susobhan Chandra Sarkar (Jesus College), brother of Dr S. C. Sarkar, viceprincipal, Patna Training College.
3. Basava L. Manjunath (Mysore).
4. Krishna.
5. Bakar Ali Mirza (Oxford 1921), Hyderabad.

Of these, 1, 2 and 5 became well-known public figures later. In the same document we find Stephenson's report dated 1 June 1925 stating that Gopaldaswamy and Sarkar are communists and are prepared to join the party and that Saklatvala should find time to talk to them. We also find Graham Pollard's report dated 3 June 1925 which says that Susobhan Sarkar is well grounded in Marxism and leaves Oxford at the end of the term (July 1925).

This report was sent from London to the India government. The home department and the intelligence department of the

20. *Communist Papers*, pp. 75-76.

21. Home-Pol. F 29, 1926.

latter immediately informed the Calcutta intelligence branch about "the antecedents" of Susobhan Sarkar on 23 March 1926.<sup>22</sup>

Regarding the oriental convention, it was a sort of emigre anti-imperialist conference of the representatives of the freedom movements of India, Egypt, Palestine, Syria and other British colonies. The CPGB had contacted from India Dewan Chamanlal, former secretary of the AITUC, T. C. Goswami, treasurer of the Swaraj Party and a close associate of C. R. Das, Deep Narayan Singh from Bihar and N. M. Joshi, general secretary of the AITUC. All of them were in London in June 1925 and with their help Saklatvala and B. G. Horniman were trying to draw up a fuller list of Indian invitees<sup>23</sup> and the conference was to be held on 1-8 September 1925. This was a good initiative and a good proposal but Roy's criticism was that through these people you could not get into touch with "real revolutionaries". This was an unjustified criticism. Probably his main grouse was that he was not consulted.

At this Amsterdam conference, there was a sharp expression of differences between the CPGB representatives and M. N. Roy. At one point Roy quite unjustifiably remarked that the CPGB's desire to keep the control on the work among Indians in England exclusively in its hands "smacks of imperialism". Actually, the purpose of the conference was to coordinate the work done through the CPGB with the work done through Roy's Bureau in Europe working directly under the ECCI. To a certain extent this was achieved at the time. As stated by Robson, Clemens Dutt stayed over two days after the conference and reached an understanding with Roy. Not only this, but we learn from Robson's report that there was a proposal on behalf of the CI that Clemens Dutt should be sent out to India to help the movement there.<sup>24</sup>

E. H. Carr in his *Socialism in One Country* has a subsection on India in chapter 39, "Southern Asia", in which he deals with the rise of the communist movement in India.<sup>25</sup> Here he

<sup>22</sup> Home-Pol. F 29, p. 226.

<sup>23</sup> Letter from the Colonial Department of the CPGB, see *Communist Papers*, p. 88.

<sup>24</sup> See section 11 above.

<sup>25</sup> Op. cit., Vol 3 (1924-26), pp. 674-92.

deals with this conference at Amsterdam and draws the conclusion that "it marked a stage in the transfer of authority as the recognised agent and intermediary of the Comintern in dealing with the Indian movement, from Roy to the CPGB". To this author, the emergence of the communist movement in the east and in India was the result of the foreign policy of the Soviet Union.<sup>26</sup> This was also the idea put across by the British public prosecutors in the Kanpur and Meerut conspiracy cases launched by the imperialists to crush the rising workers' and peasants' movement and the Communist Party. Actually the movement and the party arose out of the postwar mass upsurge of the freedom movement, when cadres of the national-revolutionary left wing of the same turned to scientific socialism and workers' and peasants' organisation brought in a new force in India's freedom struggle and gave it a scientific programme of anti-imperialist and antifeudal revolution and a revolutionary perspective of economic development after independence on democratic lines, bypassing capitalism and leading the country step by step to socialism. The Communist Party of India, like other communist parties, was a part of the world communist movement at the head of which stood the Comintern body, the ECCI. The Communist Party of India took its guidance from the general resolutions and theses of the Comintern, applying them to the concrete conditions of political and economic struggle in India. In this M. N. Roy and others helped. In 1926 and 1927, as we shall see later, British trade unionists and party members like George Allison, P. Spratt, Ben Bradley came over to India and helped in building a militant trade-union movement and revolutionary left wing of the freedom movement. Shapurji Saklatvala, an Indian who was then a member of parliament and a British communist, visited India in 1927 and his short tour also greatly helped in this direction.

But it is not true that after 1925, the CI kept in touch with India not through Roy but through the CPGB. In fact, after

26. "The conception of opening a new window for Soviet policy and revolutionary activity in the east penetrated slowly in Moscow. Safarov, on the eve of the Fourth Congress of Comintern in November 1922, boasted of the formation of communist parties in all eastern countries though they were all obliged to work illegally" (*Ibid.*, p. 620).

the first Communist Conference, when a constitution of the party was framed, Roy suggested a clause which provided for a foreign bureau of Indian communists abroad who were unable to return to India, but who were to do ideological work for the party and also to maintain contact of the party with the CI. This foreign bureau consisted of M. N. Roy, Clemens Dutt and Muhammad Ali Sipassi. This arrangement functioned up to the beginning of 1928. On the eve and after the Sixth Congress of the CI, M. N. Roy ceased to be in charge of India on behalf of the CI but even thereafter in the early thirties, the contact was direct and not through the CPGB.

The last document in this section is the introduction with which the Masses of November 1925 prefaced the reprint of the famous article by Karl Marx on "The Future Results of British Rule in India". This is one of the first three articles Karl Marx wrote on India for the *New York Daily Tribune* in 1853. These were followed by many others up to 1857 and all of them are available in the excellent authentic edition of *The First Indian War of Independence 1857-59* by K. Marx and F. Engels, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow. These articles on India, as well as the bulk of the correspondence of Marx and Engels, and a few of their works such as *German Ideology* and *Dialectics of Nature* and, of course, their papers consisting of notes, summaries, drafts and fragments remained unpublished up to the early twenties of the present century. The publication of a complete edition of the works of Marx and Engels became a possibility only after the victory of the October socialist revolution.

Thus it was in 1924 that the 13th Party Congress of the Russian Communist Party and later the Fifth Congress of the Communist International passed resolutions "On the necessity of publishing, as soon as possible, all the works and letters of Marx and Engels with a historico-critical commentary". D. B. Ryazanov, who moved the resolution in the Fifth Congress of the Comintern stated that he had by then "the photographic facsimiles of all unpublished manuscripts by Engels and Marx". Some of Marx's unpublished works and some of these letters on India were made immediately available through the magazines *Marx-Engels Archives* and *Under the Banner of Marxism* published in 1925 in Russian and German. The Labour

Monthly of July 1925 edited by Rajani Palme Dutt made available for the first time in English two articles of Marx on India, viz "The British Rule in India" and "The Future Results of the British Rule in India". But as the editorial note of the *Labour Monthly* prefacing the articles said, the text reproduced there was an English translation of the German text in the magazine *Under the Banner of Marxism*. But the text of the articles reproduced in the *Masses* corresponds exactly to the original English text of Marx as in the *New York Daily Tribune*, reproduced in the Foreign Languages Publishing House edition.

In the *Masses* introduction to the articles, the basic thought of Marx on India is sought to be introduced.

Marx's articles on India after their republication in 1925 in the *Masses* and in the *Labour Monthly* were also briefly noticed in the *Modern Review* of Calcutta, but they became widely known in India only after 1938 when B. P. L. Bedi brought out the earliest Indian edition and in the early forties when the PPH edition became available.

## 1. THE DEATH OF SUN YAT-SEN

Some time ago, we gave in these columns extracts from some notable pronouncements of Sun Yat-sen on his policy; we drew attention to him as to an example which the leaders of the revolutionary movement in India could emulate.

Today we have to record with profound sorrow the death of the great Chinese revolutionary leader. He died in Peking on 11 March, while still actively engaged in the great task to which he had harnessed himself during forty years of ceaseless revolutionary activity. With him there disappears from the arena of world politics a formidable figure in whom the aspirations of the revolutionary East had found a remarkable synthesis and whom the imperialist powers had come to recognise as one of their most redoubtable enemies.

Sprung from a peasant stock, Sun Yat-sen was born 63 years ago in Canton in South China, the city destined to be the headquarters of his revolutionary government later on. He was born into a scene of political turmoil as his native province of Canton has been the storm-centre of Chinese nationalism since 1850. With the annexation of Annam by France, Sun Yat-sen entered at an early age into his revolutionary career. As a student he was a member of secret societies for the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty. At the time of Sino-Japanese war in 1895, he organised a popular rising in Canton as the result of which he had to leave China precipitately and take refuge in Europe. Going back to Canton in 1900, he organised a second insurrection which was suppressed like the first.

By this time Sun Yat-sen had become well-known as a determined revolutionary leader working for the destruction of the monarchy in the celestial empire. He founded all over the world among the Chinese emigres propaganda centres, from which the revolutionary ideas spread over China. He himself could not enter China and the whole of Far East was forbidden to him. It was only in 1911, on the morrow of the first Chinese

revolution that he could go back openly to his country, where he became, in 1912, the first president of the Chinese Republic. He had however very soon to make room for Yuan Shi-kai who came to power supported by a reactionary band of military adventurers. It was then that Sun Yat-sen laid the foundations of his famous Kuomintang Party (the People's Party), a party which was destined to play a great role in later years. Indefatigable revolutionary, he put himself at the head of the new insurrection in 1913 and had again to leave China. In Tokyo, where he had taken refuge, he separated from the reformist section of the Kuomintang and formed the "Party of the Chinese Revolution". In 1915 he started a revolt against the dictatorship of Yuan Shi-kai and succeeded this time in upsetting him.

After the war, we find him once again in Canton where he formed in 1920 the national revolutionary government in South China, in opposition to the central government in Peking. From that moment he already formed the idea of an alliance with Soviet Russia. Meanwhile he had come more to identify himself with the Chinese workers and peasants. He supported the big strikes of Hongkong and Macao. In 1923 he reorganised the old Kuomintang Party, this time as a mass party of workers and peasants inspired by communist ideas. The party entered into close relations with the revolutionary proletariat of Soviet Russia and thus, for the first time, an organised eastern proletariat was united with the revolutionary proletariat of the west. His death has intervened to prevent Sun Yat-sen from realising the world revolutionary possibilities with which this proletarian union of the East and the West is charged, but it will remain as a great monument to the largeness of his revolutionary vision.

In the so-called civil-war, which the imperialist powers succeeded in provoking in China in 1924, Sun Yat-sen made common cause with Huan Shi-chou and Chang So-lin, the warlord of Manchuria. It was a period of great peril for the southern revolutionary government over which Sun Yat-sen presided. Canton itself was under the menace of the guns of the British fleet which lay at anchor and, profiting by the occasion, the merchants of Canton who had good reason to hate the government of Sun Yat-sen rose in rebellion. However the civil war

ended on the military scene and restated on the political scene in Peking where Sun Yat-sen, just before his fatal illness, was trying to bring about the convocation of a national assembly for the whole of China.

We want to draw particular attention to the idea which Sun Yat-sen developed in latter days, of a pan-Asiatic federation against the imperialist powers of Europe. To that he had joined the other idea of the union of the revolutionary nationalist movement of the East with the revolutionary proletariat of the West. Therein the great Chinese revolutionary had laid his finger on the veritable dynamic forces of world revolution. He had made a beginning of the momentous juxtaposition in China. The Kuomintang Party, though at the present moment passing through an internal crisis, may accomplish the task left unfinished by the great leader.

The following estimate of Sun Yat-sen will be read with interest in India: "Sun Yat-sen will go down in history as the greatest figure of a leader of the national revolutionary movement of the East in the first quarter of the twentieth century. He was neither a communist nor a Marxist. His programme, 'nationalism, democracy, socialism' bore all the signs of the backwardness of the social conditions of China. He tentatively sought his way but he hated with the righteous hate the imperialists who had subjugated his native country. He devoted his life fully and entirely to his people and what is most important in the last years of his life, he perceived more and more clearly that the suppressed people can emancipate themselves and create the preconditions of a new life only in close alliance with the world proletariat. Sun Yat-sen was not a Gandhi, the leader of the moderate wing of the nationalists of India. Gandhi during the last few years has developed more and more along a *descending line*. To the brutalities of the English imperialists, Gandhi replied with a thirty days' fast. The incapacity of those groups which are led by Gandhi will unavoidably lead to their coming to an understanding with the imperialist oppressor which is tantamount to surrender. Not so Sun Yat-sen. During the last years of his life in particular, he developed along an *ascending line*."

On the eve of his death Sun Yat-sen wrote his last message to the Kuomintang Party in which he stated, among other

things: "Forty years of work for the national freedom and equal rights for China has brought me the firm conviction that China can only achieve its aim by mobilising the masses and by the closest collaboration with those peoples who consider us as equals. The fight for the completion of the revolution must be continued. The national assembly must be convened and the demand put forward for the annulment of all treaties in which China is not treated as a party with equal rights."

Sun Yat-sen addressed the following message to the central executive committee of the Soviet Union: "Dear comrades, here on my death-bed my thoughts turn to you, as well as to the future destiny of my party and of my country. You are at the head of the union of free republics, that heritage which the immortal Lenin has left to all suppressed peoples of the world. By means of this heritage, the victims of imperialism will inevitably win their emancipation from that social order which has always been based upon slavery, war and injustice. I leave behind me a party which, as I always hoped, will be aligned with you in its historical task of liberating China and other oppressed peoples from the yoke of imperialism. My charge to the Kuomintang Party before all is that it shall continue to promote the cause of national-revolutionary movement for the emancipation of China, which has been degraded by imperialism into a semi-colonial country. I therefore charge my party to maintain permanent contact with you. I cherish the firm belief that your support of my country will remain unaltered. In taking my last leave of you, dear comrades, I express the hope that the day is approaching when the Soviet Union will greet in a free and strong China its friend and ally, and that the two states will proceed hand-in-hand as allies in the great fight for the emancipation of the oppressed peoples of the whole world."

The death-bed messages of Sun Yat-sen are worthy of a great revolutionary career; they are testaments not only for China but for the whole of the revolutionary East. If it is true of China that its freedom can only be attained by "the mobilising of the masses and by the closest collaboration with those peoples who consider us as equals", it is equally true of India and other parts of the subjugated East over which imperialist domination has cast its sombre shadow.

We mourn with our Chinese comrades our common loss of Sun Yat-sen.

We repeat with the world proletariat: Long live the work of Sun Yat-sen! Long live the workers and peasants of China!

*(Masses, No 4, April 1925)*

## 2. THE EMANCIPATION OF THE OPPRESSED PEOPLES OF THE EAST

### COMRADE STALIN ON INDIAN SITUATION

At a meeting held in Moscow on 18 May 1925, Comrade Stalin addressed the students of the University for the Peoples of the East. In the first part of his speech, Comrade Stalin spoke of the political and cultural work that is being undertaken in the central Asian republics, now forming part of the USSR.

Turning to the question of the eastern peoples fighting for their freedom from imperialist domination, the speaker said:

"The countries of the east entirely or partially subjected by the big imperialist powers find themselves under a double yoke, that of their own bourgeoisie and that of the imperialist metropol. In some of these countries capitalism develops rapidly, giving birth to an indigenous proletariat as for example in India. As the revolutionary movement in these countries grows, the local bourgeoisie begins to be divided, its lower strata becoming revolutionary and its higher strata turning more and more towards a compromise and an entente with the imperialists. Confronting the bloc thus realised there is created at last another bloc namely that of the workers and the middle-class revolutionaries. It is then that the question becomes acute of the hegemony of the proletariat and its deliverance from the influence of the nationalist bourgeoisie and these circumstances contribute towards the cementing of the union of the national-revolutionary movements of these countries with the proletarian movement in the more advanced countries of Europe.

"The conclusions to be drawn from this general view of the

situation are: (1) The emancipation of the peoples of the colonial and semicolonial countries is not possible without a successful revolution. (2) The progress of the revolutionary movements in the colonies is only possible along the lines of the isolation of the local bourgeoisie come (sic) to an understanding with imperialism, the detachment of the revolutionary middle classes from this bourgeoisie, the hegemony of the proletariat, and the organisation of the advanced elements of the working class in a communist party. (3) No victory of the liberating movement in the colonies is possible without a living and close union with the proletarian movement in the advanced countries of the west."

Applying these principles to the local conditions in each country, Comrade Stalin continued:

"Whereas in Morocco the indigenous bourgeoisie has not any reason to divide itself into two tendencies, the one revolutionary and the other reformist, the communist elements ought to work for the unity of the national front against imperialism. The crystallisation of a communist party can only come about in the course of the struggle particularly after the military victories of the national revolution over imperialism.

"On the other hand, in Egypt and in China the local bourgeoisie is already divided without, however, the reformist elements there being able any more to ally themselves with foreign imperialism. The communist elements in these circumstances cannot have as their objective the unity of the national front. Their policy ought to tend towards the realisation of a revolutionary bloc of workers and the middle classes. This bloc may take on the form of a single party—we think in this connection of the Chinese Kuomintang Party—always, however, on the condition that the bloc in reality unites two quite different parties, the one communist and the other petit-bourgeois revolutionary. The mission of such a bloc is simultaneously to fight imperialism and to find out the game of the local bourgeoisie. A great party thus constituted is useful, even necessary, on the condition that the liberty of agitation and recruitment for the proletarian communist party is not restrained. Failing that, it can only occasion confusion among the workers by corrupting the communist elements.

"In British India the indigenous bourgeoisie has come to an understanding with alien imperialism; fearing a revolution, more than hating British imperialism, it has become deliberately counterrevolutionary. The victory of the national revolution in India is not possible except by the defeat of this coalition between the indigenous bourgeoisie and the foreign imperialists. In such a situation the proletariat has to be the guide and the leader of the movement of emancipation. Here the anti-imperialist front cannot take on the form of a single party, the autonomy of the communist party having acquired an importance of the first order. The hegemony of the proletariat can only be prepared by the communist party. It is self-evident that the communist party can and must unite with the revolutionary left of the bourgeoisie in order to isolate the indigenous capitalists and landholders already gone over to the side of imperialism and to lead to the combat the millions of workers in the town and the countryside."

*(Masses, No 6, June 1925)*

### 3. TASKS OF THE UNIVERSITY IN THE MATTER OF COLONIES AND DEPENDENCIES IN THE EAST

I will now examine the second question, which concerns the tasks of the University of the Peoples of the East in relation to the colonial and vassal lands of the orient.

What is the difference between these lands and the Soviet republics of the east?

In the first place, the people in these countries live under the yoke of imperialism, and develop under the aegis of imperialism.

Secondly, the revolutionary crisis in these lands is far more acute because of the double yoke imposed upon them, on the one hand by their own bourgeoisie, and on the other hand by the bourgeoisie of foreign countries.

Thirdly, in certain of these lands (India, for instance) the

capitalist system is developing rapidly and is creating a native proletariat.

Fourthly, as the revolutionary movement progresses, the national bourgeoisie in each colonial or dependent land tends to divide into two sections, a petty-bourgeois section, which aims at compromise, and a great-bourgeois section, which aims at struggle; the former continues the revolutionary promise. The latter makes common cause with the imperialists.

Fifthly, confronting the imperialist coalition there is formed another coalition, the coalition of workers and revolutionary petty bourgeois. This is an anti-imperialist coalition aiming at the complete liberation of the country from the yoke of imperialism.

Sixthly, the question of proletarian leadership, and the question of enabling the masses to shake off the influence of that section of the nationalist bourgeoisie which would promise with the powers-that-be are questions of ever-increasing actuality in these lands.

Seventhly, the last-named fact greatly facilitates the linking up of the nationalist movement for the liberation of these countries with the proletarian movement in the more advanced countries of the west.

At least three deductions are possible from these seven points of difference:

(1) The liberation of colonial and vassal lands from the yoke of imperialism is not possible save by a victorious revolution. Independence does not come as a gift!

(2) If the advent of revolution is to be hastened, if complete independence of capitalistically developed colonies and dependencies is to be achieved, the compromising section of the bourgeoisie must be isolated, its influence upon the revolutionary leadership must be annulled, the advanced elements of the proletariat must be ensured and the advanced independent communist party must be organised in an independent communist party.

(3) No lasting victory is possible in these lands unless the movement for their liberation is effectively linked up with the proletarian movement of the more advanced countries of the west.

The fundamental task of the communists in the colonies and dependencies is to make these deductions the startingpoint of their revolutionary work.

What then are the immediate tasks confronting the communists in these lands?

In earlier days it was customary to look upon the colonial lands of the east as a homogeneous entity. This outlook no longer corresponds to the actual state of affairs. Today there are no fewer than three categories of colonial and vassal lands. First of all there are the countries (like Morocco, for instance) where there is no proletariat, or so small a proletariat as not to be worth mentioning; countries where industrial life is extremely backward. Secondly, there are countries (like China and Egypt, let us say) where manufacturing industry is little developed, and where the proletariat is, comparatively speaking, not very numerous. Thirdly, there are countries (like India) which are fairly well developed from the capitalist point of view, and possess a proletariat which has attained noteworthy proportions.

It is obvious that each of these countries will need separate treatment.

In Morocco, for instance, the native bourgeoisie has as yet had no reason for splitting up into a revolutionary and a compromising section. The communists should, therefore, do everything to promote the creation of a united nationalist front capable of fighting against imperialist encroachments. A separation of the communist elements from the general movement for emancipation to form a communist party can take place in these lands only in the course of the struggle against imperialism, and more especially after that struggle has been waged to a successful conclusion.

In such countries as Egypt and China, where the native bourgeoisie is already split into a revolutionary section and a compromising section, but where the compromisers have not yet made common cause with imperialism, the communists are faced by other tasks than the formation of a united nationalist front against imperialism. They will have to transcend the policy of the united nationalist front, and adopt the policy of forming a revolutionary coalition between the workers and the petty bourgeois. This coalition may find expression in the creation of a single party whose membership will be drawn from

lutionary, anti-imperialist coalition, and to ensure that, within this coalition, the role of leader shall be played by the proletariat. The coalition may (there are alternative possibilities) take the form of a single, united party of workers and peasants voicing a joint programme. But the advanced communist elements will need to insist upon the independence of the communist party in such lands, for the proletariat cannot be prepared for its task as leader, nor can the proletarian leadership be realised, by any other than the communist party. Yet the communist party may, nay must, openly cooperate with the revolutionary section of the native bourgeoisie, if it is to succeed in isolating the compromising and reformist section, and in rallying the masses of the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie to the fight against imperialism.

To sum up. The immediate tasks confronting the revolutionary movement in colonial and vassal lands where capitalism is well developed are as follows :

- (1) To win over the best elements among the workers to the cause of communism and to form independent communist parties.

- (2) To set up a nationalist and revolutionary coalition of workers, peasants and revolutionary intellectuals, as a counterpoise to the coalition of the great bourgeoisie with the imperialists.

- (3) To guarantee that the leadership of the revolutionary coalition shall be in the hands of the proletariat.

- (4) To free the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie from the influence of the reformist native bourgeoisie.

- (5) To secure the linking up of the national-liberationist movement with the proletarian movement of advanced countries.

We see, therefore, that the tasks facing the communists in the colonial and vassal lands resolve themselves into five groups

These tasks, considered in the light of the present international situation, are of exceptional importance. For the moment the salient characteristic of the international situation is that the revolutionary movement has entered a period of calm, of truce. What is the meaning of this state of calm? It means that the pressure on the workers of the west has been

redoubled, that the oppression of colonial lands is more ruthless, and that, above all, the attacks upon Soviet Russia (the standard-bearer of the revolutionary movement) have been reinforced. The imperialists have already begun preparing their onslaught against the Soviet Union. The campaign of calumny embarked upon at the time of the rising in Esthonia, the campaign against the USSR in connection with the explosion in the Sofia cathedral, the general and continuous campaign against Soviet Russia carried on in the columns of the capitalist press—one and all are the prelude to an offensive. Public opinion is thus to be prejudiced against Soviet Russia; these campaigns constitute, as it were, a clearing of the ground as a preliminary to more drastic action, they are meant to create "moral justification" for intervention. The future alone can tell what will be the results of these campaigns, and whether the imperialists will venture upon a serious offensive. One thing is obvious, that these attacks foreshadow nothing but evil to the colonial peoples. The preparation of a counteroffensive by all the forces of the revolution as an answer to the probable onslaught of the imperialists is, therefore, an urgent question of the day, and cannot be postponed.

It is for this reason that a systematic endeavour to accomplish the more urgent tasks in colonial and vassal lands is of such prime importance to the revolutionary movement.

In view of the foregoing considerations, we may ask what is the mission of the University of the Peoples of the East in relation to the colonies and dependencies? The university must study all the special characteristics of the revolutionary development in these lands, it must educate the students coming from these countries, must educate them in such a way as to be sure that they will be able to fulfil all the tasks enumerated above.

The University of the Peoples of the East has opened its doors to about ten groups of students from these multifarious colonial lands. We all know how eager these comrades are for light and knowledge. The university must see to it that the students shall become genuine revolutionists, equipped with all the theories and all the practical experience of Leninism, and capable of accomplishing the immediate tasks facing the movement for national emancipation, not as the outcome of fear,

but thanks to the promptings of conviction.

Here it is well to draw attention to two deviations into which the militant workers in these lands are liable to stray, and against which it is essential to fight with the utmost resolution if genuinely revolutionary troops are to be created.

First of all, the revolutionary possibilities of the nationalist movement for emancipation must not be underestimated, on the other hand, the likelihood of a united national front comprising all the elements in colonies and dependencies must not be overstressed, or looked forward to regardless of the conditions of the modes of life and the degrees of development in these regions. This is a deviation to the right which threatens to set back the revolutionary movement, and to merge the communist elements into the general welter of the national bourgeoisie. The university must combat this straying from the path with the utmost determination.

In the second place, the revolutionary possibilities of the nationalist movement for emancipation must not be overestimated, nor must the importance of the alliance between the working class and the revolutionary bourgeoisie against the imperialists be underestimated. The Javanese communists seemed to suffer from this deviation when they, recently and quite wrongly, raised the slogan "All power to the soviets" in their country. This is a deviation to the left which threatens to sever the party from the masses, and to transform it into a clique. A resolute fight against the deviation is essential if truly revolutionary battalions are to be formed in the colonial and vassal lands.

Such, in broad outline, are the political tasks facing the University of the Peoples of the East in relation to the workers in the Soviet republics and the colonial lands of the east.

We may hope that the University of the Peoples of the East will be able to accomplish these tasks creditably.

#### 4. COLONIAL CONFERENCE HELD AT AMSTERDAM, 11 AND 12 JULY 1925

I arrived in Amsterdam Friday evening and immediately went to the address at which I was instructed to make enquiries but was unable to get any reply.

On Saturday morning I met two trains arriving from Flushing, expecting to intercept Glading and others who were to be present at the conference, but as they did not arrive I again visited the contact address and discovered that Glading, Dutt and Upadhyaya were already there, having arrived by an early train and gone to the meeting place immediately.

Later Roy arrived and informed us that a meeting would take place at 4.30 p.m. A French representative was expected but nothing was certain.

##### FIRST MEETING, 4.30 P.M., SATURDAY, 11 JULY

Comrade Sneevliet, of the Dutch party, presided, and it was agreed that we should first hear Glading's report.

There were present. Sneevliet, Gertrude Hessler (sister of Karl Hessler), Khan (Ashcroft, of the Indian Bureau in London), Roy, Glading, C. P. Dutt, Upadhyaya and myself.

Comrade Glading stated that he had not expected to be called upon to give a full report of his visit to India and then gave the names of places which he had visited and people whom he had met. He had not met any communists and had finally decided that those with whom he had come in contact were useless so far as our party work is concerned. He said that Calcutta, which he visited last, is the best place. Questions were then asked as follows :

Roy : "What opinion had the Calcutta trade unionists and nationalists of the big leaders?" Glading stated that he had not ascertained this.

Sneevliet : "Was Glading aware of any relations existing between the Indian leaders and Amsterdam?" Glading stated that he was not aware of this.

Very little discussion took place.

It was then announced that as Khan had to return to England we ought to take his report next.

Khan then reported that he was present in place of Dr Banerji, who was unable to come, and that he was to report on the position of the Indian Bureau in London. The Indian members of the bureau had hoped to receive some training from the party but absolutely nothing had been done in this direction, and they had received no support whatever from the party in their work. Meetings had been postponed or neglected through carelessness. The bureau was ignored because they were Indians and that Roy had received all the complaints.

I interrupted and asked that these complaints should be stated definitely and clearly point by point, so that I might deal with them and that I had not come expecting anything of this. This was agreed to Khan then made the following points :

(1) That it had been proposed to form a Seamen's Union among Indian seamen, but that so far nothing whatever had been done. At a recent meeting in Poplar Town Hall, arranged for this purpose, party speakers had only dealt with China.

(2) The Indian Bureau had tried to send letters abroad but the party refused to accept responsibility for these and stated that they must see all letters sent; that they opened the letters entrusted to them and altered the contents.

(3) Lectures had been proposed under the auspices of the party for the Indian Bureau members. Nothing had been done however. Only one lecture was to have taken place, this had been postponed. The bureau was very much disappointed.

(4) That Banerji was not allowed to visit the party office.

(5) That the Indian Bureau had suggested a demonstration against Lord Reading on his arrival in London recently, and had given three months' notice of this to the party, to allow for the preparation of plans, but that the colonial committee had afterwards complained that it was too late to do anything and nothing was done.

(6) That the Indian Bureau had been informed that if possible they would be helped, but that they were not either directly or indirectly connected with the party.

Roy then put two questions to Khan :

(1) Was it true that Bell had asked Banerji why he went to see Roy in Paris without the party's permission, and (2) which

ther Bell had asked was Roy trying to build a parallel organisation of his own?

Replying to Roy's questions first, I stated that I knew nothing whatever of this, but that the colonial committee was in charge of colonial work and had a right to expect to be informed of such activities. I then dealt with Khan's complaints, pointing out that this work had only been going on a few months and that Upadhyaya was in charge of the activity under the auspices of the minority movement and that therefore he could better deal with this complaint, but that the party was by no means responsible for any neglect if such neglect had occurred.

With reference to the second complaint, I said I knew nothing of this, but I did not believe it to be true that the contents of letters had been altered at the party head office before being transmitted. I also said that we could not be responsible, in my opinion, for sending letters through party channels regarding which we knew nothing.

Roy here intervened to say that these letters were all addressed to him and that it was not a question of not trusting Banerji but of distrusting Roy when the party adopted this attitude.

On the third complaint I referred this matter to Dutt, stating that he was in full charge of preparations of lectures and that a syllabus had been drawn up, that the party was in the dark as to what had followed and expected that the lectures had been carried on as per programme submitted by Dutt.

On the fourth complaint I stated that it was not desirable, in Banerji's own interests, or in the interest of our work among the Indians, that he should be daily visiting the party offices, but that he had not been warned to be careful but some time ago doubts had been raised regarding Banerji's trustworthiness and this also might have something to do with the matter.

In reply to the fifth complaint, I stated that Banerji had certainly approached the colonial department, and suggested a demonstration, but had also pressed that the Albert Hall should be booked for this demonstration, which was obviously ridiculous and fantastic. Bell had agreed entirely with Banerji that a demonstration would be valuable, and had asked him

how many Indian students and Indian seamen could be rallied to meet Reading at the station with banners demanding freedom for India, etc. Banerji stated that he could get a number of these and we thereafter left it to the Indian Bureau to make preparations and inform us, being fully prepared to give all assistance necessary, but we heard nothing more about the matter.

With reference to the sixth complaint I said that with two exceptions members of the Indian Bureau were not party members but that wherever it was possible to assist them in their work, the party had done so.

Upadhyaya reported that he had received practically no support from the members of the Indian Bureau in his work among Indian seamen, but mainly from members of the British party. He repudiated practically the whole of Khan's complaints and demanded to know what work Banerji was doing among Indians.

C. P. Dutt stated that the question of the Indian Bureau was very involved and that Khan was not in position to present any complaints owing to his frequent absences from the bureau meetings. (This Khan emphatically denied.) Dutt stated that everything possible had been done to get the Seamen's Union going, that the Indian unions had been communicated with and no reply received, and that it had been decided to consult Joshi on the position, but during the last week or two the bureau had decided to go along on their own with the work. With reference to Banerji and the party office, Dutt stated that it was unfortunate that Banerji's reliability had been questioned, and that there was nothing in such suspicions in Dutt's opinion. He believed that it was true that not sufficient help had been received from the party in the work among the seamen. He concluded by saying that the Indian Bureau was not a proper working body.

Khan reiterated that a special meeting for the formation of an Indian Seamen's Union had been recently held in Poplar Town Hall and that nothing had been done in this direction. Only the Chinese situation had been dealt with and that they had failed to obtain party help.

Roy stated that he supported neither party in the discussion and that our party in Britain must understand that the Indian

Bureau members were not communists and that we could not have very official dealings with people who were by no means communists. He had not heard of the suspicions against Banerji before but believed that he was a sincere revolutionary so far as the present situation is concerned in India. Saklatvala was troubled with "spy mania", and we need place no reliance on his suspicions of Banerji. He proposed to deal with certain points made by me in reply .

(1) That the colonial committee is in charge of colonial work : "This", said Roy, "smacks of imperialism", and we must modify such a point of view. Among communists, we could exercise discipline over communists. It was necessary to go slowly and diplomatically in our work among the colonial peoples, and quoted Lenin to the effect that concessions would have to be made to the national prejudices of colonial peoples. There was much national prejudice existing even among the communists, and there was a certain amount of truth in the Indian Bureau's complaints. The bureau was one or the other: it was either composed of communists, in which case it would cooperate with the British party, or it was nonparty. (Here I interrupted and stated that we were placed in a ridiculous position if we were to accept responsibility which was not mutual to both sides, but Roy evaded this by stating that the letters sent by the Indian Bureau which had been opened by the British headquarters were addressed to him and that he was a communist and ought to be trustworthy.) Continuing, Roy said that the Indian Bureau was *not doing all it should do*, but he was not satisfied about the explanation regarding no demonstration being (held) against Reading. The British party should have held a demonstration; some attitude should have been taken; we had known Reading was coming for a long time, but he believed that the British party did not like Indians coming round to the head office. If these Indians wished to do so, why not? He interpreted our attitude as being due to a desire of maintaining our prestige as not being in touch with Indian revolutionaries. I then asked Comrade Roy to repeat this latter statement, which he did, and I complained that such an expression was uncalled for, when Roy said probably the expression is not correct.

Sneevliet asked Glading why he made his investigations in Calcutta on a communist basis. Glading replied that he did not do so. Roy then said to Glading : "Is it true that Bell has said that the international programme for work in India is 'all nonsense' and not justified by your report?" I then explained that a subcommittee of four, consisting of Dutt, Bell, Glading and myself had been set up to consider the international programme in the light of Glading's report and that no such thing had been said by Bell, but that our attitude was that in the light of Glading's report, which stated that no Indian communist groups existed at all, it was necessary to revise the suggested programme. Roy then stated that he had documentary evidence that Indian groups existed but that these had been unable to make up their minds to see Glading before he left India for England.

It was then agreed that the meeting should be continued the following day at Bussum, a few miles out of Amsterdam.

#### SUNDAY AFTERNOON MEETING AT BUSSUM

Having considered the preceding business I decided that I could not deal with same as certain matters had arisen which were new to me and upon which it would be necessary for the central executive to express an opinion, i.e., the consultations (unknown to the colonial committee) between Roy and members of the Indian Bureau, etc., and I merely stated therefore regarding Saturday's discussion that I had already dealt with the complaints made by Khan, that we had expected to have a fully representative conference at which many other questions beside India would be discussed, and that I proposed to go on with the next item on the agenda. This was agreed to, and Roy asked for a report regarding arrangements for the oriental conference and our relations with Goswami, Chamanlal, Deep Singh and Joshi. I therefore reported what had been done in this connection consisting mainly so far as India was concerned in the despatch of about 20 invitations to certain people in India, which invitations the four above referred to had signed as well as Horniman. Roy complained that vital information regarding this business was lacking, and that he had received no report. He had been informed in Paris by Joshi that all four

had been invited to Russia, Saklatvala being the intermediary and not, as I stated, the colonial committee being the intermediary. With reference to their having signed invitations to the oriental conference, the party had no influence over them, and it was not a party invite. It was therefore useless. The International does not consider it necessary to get into touch with these people but with the real revolutionaries.

Dutt stated that these invitations were intended to be a screen to cover our own invitations to people whom we were desirous of having present.

Roy then asked if Sircar was coming, and I said that I understood that he had been invited. Roy also asked whether the party had thought of consulting him regarding these invitations, and whether the party was completely aware of the record of these four people, and did we think we were justified in relying on them? He then attacked their records, as did Evelyn Roy also. Roy then said that he thought we could come to no conclusion on the matter, that this was merely an exchange of views, He was completely in the dark regarding the conference and could only express an opinion.

I intervened to point out that it was unfair to judge the work of the colonial department on such a restricted basis as India, and that had this been a full conference we could have shown extremely good results in other directions; and that we had achieved contact with real revolutionaries, party members and nationalists who had been invited in Egypt, Syria, Palestine and Morocco, as well as elsewhere. In connection with India and invitations to people there, Glading's visit brought absolutely no information, and we had not one contact with whom we could communicate as a result, hence the fact that we had made the best of matters by doing what was possible with Joshi, C. Lal, etc. Roy replied that we must not think he was rebuking the British party. Not long ago the complaint had been that we were not doing enough colonial work; now, we were doing too much.

He thought that too much importance was attached to Glading's report, whose visit had been in opposition to Roy's opinion and much too hasty. We were challenging our former policy on a defective report, and trying to defend errors by

making errors. We must not follow the line of least resistance. He knew more about India than any of those four and had not been consulted. We were following a wrong policy. He wished to be in Moscow when these four nationalist leaders were there. He had been a pessimist regarding the conference results and had not believed we would get real revolutionaries. The people we would reach through Chamanlal and the rest of them would be of no use. There was no objection to them going to Moscow but he would expect to be informed when they set off. He wished it to be recorded as his opinion that the oriental conference would be futile; at the same time he offered all co-operation possible if the British party considered it of any value. When MacManus was in Paris recently he did not trouble to get into touch with comrades concerned in Indian work, and now he was not here either; no EC member had considered it necessary to come.

Evelyn Roy stated that she had met Joshi in Paris and informed him she would like to meet Chamanlal, but that Joshi had said that Chamanlal did not wish to meet her as he was a friend of Saklatvala's, and that Saklatvala and Lal were opposed to her or having anything to do with her. She thought that this should be gone into fully.

Roy said that he wished to have a list of the people invited to the oriental conference sent to him. With reference to Birkenhead's speech, who stated that he had investigated and failed to find one responsible Indian nationalist who demanded separation from the empire, etc. Roy said that some counter-statement should be made and that a manifesto should be drafted repudiating this charge, and signed by Lal, Joshi, Goswami and Singh, stating that they represented a volume of opinion in favour of separation, after which our party could take the matter up and organise a demonstration. This would test whether these four were wholly with or only partly with us, and the criticism of Wedgwood and MacDonald's speeches in the House of Commons regarding Indian independence should be included in such a manifesto.

#### C. P. DUTT AND WORK IN INDIA

I stated that we only had £100 in hand for the purpose of sending Dutt to India for the work there, and that this would

merely suffice to cover his passage out and back, that the party could not accept financial responsibility if Dutt was sent to India.

Roy replied that this would cause no expense to be incurred by the British party (Dutt intervened to say that this was the first he had heard of the matter with the exception that Roy had made a suggestion to him some time ago which he did not take as official). Roy said that he had been instructed to go ahead with the question of Dutt being sent to India in the absence of any objection from the British party and Dutt himself. He also said that this was not a full colonial conference, and that he was coming on behalf of the eastern department of which he had been asked to take charge. He had not yet agreed, but that he would like a general report of our work from myself.

I then gave a full report of our work in Egypt and the Near East generally, among Indian students at the universities, and Indian seamen, etc., concluding by stating that the British party desired it to be stated that they should have the right to control work conducted in the British colonies. Roy asked what was meant by "control"; if we meant as a result of a decision by the Comintern—yes; if we meant to control the movement in the colonies, this must be decided by the ECCI. Evelyn Roy asked how many Indian organisations existed in England, and whether the party would assist in distributing the *Masses of India*, whether we would send a list of these organisations to Paris so that copies could be mailed, and stated that we could have as many copies as we wished for distribution as required. To this I agreed.

Roy said that we should not look upon him as an individual. In Europe a bureau of Indian communists had been entrusted with supervision of the communist activity in India. Close co-operation between the British party and this bureau was essential. They published literature from time to time, and he wished the colonial committee to take the responsibility of circulating this literature first among all Indians in England and second to find some method of sending supplies to India. Some understanding on the development of the possibilities to do work in India was necessary. They wished us to let them

know how to send supplies to India. With reference to our Indian contacts in universities, these would eventually come back to India, and it was desirable that they should be put in contact with the European Indian bureau.

Evelyn Roy stated that literature could be sent through sailors. Dutt asked what could be done with it in India, and Roy stated that he had addresses in Bombay, Colombo and Calcutta. Evelyn Roy said she saw Banerji and Khan in Paris and suggested the formation of a loose committee of Indians, Egyptians and Irish for concerted action against British imperialism. This was extraparty, and the party should push it. In her opinions sympathisers at Oxford and elsewhere among Indian students should be made to join the party openly, and when they returned to India should take up the fight there if necessary in the law courts for propaganda purposes. It was ridiculous not to have them openly connected with the party as I have reported.

Sneevliet said that he had to use these nationalist intellectuals for work, not for trials; that there were only a few of them and they should be handled carefully. In his opinion it was best to work as the British party were doing, secretly. Evelyn Roy disagreed and Sneevliet referred to the experience of the Dutch party, which had been unable to make use of good comrades because they were known to the authorities, and said that her suggestion was all humbug.

Roy stated that he agreed with Sneevliet that some organisation is advisable, but he insisted on organised effort in this work. These Indian student sympathisers should be prepared to join the Indian party and contact with Roy is essential. We could not control the work from Britain. Direction was not possible and even harmful. The British party should carry on propaganda and organise as much as possible so as to supply the Indian Bureau with a number of trained workers. The direction or leadership of the British party should go no further.

Evelyn Roy said that colonial peoples felt that the communist parties act in an imperialist spirit. Our request regarding control of work within the British empire was a species of imperialism.

Roy stated that agitation among the Indians was important

and should be developed. When it has been developed and groups of sympathisers are established the Indian Bureau will have reason to exist and should consist of these Indian party sympathisers.

Dutt reported upon work in the Welfare League.

Evelyn Roy desired that I should return via Paris in order to see about the transport of supplies of literature for work among Indians in England.

Roy said that he wishes us to write to him regarding the movements of Chamanlal etc., under cover of Suceviet, and said that it was advisable that someone should go to Paris and see about literature transports. Rose Cohen was to see Gertrude Hessler next weekend, she might see to arrangements regarding transport at the same time. It would also be as well for Upadhyaya to see the comrade in charge of this work in Paris.

This concluded the meeting.

Later, Gertrude Hessler suggested that some responsible member of the party executive should have come to the conference and not myself, and that Roy wanted information. Dutt was to stay two days to discuss his work in India and reach an understanding with Roy, Upadhyaya also delayed his return as Roy wished to discuss his work with him also.

R. W. ROBSON  
(*Communist Papers*)

## 5. INTRODUCTION TO KARL MARX'S

### "THE FUTURE RESULTS OF BRITISH RULE IN INDIA"

The following is one of the three articles written by Marx in 1853. Apart from its theoretical value, the article shows how remarkably well-informed the writer was at that remote epoch when India was a fabulous terra incognita even to the leading statesmen of Britain. All through its bloody history British domination of India has been either praised or condemned. To

some it is an unmixed good and to the others an unmixed evil. As far back as 1853, when so little was known as to the state of affairs in India, the critical mind of Marx grasped the historical significance of British conquest of India. While bitterly condemning imperialist robbery, Marx indicated the great revolutionary effect that would result from British conquest. He declared with his characteristic boldness that effect would not in a mean degree make up for the evil done to India by the British conquerors. Today we see how correct was the forecast made by Marx. British conquest has had in India the significance of a great revolution. There are few among Indian nationalists who are capable of conceiving this aspect of the British rule. Having accomplished an historical mission British rule in India became a positive hindrance to the normal progress of the forces let loose by the revolution. This counterrevolutionary phase of the British rule has done immensely more harm to India than the massacre, plunder and pillage committed in the earlier stages. What remains for it now is only to be overthrown. In fact this well-merited overthrow is already overdue. This delay has been caused by the retarded maturing of the social forces that are destined to complete the revolution unwittingly begun by the British conquerors. But at last the ground is ready for the final battle. The Indian nation stands in battle array equipped with the means and weapons to drive the foreign intruder out.

(*Masses*, No 11,  
November 1925)

## 5. The First Indian Communist Conference in Kanpur

### INTRODUCTION

The First Indian Communist Conference (26-28 December 1925, Kanpur) was convened by Satyabhakta, who was not a member of any of the recognised communist groups functioning in India at the time and the leaders of which were prosecuted and sentenced in the Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy Case. However it is necessary to put the record straight by stating that the idea of holding such a conference was first mooted by the leaders of the recognised communist groups, particularly by S. A. Dange from jail. All the same, it is necessary to record here the facts about Satyabhakta, a member of the national-revolutionary (terrorist) group in UP, who was influenced by the October Socialist Revolution, by the achievements of the Soviet Union, and was attracted to the principles of communism and attempted to form a legal communist party in Kanpur.

This party convened an "Indian Communist Conference" to meet in Kanpur at the time of the annual session of the Indian National Congress. Satyabhakta invited all communist groups then functioning in India. At the conference, Satyabhakta's own ideas were rejected. The conference became the instrument of bringing together all the genuine communist groups in the country, thus creating the first Central Committee of the

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CPI and framing its first constitution. It is this all-India centre of the CPI which during the next 3-4 years organised militant mass trade-union and kisan movement, formed workers' and peasants' parties in various provinces which in December 1928 united in an All-India Workers' and Peasants' Party at its conference in Calcutta. Thus it created a new mass force for the country's independence struggle—a mass force which under the leadership of the working class fought for the acceptance and implementation of an anti-imperialist antifeudal national-revolutionary programme by the country's liberation movement. It is against this mass force that the imperialists struck hard by launching the Meerut Conspiracy Case in March 1929.

We will relate the story of Satyabhakta's "Indian Communist Party" on the basis of his own documents and of their critical examination. Satyabhakta's mistake was that he thought that the genuine communist groups were prosecuted and not allowed to function just because they claimed affiliation to the Communist International. He wrongly contraposed national against international communism. His "national communism" was not even national because it failed to formulate a national-revolutionary programme for the country's independence struggle in which the organisations and struggles of workers and peasants had a revolutionary role to play. Such a programme had been put forward by the communists already before the Gaya Congress in December 1922. Satyabhakta was blissfully ignorant of this. In the Kanpur Case, the communists were prosecuted not just because they sought affiliation with the Communist International, but because they were seeking to organise a workers' and peasants' party with a revolutionary programme to overthrow the imperialist rule of his Britannic majesty! Satyabhakta's Indian Communist Party got its legality by repeating general principles of communism and saying very little about the revolutionary struggle for independence.

Therefore, we think, it is quite incorrect to place the documents of Satyabhakta's Indian Communist Party on the same level as the documents of the other communist groups of the period, as

Though the question regarding the theory of revolution as applicable to the Indian conditions did not find solution in these documents, they correctly defined the object of the party and its tasks and the sphere of its activity in relation to their times."<sup>1</sup>

Actually Satyabhakta's "definition of the object of the party and its tasks" resulted in his "National Communist Party" after his defeat and isolation at the conference and this party disappeared from the scene soon afterwards. It is the negation of Satyabhakta's ideas at the conference which led to the onward march of the Communist Party of India in the subsequent 3-4 years as we have stated above. Exclusive and uncritical reliance on Satyabhakta and on material obtained from him has led the two Soviet scientists, in their otherwise excellent paper, to the overestimation of the role of Satyabhakta and to their failure to demarcate him from the genuine communist groups of the period.

The starting point of the effort to hold a conference of the communist party openly and legally, both in the case of the recognised communist groups as well as in that of Satyabhakta, was a statement made by Ross Alston, the prosecution counsel in the Kanpur Conspiracy Case, in the course of his speech before the session judge stating that the accused in the case are not tried only because they held communist doctrines. We have not been able to locate when such a statement was made or the actual text. Both Dange and Satyabhakta assert that such a statement was made some time in May 1924. Turning to the recorded facts, we find that some time before the trial in the session court ended (i.e. before 23 May 1924) three members of the British House of Commons (communist and ILP) sent a telegram to the viceroy protesting against the trial and stating that the accused were being prosecuted only because they held communist views. To this telegram Ross Alston sent a reply stating that "the accused were prosecuted not because they believed in communist doctrines but that they were being prosecuted under a specific section of the

1. "First Conference of Indian Communists and the Foundation of the Communist Party of India" by A. M. Melnikov & L. V. Mitrokhin in *Problems of History* (Russian), March 1973, pp. 67-80.

Indian Penal Code".<sup>2</sup> On 19 May 1924 replying to a question in the British parliament the government spokesman stated the same thing.<sup>3</sup>

So the statement of Ross Alston must have appeared in the Indian press some time in the middle of May 1924.

Dange recalls that when this statement was made his reaction was: Why not utilise this to hold an open conference of the communist party? And he sent a message to that effect to Bombay comrades, through V. H. Joshi who was now and again coming to Kanpur to arrange for the defence of the accused in the case. The matter did not rest there. In the *Socialist*, which continued to appear even after Dange's arrest, edited by K. N. Joglekar and T. V. Parvate, letters were published discussing the question that an open communist conference be held to test the statement made in the course of the case proceedings.<sup>4</sup>

In his homage "Comrade Ghate, Our First General Secretary", Dange has said the same thing: "During the proceedings (of the Kanpur Conspiracy Case—G.A.) the government prosecutor made the statement that we were not being tried for holding communist views or preaching them. We were being tried for conspiracy to overthrow the government and the king-emperor's sovereignty. At the end of the case a question was raised by me whether we should not proceed with our plans for holding a conference of communists and founding the party as we intended to do before our arrest. Muzaffar Ahmad was against it. Shaukat Usmani did not mind giving a trial to the idea. Nalini Gupta had no opinion. I was positively for it. V. H. Joshi from our group in Bombay, who looked after the defence arrangements with the help of the Kanpur people like Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi and others, was given the task of conveying our ideas to others. Usmani asked his Kanpur contacts to help. This way arose the first conference of the communists

2. This information was given by Ross Alston while arguing against the High Court Appeal of the accused in the case in November 1924 (*Leader*, 7 November 1924).

3. See section iii of 1924 for fuller details.

4. This statement is made on the authority of S. A. Dange. The actual issue of the *Socialist* in which the letter of K. N. Joglekar and T. V. Parvate appeared has not been secured.

which met in Kanpur at the time of the Congress session in 1925.”<sup>5</sup>

Dange's idea of holding an open conference of the communist party could not be implemented by the communist groups. But the fact that the question was mooted and openly discussed in the *Socialist* early in 1924 shows that pioneers of the Communist Party were already thinking in terms of an all-India conference of communists to create a countrywide organisation and an all-India centre.

Satyabhakta's reaction to the official statement that the propaganda of communism as such was not illegal led him to organise his own Indian Communist Party legally. We will now proceed to give an account of his Indian Communist Party basing ourselves on the documentary material he has kindly supplied us and supplemented by material from other sources, particularly the confidential reports of the government of India.

Satyabhakta has given his own background in an article "Some Reminiscences of My Life as a Journalist" in a Hindi monthly *Dnyan* (April 1956) which published several articles devoted to his sixtieth birthday. He hailed from Bharatpur (Rajasthan) and already as a young man he was a follower of extremist politics and believed in "revolutionary activities". In the middle of 1913 he was collecting explosives and attempting to make bombs in the course of which there was an explosion and he was injured. Since then he says he was watched by the police for the next 20 years. He participated in the first non-cooperation movement and, after its withdrawal in 1922, he turned to the study of the October Socialist Revolution in Russia and to communism. Intelligence bureau chief Cecil Kaye records that Satyabhakta corresponded with Sylvia Pankhurst who was then editing *Workers' Dreadnought*, the organ of the CPGB, to obtain communist literature. In the beginning of 1923 Satyabhakta joined Radha Mohan Gokulji, another associate of the revolutionary group, who was then bringing out a leftwing weekly *Pranvir* from Nagpur. He assisted in editing this paper from April to October 1923. David Petrie, the intelligence bureau chief, who succeeded Kaye,

records that "He (Satyabhakta) attracted attention too as a correspondent of S. A. Dange..."

Towards the end of 1923, Satyabhakta returned to Kanpur and participated in labour activities there. At the beginning of 1924 there was a strike of cotton-mill workers of the Victoria Mill, which lasted for one and a half months. The authorities sought to crush the strike by police firing on strikers. Later the collector of Kanpur instituted an inquiry into this firing and its report was published in *Pioneer* dated 26 April 1924. The report not only justified the firing but also expressed the suspicion that bolsheviks were behind this strike, and that this must be inquired into.

On this Satyabhakta published a letter in *Dainik Vartaman* of 31 April 1924 in which he gave the details of the strike and said that the Mazdoor Sabha had collected and spent nearly two thousand rupees in the cause of the movement. He also said, "there may be people in the Kanpur labour movement who believe in communist or bolshevik theories but there are no bolshevik agents among them". He added that the collector has raised the bolshevik bogey firstly in order to screen the brutal firing by the police on the workers; and secondly to involve Kanpur labour leaders in a case like the Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy Case.

In the article in *Dnyan* Satyabhakta briefly describes how he came to set up his Indian Communist Party in Kanpur: "When I came to Kanpur, Communist Conspiracy Case was going on there. Dange, Muzaffar Ahmad, Shaukat Usmani were among the accused. I used to attend the proceedings. A young man who came from Calcutta to help Muzaffar Ahmad used to put up with me for a long time (the reference is to Abdul Halim—G.A.). In the course of his judgement, the judge said: 'The accused have been convicted because of their conspiratorial activities (against British raj)...communism as such is not illegal(?)'<sup>6</sup> Basing on this I established 'The Indian Communist Party' in Kanpur and for one year it carried on work. 150 members joined it. This was in 1924 and 1925. During this time, I was watched by police. My house and bookshop were

<sup>6</sup> All this is incorrect. Correct authenticated facts have been stated earlier—G A

searched. My book *Agle Sat Sal* (The Next Seven Years) was confiscated. At the end of 1925, I arranged to hold 'Indian Communist Conference' at the time of the All-India National Congress session in Kanpur.."

Coming to the details, we find that it was in the Hindi daily *Aj* of 12 July 1924 that Satyabhakta first announced his intention to set up his Indian Communist Party. In his letter he refers to "Russia where the communist movement has won success and communist rule is established" and asserts that "communism is the only path of uplifting the unhappy and exploited people of this world" The actual formation of his party is announced in his letter published in *Aj* on 1 September 1924. In this he defined the main aims of the party as: "The right of peasants on land, of workers in factories and mills to be recognised and that they should be recipients of the product and profit obtained from land and factories; all employees be ensured decent living conditions" He called upon all wage-earners, including peasants, workers, clerks, school-masters, railway and postal employees and peons, etc. to join the party. He signed the letter as secretary, *Bharatiya Samyawadi Dal*. The announcement also appeared in the English daily *Indian World* of Kanpur and other papers.

Later in September Satyabhakta published two 4-page leaflets, one in Hindi and the other in English, both entitled "The Indian Communist Party (*Bharatiya Samyawadi Dal*)" with a membership form printed at the end. They were signed "Secretary, Indian Communist Party" with Satyabhakta, Socialist Bookshop, Kanpur, as printer and publisher.<sup>7</sup> The English leaflet defines the object as: "Establishment of complete swarajya and the system of society based upon the common ownership and communal control of the means and instruments of production and distribution of wealth by and in the interest of the whole community of India." Under the head "principles" of the party, the English leaflet says: "The present zamindari system is the sole cause of all the miseries of the Indian peasants... therefore, the zamindari system must be abolished at

7. The original of both the leaflets are in the Meerut Conspiracy Case Record in Bagerhatta's file (D 374) seized by the police from his house.

once and the peasants should be deemed as the rightful masters of the fruits of their labour."

The Hindi leaflet defines the tasks of the party thus: "It is the duty of the toiling people to organise themselves openly and to fully participate in political movements. In this way they will be able to capture all councils, big and small, district boards, municipalities and other bodies which are today ruling the country. If this happens, all these government councils, offices, police and armed forces, which today in the main oppress the people, will be turned into instruments of ending their misery. With their help the injustice and violence of the selfish can then be ended."

The Hindi leaflet further states that "the Indian Communist Party was fully determined to supersede or merge with itself all other parties which maintain open or secret relations with the rich or the capitalists". The leaflet concludes by saying that if the toiling people rally under the banner of the Indian Communist Party, stand firm and set to work, they will be able to change the present laws and system under which the poor are oppressed and robbed of the fruits of their labour.

The UP government banned both these leaflets by a notification in its gazette dated 11 October 1924. Satyabhakta published a letter in the daily *Vartaman* of Kanpur on 20 October 1924 protesting against this ban: "It is a cowardice of the government to ban the rules of the party without declaring the party itself illegal." Even if the government were to do so, he was prepared to declare that he was a communist and wanted to implement its aims and objects and face the consequences, he added. In another letter published in the daily *Aj* on 5 November 1924, he reiterated his resolve "to face repression in order to settle once and for all the question whether we have the right to organise a communist party or not". In this letter, answering the question "Why a new organisation?", he said: "Swaraj has not been defined; what changes we want in the present order have not been defined. Besides the National Congress is strongly under the influence of the very rich people. Communism wants to eliminate disparity between the rich and the poor." Answering the question why he did not call his party "socialist", he says in the same letter, "Henry Ford, Ramsay MacDonald and Lenin all talk of communism and

socialism, but in their ideals and principles there is a world of difference. Therefore, to make our aim clear, the name of the party also must be clear." But the main point he made in this letter was that since legal communist parties existed in other countries of the British empire, as in England, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and Canada—why not one in India?

Thus we see that though Satyabhakta's Indian Communist Party talked of complete swaraj, of abolishing landlordism and ending all exploitation, he called upon the toiling people to achieve all this by "capturing all councils, big and small, district boards and municipalities and other bodies which are today ruling the country". He naively expected to supersede or merge with his party all other political parties having relations with the rich and the capitalists so that the toiling masses rallying under the banner of the Indian Communist Party could march to the millennium. He tended to ignore or underestimate the communist movement which was rising through sacrifice and struggles and sought to propagate a "national communism" which he thought would be legal.

The British government and its intelligence department, who closely watched the activities of Satyabhakta, raided his house and bookshop several times and confiscated some of his publications, were quite aware of this distinction between the genuine communist groups and Satyabhakta. Thus Cecil Kaye in his report to the government of India said in September 1924: "Satyabhakta and his associates are men of no weight whatever and it is as certain as anything can be that the 'Communist Party of India' will be nothing but a name."<sup>8</sup>

The government of India knew that Satyabhakta had no contact whatsoever with the Communist International. His name was included in the thirteen names originally selected by the British authorities for launching the Kanpur Conspiracy Case, but was later dropped for want of evidence. In September 1924 they were still saying that Satyabhakta was not in contact with the bolsheviks (i.e. the communists). All the same, they continued to watch his activities as a potential communist. In December 1924 Satyabhakta's Hindi leaflet "An Appeal to the

Lovers of Communism" (Samyavadke premiyonse appeal) dated 12 November 1924 fell into their hands. David Petric, the intelligence bureau chief at the time, advised against its proscription but stated that "Satyabhakta's activities are being closely watched".<sup>9</sup>

On 14 December 1924, *Pranvir* published the first quarterly report of the Indian Communist Party in a brief letter signed by Satyabhakta as its secretary. In this he states that 78 members have joined his party, the bulk of whom are from Kanpur city, the other districts of UP and from Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. He also gives here the names of the prominent members of his group: Maulana Hasrat Mohani, Narayan Prasad Arora (MLC), Manilal Awasthi, Rama Shankar Awasthi (editor, *Vartaman*),<sup>10</sup> Pandit Ram Prasad Sharma, Radha Mohan Gokulji,<sup>11</sup> Ram Gopal Vidyalkar (editor, *Pranvir*) and Sureshchandra Bhattacharya<sup>12</sup> (subeditor, *Vartaman*).

About the same time, Satyabhakta's office was raided by the police and they took away copies of *Volunteer* and the *Revolutionary* which were organs of the national-revolutionary group (HRA) in UP. Satyabhakta issued a statement to the press dissociating himself from the *Revolutionary* and the *Volunteer* which he said "contains many things which are against the policy of our party".<sup>13</sup> In the same month, one Mukut Bihari, editor of *Swadesh*, was arrested in Gorakhpur, while selling *Bolshevism kya hai*, a 16-page pamphlet in Hindi in the form of questions and answers, written and published by Satyabhakta in October 1924. Protesting against the arrest, Satyabhakta published a statement saying: "If government is unable to leave the open activities of honest and straightforward people then this movement will go in the hands of conspirators and of those who work underground."<sup>14</sup> In March Mukut Bihari was released and the case against him was withdrawn. On 18 March 1925, in the UP legislative council, Lucknow, the UP

9. Home Pol Progs, 1924, F 449.

10. Author of *Life of Lenin* (Hindi).

11. Author of *Communism kya hai?* (Hindi), 1927.

12. Later arrested and sentenced in Kakori Conspiracy Case.

13. *Pranvir*, 8 February 1925.

14. *Vartaman*, 18 February 1925.

government in answer to the question put by Krishna Dutt Paliwal stated that "as long as the 'Indian Communist Party' of Kanpur does not engage in illegal activities, it has nothing to fear".<sup>15</sup> David Petrie, chief of the central intelligence bureau, records :

"In March 1925 the *Vartaman* published a second quarterly report of the Indian Communist Party, which claimed that by the end of February, its members had risen to 215 of whom 139 were the residents of the United Provinces... In the same month information was received to the effect that the communist M.P. Saklatvala was communicating with Satyabhakta. Towards the middle of 1925 Satyabhakta issued another leaflet entitled 'The Future Programme of the Indian Communist Party'..."<sup>16</sup> This leaflet, which is dated 18 June 1925, mentions for the first time that an Indian Communist Conference will be held at the same time as the session of the Indian National Congress due to be held in Kanpur.

On 7 July 1925, Satyabhakta's bookshop was again raided by the police who seized communist literature printed in England by the CPGB and also some works printed in India. *Hindustan Times* dated 16 July 1925 published the news under the headline: "Communist Party—Police raid uncalled for—Secretary explains." Below it the paper gave Satyabhakta's statement saying that not a single book taken away by the police contained anything against the government or the emperor of India. "The only fault", he continued, "that can be found with these books is that they have been published by the Communist Party of England. Has India been reduced to the level of a prison, whose inhabitants have lost freedom to communicate with the outside world and read books published in other countries, especially England? Is it any crime to be in possession of the communist literature?" Satyabhakta further said that he had written to the home member of the government of India to supply him with a list of proscribed and prohibited books (which, of course, they never did—G.A.).<sup>17</sup>

We have given in brief an account of Satyabhakta's Indian

15. *Pratap*, 23 March 1925.

16. *Communism in India, 1924-1927*, p. 174.

17. Home-Pol. F 294, 1925.



says gave the programme of the Hindustan Republican Association, is dated 1 January 1925. The statement issued by Satyabhakta repudiating the same appeared in *Pranvir* on 8 February 1925. Roy is quite right in sharply criticising Satyabhakta for repudiating this illegal leaflet of the Hindustan Republican Association.

It is not surprising that the police searched Satyabhakta's office for this pamphlet in the beginning of 1925 and found it there. We know from confidential police reports of the time that the government of India believed that "this Indian Communist Party set up at Kanpur was a direct result of the revolutionary conspiracy known as the Hindustan Republican Association and that Satyabhakta was merely a figurehead. While Satyabhakta himself seems to have steered fairly clear of revolutionary activity, yet there is good reason to believe that his knowledge of the secret work of the Hindustan Republican Association was much more extensive than it should have been."<sup>18</sup>

Satyabhakta himself has quoted from this the phrase that "he seems to have steered fairly clear of revolutionary activity" and stated that he was an inactive member of the revolutionary movement (HRA) in his recent book *Kranti Path-ke Pathik*.<sup>19</sup>

It is worthwhile giving the main points of this leaflet which in its subtitle says it is "An organ of the Revolutionary Party of India—1 January 1925, Vol 1, No 1". Having described the emergence of "the revolutionary movement of young India" in

18. Petrie: *Communism in India, 1924-1927*, pp 173-74.

19. "*Kranti Path-ke Pathik*" (Hindi), Mathura, November 1973. On page 194, after quoting a part of the above mentioned passage from Petrie's book, Satyabhakta says, "Though I had no objection whatsoever to the principle of armed revolution, I never sought to place myself in the front ranks (of the revolutionary party). That is why, as the official report says, I did not come into the clutches of the police, though I kept myself informed about the Revolutionary Party." In confirmation he quotes from Sachindranath Sanyal's *Bandhjeeran* (p. 136): "Satyabhakta wanted to organise a party on the basis of the principles of communism. A fundamental principle of communism is that success can only be achieved along the path of revolution. We were revolutionaries in the true sense of the word. Satyabhakta did not want to proceed along the path of revolution. But he had many good books on communism. I lived in his house and read them all."

Communist Party. We also have detailed the main contents of the various leaflets, statements and literature issued by him on behalf of the party, without much comment. It would be useful to critically review some of his earlier statements as has been done by the *Masses* (editor: M. N. Roy) in an article "What is Communist Party?" in the issue of January 1926.

The *Masses* expresses surprise at the appearance of "this particular Communist Party of Kanpur... on the scene with an open office, signboard, red flag and all, in spite of the legal ban of communist organisations". There was actually as yet no ban on the Communist Party or its organisations. The government was prosecuting communists for their anti-imperialist and revolutionary agitations, thus seeking to prevent its organisation taking shape and getting a mass basis. The ban came much later—in 1934, when the government found that despite three conspiracy cases, the movement advanced, obtained base among the workers, peasants and revolutionary intellectuals, and became a force in the anti-imperialist and freedom struggle.

Roy refers to Satyabhakta's first public statement which appeared in *Vartaman* on 31 April 1924 and through which Satyabhakta was replying to the charge of the British district collector of Kanpur who published a report stating that Kanpur strike was the work of bolshevik agents. In this statement there was mention of "M. N. Roy as a bolshevik agent". There may have been some other statements by Satyabhakta at the time in which he may have dissociated himself from "M. N. Roy, a bolshevik agent". He was afraid of being involved in another Kanpur conspiracy case and that is why out of timidity he may have made such a statement.

Roy quotes Satyabhakta's first quarterly report in which he gave the general composition of the 78 members of his Indian Communist Party. Of course, there was no actual worker among them, a fact which Roy underlines. For the matter of that, there were no actual workers also among the real communist groups existing at the time. Roy mentions that there was a police raid on the office of the Indian Communist Party in December 1924 in which the leaflet *the Revolutionary* was seized and Satyabhakta then issued a statement dissociating himself from the same. Now this raid must have been some time in January 1925 because the leaflet itself, which as Roy

says gave the programme of the Hindustan Republican Association, is dated 1 January 1925. The statement issued by Satyabhakta repudiating the same appeared in *Pranvir* on 8 February 1925. Roy is quite right in sharply criticising Satyabhakta for repudiating this illegal leaflet of the Hindustan Republican Association.

It is not surprising that the police searched Satyabhakta's office for this pamphlet in the beginning of 1925 and found it there. We know from confidential police reports of the time that the government of India believed that "this Indian Communist Party set up at Kanpur was a direct result of the revolutionary conspiracy known as the Hindustan Republican Association and that Satyabhakta was merely a figurehead. While Satyabhakta himself seems to have steered fairly clear of revolutionary activity, yet there is good reason to believe that his knowledge of the secret work of the Hindustan Republican Association was much more extensive than it should have been."<sup>18</sup>

Satyabhakta himself has quoted from this the phrase that "he seems to have steered fairly clear of revolutionary activity" and stated that he was an inactive member of the revolutionary movement (HRA) in his recent book *Kranti Path-ke Pathik*.<sup>19</sup>

It is worthwhile giving the main points of this leaflet which in its subtitle says it is "An organ of the Revolutionary Party of India—1 January 1925, Vol 1, No 1". Having described the emergence of "the revolutionary movement of young India" in

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powerful words, "as the manifestation of new life" it goes on to say: "This foreign rule must be abolished. They have no justification to rule over India except the justification of the sword and, therefore, the revolutionary party has taken to the sword. But the sword of the revolutionary party bears ideas as its edge" (emphasis added—C.A.). Defining its political ideas, the leaflet said that its aim was "to establish a federal republic of the United States of India by an organised and armed revolution". It goes on to state further:

"The final constitution of this republic shall be framed and declared at a time when the representatives of India shall have the power to carry out their decisions. But the basic principles of this republic shall be universal suffrage, and the abolition of all systems which make the exploitation of man by man possible, e.g. the railways and other means of transportation and communication, the mines and other kinds of every great industries, such as manufacture of steel and ships—all these shall be nationalised. In this republic, the electorate shall have the right to recall their representatives if so desired, otherwise democracy shall be a mockery. In this republic, the legislature shall have the power to control the executives and replace them whenever necessity will arise."

"The revolutionary party", it said, "is not national but international... it aims at not competition but cooperation between different nations and states... it follows the footsteps of the great Indian, rishis of the glorious past and of bolshevik Russia in modern age."

But the leaflet did not give a programme of demands of anti-imperialist, antifeudal democratic revolution nor a call to organise workers and peasants and unleash militant mass activity to achieve those demands. It further proclaimed that "Indian revolutionaries are neither terrorists nor anarchists". They "do not believe that terrorism alone can bring independence". The present government exists solely because the foreigners have successfully been able to terronise the Indian people... This official terrorism has surely to be met by counterterrorism... The party has deliberately abstained itself from entering into this terrorist campaign at the present moment even at the greatest provocation... simply because the party is waiting to deliver the final blow."

Criticising Satyabhakta's disavowal of the programme contained in the manifesto of the Revolutionary Party, Roy says: "Apart from its naivete and quaintness (about the rishis) the programme raised issues of vital importance, namely complete national independence, organisation of a democratic state and the allies of the Indian people in their struggle for freedom. Secondly, according to his own statement the principles of Mr Satyabhakta and his 'Communist Party' are against these vital issues."

Further Roy criticised Satyabhakta, for having "informed the government of his willingness to deal only in books approved by the police". But it must be said to the credit of Satyabhakta that as early as in 1925, he was importing and selling important communist books.

"The Future Programme of the Indian Communist Party" and "The First Indian Communist Conference" are, strictly speaking, not the documents of the Communist Party of India, but of Satyabhakta's *Indian Communist Party*. But they are part of the preparation for convening the First Communist Conference. In these documents Satyabhakta is attempting to give the aims and objects and programme of his legal Indian Communist Party in a more precise form.

As we pointed out, Satyabhakta was seeking to demarcate himself from the existing communist groups by attempting to form a legal communist party by presenting its principles and practice in a utopian and naive way. Thus in the very first paragraph of the first document, he defines his aim as "to establish the right of forming a communist party in India openly". "Undoubtedly", he says, "the government attempted to suppress this party, but owing to our open policy and straightforward methods, it could not find its way to do so."

Before we come to the proceedings and the documents of the First Communist Conference, let us see what was the reaction of the existing communist groups in India and their leaders to Satyabhakta's announcement that his Indian Communist Party was convening a conference of Indian communists in Kanpur at the time of the Congress session. We have the recorded reactions of Ghate and Joglekar from Bombay, of Muzaffar Ahmad from Calcutta and of M. Singaravelu from Madras. We have no recorded reactions of comrades from

Lahore, but we know that comrades who were working with Abdul Majid attended.

In his article "Foundation Conference of the Communist Party of India, Kanpur, December 1925", which appeared in *New Age* weekly dated 6 February 1966, S. V. Ghatge records: "After the Kanpur Case, those of us who were working in the Socialist group were considering the formation of a party of the working class in our country.<sup>20</sup> In the meantime, an announcement was seen in the daily press about calling of a conference of the communists in the country at Kanpur... The convener of the conference was one Satyabhakta, then a Congress worker. He had the blessings of Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, Maulana Hasrat Mohani and a few from among the revolutionary groups, though of this I am not certain. M. N. Roy also had sent a message to different groups of communists in the country to help and make the conference at Kanpur a success."<sup>21</sup>

Ghatge says further: "We in Bombay decided to attend the conference. J. P. Bagerhatta, who was in touch with M. N. Roy, was in Bombay and we together decided to attend the conference." Ghatge records that the resolutions committee at the conference consisted of Satyabhakta, Joglekar, Bagerhatta, S. Hassan (Lahore), Krishnaswamy (Madras) and Ghatge himself. "Satyabhakta objected to the name Communist Party of India as he smelt bolshevik flavour and wanted the name to be Indian Communist Party. Ultimately our suggestion was accepted. The resolutions were placed before the open session on the third day. As president M. Singaravelu Chettiyar, two joint secretaries Bagerhatta and myself and an executive committee were elected. Muzaffar Ahmad was in the executive committee." Ghatge also records: "Within four days, Satyabhakta announced the formation of a new National Communist Party and left the organisation in the formation of which he himself was a

20. This is obviously a reference to Dange's suggestion referred to earlier—G.A.

21. This is probably not correct. The intelligence bureau of the government of India which intercepted all Roy's letters says this: "The proposals for this conference seem to have drawn the attention of Roy and Sipassi to Satyabhakta, and they began to make enquiries about him and his organisation." (D. Petric: *Communism in India*, p. 177.)

party. When he was approached to hand over the minutes and documents of the conference, he refused to pass them on since he had established his own party."

Ghate has given an almost identical account in two other places : in the *New Age* monthly of April 1958 in his "Reminiscences" and in his tape-recorded interview preserved in the oral history tape in the Nehru Memorial Institute. The only additional facts recorded in the "Reminiscences" are that it was decided that the headquarters of the party were to be at Bombay, and Ghate adds further : "We set to work. In 1926, I remember, we issued a manifesto in the name of the Communist Party of India against Hindu-Muslim riots and for communal unity."

Ghate's testimony is of the greatest importance, firstly, because he was present at the conference and had a hand in drafting the resolutions adopted, and also because he was elected one of the general secretaries of the party and continued to act as such for several years afterwards. What Ghate has recorded is confirmed and supplemented by K. N. Joglekar, who also participated in the conference. In his reminiscences Joglekar records that he and the Bombay group came to know through V. H. Joshi, who was going to Kanpur to meet Dange in jail, that Satyabhakta, Hasrat Mohani and others were taking initiative to organise a communist conference in December 1925. He states : "We, the Bombay group, gave support to the idea and decided to participate in as large a number as possible." About Satyabhakta, Joglekar says : "At the initial stages of the defence committee in Kanpur Conspiracy Case, he was to some extent helpful to us in the defence work. But his national communism ideas brought conflict between him and Joshi and rest of us."

Muzaffar Ahmad, another participant in the conference, also confirms the above account in his writings both before and after the split in the party. In his article in *New Age* monthly of April 1958, Muzaffar Ahmad says, "I was released from there (Almora district jail) in September 1925...and stayed on in Almora. Satyabhakta wrote a letter to me in Almora...requested me to join the Kanpur conference...on reaching Kanpur, I found comrades S. V. Ghate, K. N. Joglekar, P. S. Nimbkar. I met Ayodhya Prasad and Janaki Prasad Begghatta." After describing how "our viewpoints clashed with that of S. V. . .

bhakta", he adds, "Satyabhakta left the place with his papers and files" It is significant to note that Muzaffar Ahmad recognised the significance of the First Communist Conference in Kanpur in the history of the party in this article of 1958 and also in his *Sama Kaler Katha* (August 1963). In the article in *New Age* monthly, he says, "uniting the communists of various places we constitute for the first time the central committee of the CPI in Kanpur itself. The conference was openly held and, therefore, the committee was also constituted openly." For this, he comments, "We had to face plenty of criticism—we deserve this criticism, but there was no other way either." "Had we not joined the conference at Kanpur, the Communist Party of Satyabhakta would have hindered us considerably in the future."

He emphasises the same point in *Sama Kaler Katha*. "In the beginning for several years the central committee of the CPI was not organised. The first central committee of the party was organised in 1925. First constitution of the party was published in 1926. At that time, there was a great possibility of the CPI being affiliated to the Communist International. In this newly-organised central committee there were members of the Communist Party formed abroad. But as the party members did not consider the membership sufficient so they did not apply for party being affiliated to the Communist International. All the same, the Communist International considered the CPI as a part of itself."<sup>22</sup>

But the same Muzaffar Ahmad, after the split in the party, writing in his *Myself and the CPI*, considered the First Communist Conference an "entirely childish affair". According to him, the CPI formed in Tashkent was affiliated to the Communist International. "That is the real date of the foundation of the Communist Party of India", he says and asks, "then why did the Right Communist Party rush in the direction of Kanpur to determine the date of its foundation? Was the Communist International a mote in their eyes?" Thereafter Muzaffar Ahmad goes on to slander the CPI and Dange in his usual way.

<sup>22</sup>. *Op. cit.*, p 34.

Actually, the facts are the other way round. It is not the CPI and Dange, but Muzaffar Ahmad and the CPM who have repudiated the Communist International and its successor the world communist and workers' movement and placed themselves outside its pale. That is why he repudiates his own stand about the Kanpur conference. He now conveniently forgets that it was the Central Secretariat of the CPI before the split that took the unanimous decision about the date of the foundation of the party being 1925. The Secretariat at that time consisted of Ajoy Ghosh, B. T. Ranadive, P. C. Joshi, M. Basavapunniah, Z. A. Ahmad, S. A. Dange and A. K. Gopalan. It was on 19 August 1959 that this Secretariat took the decision. It was on 20 August 1959 that the party centre sent a letter to the Indonesian Communist Party in answer to its query that "It was in December 1925 that in a meeting of representatives of the various groups of communists in the country held at Kanpur that the Communist Party of India was formed." This letter was signed by B. T. Ranadive. All these facts are stated by S. V. Ghate in his article in *New Age* weekly dated 30 August 1970.

Thus the comment of Muzaffar Ahmad on the Kanpur conference in his latest book is based on bias and prejudice. Let us now consider the additional facts he gives there. He gives here the names of eleven prominent persons who attended the conference of which the only new names which we have not mentioned so far are those of Swami Kumaranand and Radha Mohan Gokulji. He mentions that Abdul Majid was not present but his name was put on the executive (in absentia). He says that Shapurji Saklatvala did not come as the CPGB asked him not to preside over the conference of a communist party of a doubtful origin. He disputes the statement of S. V. Ghate that the conference had the blessings of Ganesh Shankar Vid-yarthi by pointing out that he did not give a plot to set up a camp (for the conference) within the boundaries of the vast Congress Nagar built for the Congress session. He further states that Roy wrote more than one lengthy letter to Ghate severely criticising the whole business (i.e. the Kanpur conference).<sup>23</sup>

23. *Myself and the CPI*, pp. 407-13.



Certain conclusions can be drawn from these reactions of the existing communist groups to the announcement of the conference in Kanpur and the proceedings and the outcome of the conference. Firstly, the initiative of Satyabhakta and others to convene a conference of this nature met with a positive response from all the groups—not only those from Bombay and Bengal but those from Punjab and Madras as well, and all sent their representatives to the conference. Secondly, we do not know whether Satyabhakta's preparatory documents had reached these groups. It appears, however, that all these groups had come to know from the daily press about Satyabhakta's Indian Communist Party and its idea of keeping aloof from the international communist movement. Bombay and Calcutta groups were apprehensive of this tendency and they came to ensure that the Kanpur conference does not become a hindrance to the communist movement in India developing on right lines. Thirdly, we do not know what correspondence passed between Satyabhakta and Singaravelu; but the latter prepared his presidential address on cautious and safe lines. He got it printed in Madras and brought the copies with him to Kanpur. Fourthly, at the conference itself, the ideas of Satyabhakta were not accepted and though no decision was taken for international affiliation, the decisions were in the spirit of cooperation and solidarity with the international working-class and communist movement. Fifthly, though Satyabhakta and some of his colleagues were elected to the central executive committee by the conference, Satyabhakta later resigned and started his separate National Communist Party.

It is interesting to note here that Satyabhakta published the first number of his 8-page Hindi fortnightly *Samyavadi* on 1 January 1926, i.e. after the conference was over and had taken its decisions. From the contents it appears that he wanted to publish it just on the eve of the conference but was not able to do so. For instance, it prints the text of the provisional rules of his Indian Communist Party. In the editorial notes, Satyabhakta again reiterates his view regarding keeping touch with the international communist movement. In the concluding paragraph of its editorial article entitled "Our Path" (*Hamara Marg*) it puts forward a utopian and non-revolutionary perspective which ignores bitter class struggles ahead.

प्रथम भारतीय साम्यवादी काँग्रेस

स्वागत-समिति, कानपुर।

नं० 143

प्राप्त

रु०

शहर और इलाक़ा

स्वागत समिति की शीव V) प्राप्त हुई।

राशि

₹ 5 रुपये बनाये बाकी है

First Indian Communist Conference,

(प्रथम भारतीय साम्यवादी काँग्रेस काँग्रेस कमिटी कानपुर)

Reception Committee, Cawnpore.

स्वागत-समिति, कानपुर।

• استقبالیه کمیٹی کانپور •

नं० 133

प्राप्त

₹ 5 रुपये

से स्वागत

समिति की सेवरी की शीव V) पांच रुपया [ Five rupees ] प्राप्त हुई।

राशि

बनाए बाकी है

Receipt book of the first conference

The issue also contains short articles by Singaravelu, Maulana Azad Subhani and Radha Mohan Gokulji, in all of which the call for the organisation of the working class, peasants and toilers—who form the overwhelming majority of the people, and thus create an invincible force for the struggle for independence—was noticed. There is a one-page article on “Lenin—the Emancipator of the Poor” and on the developments in the “Present Bolshevik Russia”.

Coming to the conference proper, we find that its first session took place on 25 December in a special pandal built near the Congress pandal in Kanpur. According to *Kirti* (February 1926) 300 delegates attended the conference. Government of India's confidential report gives the number as about 500.<sup>24</sup> In the first session, Saklatvala's message was read out. This was followed by the speech of the chairman of the reception committee Hasrat Mohani and then by the presidential address of M. Singaravelu.

The second session met in the evening of 26 December. This was devoted to resolutions, while the third session was held on 27th and it was devoted to the adoption of the constitution and to the elections of the central executive committee.

On 28 December 1925 the central executive committee met and elected the office-bearers, the president, the vice-president, the general secretaries and the members of the CEC in charge of the various provinces.

We have quoted Muzaffar Ahmad above to say that Saklatvala did not come to the conference because the CPGB did not want him to go to a conference called by a communist party of doubtful origin. But from the text of his message dated 10 December 1925, it appears that Saklatvala took the conference seriously and probably knew or surmised that all the existing communist groups would attend the conference

The text of Hasrat Mohani's speech found in the *Indian Annual Register* appears to be the English text circulated to the press at the time. It tallies in content with the text given in Bengali in *Lagal*, Vol. I, No. 5, 21 January 1926—a weekly with which Muzaffar Ahmad was closely associated. The paragraph in which he defines the attitude towards the Communist

24. D. Petrie, *Communism in India, 1924 to 1927*, p. 179.

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प्रथम भारतीय साम्यवादी काँग्रेस

پہلی ہندوستانی کمیونسٹ کانگریس

First Indian Communist Co

प्रवेश टिकट

دخول

नाम

स्थान

टेलिग्राम ( : )

संख्या

प्रथम भारतीय साम्यवादी काँग्रेस



प्राप्तिका

Admission card and volunteer badge of the first conference

International is cautiously worded yet with a slight positive approach. Further Maulana Hasrat Mohani, in his eagerness to win Muslims to communism, was uncritically placing Islam on a higher pedestal than communism.

The presidential address of M. Singaravelu was widely reported in the contemporary press. Though treated rather contemptuously by Roy, it was on a fairly high political level.

The first day's proceedings concluded with the address of the president. In the second session in the evening of 26 December, resolutions were taken up and adopted. It should be noted that the 13 comrades who are mentioned in the third resolution as having suffered jail sentences were all communists, convicted in the Peshawar or Kanpur bolshevik conspiracy cases. And the point to be noted is that the Labour Kisan Party of Hindustan formed by Singaravelu was formally dissolved, which shows that at the time the idea was to function the Communist Party legally.

In the third session, on 27 December, the constitution of the Communist Party of India and the declaration form for the membership of the party were discussed and adopted. This constitution is different from that of Satyabhakta's Indian Communist Party. Though it refers to "the liberation of India from British imperialist domination" and has a provision for "distinguished members", is also defective. However it is the first authentic constitution of the Communist Party of India. It provides for the affiliation of "working-class unions" to the party and for "any bona fide worker or peasant being eligible for election as delegate for the annual conference". The significance of the "declaration form" consists in that it includes the text of the resolution adopted on 26 December 1925 for the "establishment and formation of the Communist Party of India". This was the most debated resolution which was adopted after the rejection of the view of Satyabhakta that the party should be called the Indian Communist Party.

The election of the central executive committee seems to have taken place on the same day. Though it was to consist of 30, only 16 were elected at the conference and 14 were to be co-opted later from the provinces.

The meeting of the central executive committee took place on 28 December at 10 a.m. in the president's camp, and accord-

# FIRST INDIAN COMMUNIST CONFERENCE

1925

## PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

### COMRADES

*Our Conference* - At a time when the opponents of Communism are attempting to crush our movement and prevent our making the world happier and plusher for all human beings dwelling in it, we communists in India are meeting in this hall today, to take a general view of the political and economic situation in India, and to

ally the industrial and agricultural workers whose benefit this conference is mainly held

Those Corpses of young men  
Those martyrs who hang from the gibbets,  
Those hearts pierced by the gray lead  
Cold and motionless as they seem live elsewhere with  
untampered vitality  
They live in other young men, O kings,  
They live in brothers ready to defy you  
They were purified by death, they were taught and exalted,  
Not a grave of the forgotten for freedom but grave seed  
for freedom, in its turn, to bear seed  
Which the winds carry afar and the rains and snows

nearby,  
Not a disembodied spirit, can the weapon of tyrants let loose  
But it stalks invisibly over the earth whispering, counselling,  
and exhorting  
It has been the history of humanity from the dawn of ages. I believe  
this may be the history of the few communists who today are put to  
undirected suffering for trying to serve their fellow men, all the world  
over

the suffering of these - that fact that goes to show that  
our noble comrades who are put kept in prison for speaking and writing  
ideas which need not have been condemned as offences. But the law of  
the land condemned them. They have been found guilty, by the harsh

of these with  
which will have  
of the  
be great  
the who  
of writing and

ing to the proceedings of the meeting, the office-bearers and organisers were elected

This meeting then issued a communique to the press announcing the formation of the Communist Party of India. The full text of this communique was found in the file of J. P. Bagerhatta, one of the general secretaries, which is preserved in the Meerut Conspiracy Case Record. The contents of this are almost identical with an earlier document except for the following opening sentence "As a result of the session of the First Communist Conference, the provisional Indian Communist Party was dissolved and a formal (?) party with its name as the Communist Party of India has been formed."

This is important because it expressly records the dissolution of the Indian Communist Party of Satyabhakta who convened the conference. This communique was issued to the press a little later, i.e. some time after the day-to-day reports of the conference had appeared in the press. For instance, it appeared in the *Leader of Allahabad* on 24 January 1926. The press report is datelined Delhi, 21 January, and opens with the sentence: "Mr Janaki Prasad Bagerhatta, member of All India Congress Committee and general secretary of the Communist Party of India, informs that the first (?) Communist Party of India has been dissolved and a formal party with its name as the Communist Party of India has been formed." The report summarises the same facts as given in the communique.

It is necessary to record here the testimony of Satyabhakta that his Indian Communist Party went into other hands and was dissolved. In his recent book he says: "In reality, I did not feel the least dissatisfaction or regret when the 'Indian Communist Party' was captured by other workers. Though I had taken up the work, inspired by my inner urge, the lack of resources and the continual obstacles placed in my way by the government placed a great strain on my time and energy and I felt exhausted. It was against my nature to secure financial aid by hook or crook either in the country or from abroad. That is why I myself wanted that some other workers should take the responsibility off my hands and relieve me."<sup>25</sup>

Here we have the testimony of Satyabhakta himself that his

25. *Kranti Path-ke Pathik*, p. 149, my translation—C.A.

party, the Indian Communist Party, was captured by other workers. In these memoirs, written some 46 years after these events, Satyabhakta underplays the fact that he formed a "National Communist Party" in 1926. He emphasises that he had no quarrel with the workers of the CPI. He however makes a sharp attack on M. N. Roy, not on the basis of his politics but on that of his personal character, relying on the rather doubtful evidence culled from the writings of M.P.B.T. Acharya and Mahendra Pratap. He defends his stand regarding the non-affiliation with the international communist and workers' movement. All this shows that Satyabhakta did not understand even the ABC of the internationalism of the working class and its movement, was knuckling before imperialist repression and repeating imperialist slanders against the Comintern.

As we have seen the ideas and proposals of Satyabhakta were rejected by the conference. But he was elected to the CEC. Did he accept the majority decision as a true communist? He did not. We need not rely upon personal reminiscences as to what he did thereafter as there is documentary evidence.

In the record of the Meerut Case, File D-374,<sup>26</sup> there is a letter of Satyabhakta to Singaravelu dated 15 February 1926 and another handwritten letter to S. V. Ghate dated 16 February 1926 signed S. Satyabhakta. The purport of both the letters is that Satyabhakta was resigning from the CEC and the party as he does not agree that the CPI should have international affiliations. He says that at the Kanpur conference, the original constitution and name as given in his documents were not accepted. He says:

"...As the previous constitution was not consulted at all in the conference and the old workers have not taken any part in the sittings of the subjects committee, the party constituted in the congress is in reality a new one and has nothing to do with old organisation."

Further, "The reason of my resignation is a fundamental one, I am of the opinion of keeping Indian communists separate from international communists and had always vigorously opposed all such proposals favouring international connections

26. This is the file of J. P. Bagerhatta referred to earlier.

coming from any quarter. But Mr Janaki Prasad and his friends say that there can be no communism and no party is entitled to call itself communist unless it has international recognition."

He did not stop there. In reply to M. N. Roy's articles in the *Masses* of January and March 1926, he issued a two-page leaflet from Kanpur on 1 May 1926 entitled "The Indian Communists and M. N. Roy". He is here "defending" himself against the alleged statement by Roy that his Indian Communist Party was "started with the help of the police". As one can see from the two articles from the *Masses*, Roy made no such allegation. He has stated that it is no wonder that such a party as that of Satyabhakta should "receive justice from the British government".

So in his "defence" Satyabhakta writes here: "In fact, from the very beginning, when I saw a number of letters of M. N. Roy in the Bolshevik Conspiracy Case, I came to know him in true colours and concluded that he was a *hired agitator* and his propaganda could not do good to our country. He receives money from Moscow and in return shows a record of his activities. This is why he creates so much noise and makes a show of communist propaganda just to impress his masters, without caring the least that by such a course of action the life of many a young man is being ruined" (emphasis added—G. A.).

It is surprising that Satyabhakta's perusal of the documents of the Kanpur Conspiracy Case should lead him to the same conclusion that the British imperialists drew when they sentenced "young men" like S. A. Dange and Muzaffar Ahmad to 4 years' R. This is not a political criticism of M. N. Roy, of which Satyabhakta was incapable, but a downright slander of the Comintern, and the "life of young men" was not ruined but they became leaders of a powerful communist movement in India.

Reiterating his view regarding affiliation to the Communist International, he says here:

"I am not hostile to the Communist International. We are ready to send our representatives to attend its annual sessions if only we can do so openly. We agree in the general principles of communism with our foreign comrades and are trying to preach its economic side in India as the economic condition is the root of all social and religious changes. Looking this way,

the 'Indian communists' have got a friendly relation with the communists of other lands and it is simply natural that we should have a sympathetic attitude towards Communist International. But as I have declared in my previous manifestos, it is neither possible nor beneficial to affiliate ourselves or to have any direct connection with the Comintern of Moscow. Besides, we are not ready to tie our hands nor do we want to take orders or instructions from outside. The position of India is peculiar in many respects from that of other parts of the world and our programme must be chalked out according to the needs and conditions of the Indian society. Keeping all these vital points in view, we prefer a policy of national communism for this country to an international one and for this reason, the name of the Indian Communist Party has been changed into the National Communist Party of India. This change also will distinguish our work from the ostentatious propaganda of Mr Roy. It is a matter of satisfaction that this change has been appreciated, and supported by our several Indian and foreign communist friends."

This leaflet is signed: "S. Satyabhakta, organiser, National Communist Party of India."

According to contemporary government reports, both public as well as confidential, Satyabhakta's National Communist Party was confined to UP and by 1927 "was, to all intents and purposes, defunct". The government of India's annual statement to parliament, *India in 1925-26* which gives a brief account of the First Communist Conference and the differences that arose there, says that "as a consequence, Satyabhakta resigned and recently issued a manifesto attacking M. N. Roy..." It says further, "the so-called Indian Communist Party... has met with little success in its bid for popular support." David Petrie says the same thing about Satyabhakta's National Communist Party. He mentions that the Communist Party India held a meeting (CEC?) in Calcutta after the abovementioned leaflet was published and decided there to denounce Satyabhakta, and later Ayodhya Prasad published a letter in *Pratap* to that effect.<sup>27</sup>

Neither Ghate nor Muzaffar Ahmad mentions anywhere of a

27. *Communism in India, 1924-1927*, p. 182.

meeting of the central executive committee being held in May 1926. But the letter of Ayodhya Prasad Shrivastava published in *Pratap* is available in English translation in the Meerut Record (P. 2318 T) and was published in that paper on 30 May 1926. This letter, which is entitled "Mr Satyabhakta and Communism" was a reply to Satyabhakta's leaflet, attacking M. N. Roy. A. P. Shrivastava is the same Ayodhya Prasad, who was a member of the CPI for a number of years, arrested and convicted in the Meerut Conspiracy Case and had acted as an underground courier between the CPI and the CPGB in 1927 in the disguise of a lascar. Besides he was also present in the First Communist Conference<sup>28</sup> Therefore the testimony of Ayodhya Prasad is important. Speaking "as a communist" and on behalf of "communists in India, who do not pin their faith on Satyabhakta", he refers to Satyabhakta's doings in Kanpur conference and says that "other communists in Kanpur who till then saw Mr Satyabhakta with distrust, joined in order to save communism from being blamed (ref. to defeat of Satyabhakta at Kanpur conference—G.A.). Then Mr Satyabhakta after tendering his resignation from the Communist Party formed a new party called Nationalist Communist Party."

It is not our intention to minimise in any way the credit that must be given to Satyabhakta and his Indian Communist Party. We have dealt with this subject at some length to put the record straight about the sharp demarcation which existed between the Indian Communist Party of Satyabhakta and the contemporary communist groups which mustered strong at the Kanpur conference, captured the same and made it the foundation conference. Recent Marxist writers on the subject, who tend to underplay this demarcation and do not mention anything about Satyabhakta's National Communist Party, have nevertheless in their own way made clear the difference between the two. Devendra Kaushik and L. V. Mitrokhin in their article in the *Mainstream* state: "Satyabhakta soon broke with the party formed in Kanpur. His differences were over the method of work and affiliation with the Comintern. For some time he tried to keep alive his Indian Communist Party, but lacking resources and following, he gave it up to return to his.

28. Melnikov & Mitrokhin, *op. cit.*

old field of journalism"<sup>29</sup> (emphasis added—G.A.). Melnikov and Mitrokhin in their paper quoted earlier state: "Conference adopted basic documents, that laid the programmatic and organisational foundations of the party. Its decisions underlined that only he can become a member of the party who is prepared to take solemn oath of struggle for the realisation of the aims and objects of the party. Real practical work was demanded from the communists. This saved the party from casual entrants and consequently the Communist Party of India principally differed in this respect from the Indian Communist Party of Satyabhakta"<sup>30</sup> (emphasis added—G.A.).

As we have seen Satyabhakta resigned from the CEC elected at the Kanpur conference and started his National Communist Party which disappeared from the scene soon afterwards, while the representatives of the existing communist groups elected to the CEC like Muzaffar Ahmad, S. V. Ghate and others immediately set to work to build the CPI organisationally and politically, and their work was to lead to a period of mass activity in 1927-28 which projected the image of the party as a new rising political force in the country.

We have, for instance, the statement<sup>31</sup> of Muzaffar Ahmad issued soon after he returned to Calcutta from Kanpur. It says:

"As everybody knows, the first conference of the communists in India was held at Kanpur during the last week of December. It has been decided to set up a central office of the Communist Party at Bombay and separate branch offices at Kanpur, Calcutta, Lahore and Madras. The only representative who could be present from Bengal was Radha Mohan Gokulji. I too was present but I had gone there from Almora. The responsibility for setting up an office in Bengal and for building up the party in Bengal has been placed on me. My health is not at all good. The government of India released me only when I was almost on the point of death, suffering from tuberculosis in the UP

29. *Mainstream*: 6, 13 and 20 September 1969: "First Indian Communist Conference at Kanpur".

30. Melnikov & Mitrokhin, *op. cit.*

31. Published in *Langal*, Vol. I, No. 5, 21 January 1926, under the heading "On Building up the Communist Party".

jails. Then, after three months at Almora in Kurnachal, though I have got back strength enough to move about, I have not yet been completely free from this fell disease, nor do I know if I shall ever be free from it altogether. Under the circumstances, it is neither desirable nor perhaps possible for me to stay on in Calcutta. However, the task of building up the Communist Party can in no way be shelved as a result of my absence alone. To those who are communists in Bengal, I send a fervent appeal—come together and build up the party. It is not a crime according to the laws of the land to ask men to become communists. I shall be highly obliged if the communists in Bengal let me know what they are prepared to undertake in the matter of building up the party.”

From this we see that Muzaffar Ahmad took the decisions of the Kanpur conference seriously. He takes steps to discharge the responsibility placed on his shoulders to build a unit of the CPI in Bengal. Thirdly, he is probing the possibility of doing this legally.

It appears Muzaffar Ahmad recognised the significance of the Kanpur conference to the extent that it was there that the first all-India centre, the executive committee of the party, was formed and its first constitution adopted. This is clear from what he has stated in his *Sama Kaler Katha* which we have quoted earlier. But later in his *Myself and the CPI* he says the Kanpur conference was a “childish” and a “disgraceful” affair and asserts the party was founded in Tashkent in November 1920 when it was also affiliated to the Comintern. We have mentioned this fact here for record and not to take up the discussion here.

S. V. Ghate, one of the general secretaries elected at the Kanpur conference, took the initiative to secure finances for the party. He wrote to V. H. Joshi, who was the secretary and treasurer of the Communist Defence Fund collected for the defence of the Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy Case accused. Ghate writes :

“When the Communist Defence Fund was started, it was mentioned that whatever balance was left after defraying the Conspiracy Case charges was to be utilised towards reorganisation of the party. From the account that you published, a sum

of Rs 400 remains with you, as its then treasurer. I shall, therefore, thank you to hand over the same at an early date and oblige."

J. P. Bagerhatta, the other general secretary, who as we know was already in touch with M. N. Roy, then functioning on behalf of the Communist International, sent him reports and the documents of the First Communist Conference. M. N. Roy's replies to these are available in Bagerhatta's file in the Meerut Record. Some of these give the reactions of M. N. Roy and of the international communist movement to the conference and the further development. But before we deal with these documents, a word about the press reports about the conference.

The First Indian Communist Conference seems to have got some publicity in the press and attracted considerable attention of the leftwing in the national-liberation movement. This is proved by the fact that the *Indian Annual Register* of 1925, the nonofficial annual record of the national movement, which the enterprising and talented R. Mitra used to bring out every year as a counterblast to the official annuals of the British government, devotes four pages to the conference. It gives a fairly detailed summary of Hasrat Mohani's speech and key passages from M. Singaravelu's presidential address. Reports also appeared in the *Forward*, *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and *Englishman*.

Besides many Hindi and English dailies gave summaries of the two main speeches at the conference. For instance *Vishwamitra*, the popular Hindi daily of Calcutta, gave these reports on 3 January 1926 *Hindustan Times* of Delhi gave the report of Singaravelu's speech with a jeering commentary. In a column-and-a-half report headed "The Communist Stunt" on 28 December 1925, the paper says that the conference was a "damp squib". It ridicules Singaravelu for describing the Congress as a bourgeois organisation and for criticising khaddar movement. The paper says: "M. Singaravelu has struck a strident note to organise workers and peasants. How and to what end he has failed to make clear." Obviously, the paper is afraid of strikes, for in the next sentence it commends Sarojini Naidu's call to organise workers "for harmonising relations between capital and labour". The paper concludes by telling the communists that "their colour was not a shade redder than that of

the Congress" and advised them to follow the Congress. This comment as well as that of *Amrita Bazar Patrika* clearly shows that the First Communist Conference was considered a new and significant leftwing development in the national politics of the country.

Finally, it must be mentioned that the report of the First Communist Conference appeared in the *Punjabi Kirti* (Worker) of Amritsar and the *Bengali Langal* (Plough) of Calcutta which were the first communist weekly journals in Indian languages. *Kirti* started publication from February 1926 under the editorship of Santokh Singh of the Ghadar Party, and it later became the organ of the Kirti-Kisan Party of Punjab under the editorship of Sohan Singh Josh. The article on the communist conference appeared in the very first issue and it gave the speech of Hasrat Mohani as reported by the Associated Press and the summary of the speech of Singaravelu as reported in the *Forward*. *Langal* which began publication on 16 December 1925 as the organ of the Labour-Swaraj Party and later became *Ganavani*, the organ of the Workers' and Peasants' Party of Bengal and with which Muzaffar Ahmad was connected from the very beginning, published in its issue No 5 dated 21 January 1926 an article entitled "Communism and Bolshevism" which in the main gave a brief summary of the speech of Hasrat Mohani and it printed at the end the statement of Muzaffar Ahmad which we have quoted already.

It appears Roy and Indian communists abroad took some time to understand what actually happened at the Kanpur conference. Bagerhatta's report probably brought out the point that Satyabhakta's ideas were defeated at the conference and, in the outcome, a basis was laid for creating an all-India centre of the Communist Party of India. In the beginning, and even after getting all the reports, Roy and his colleagues were tending to equate Satyabhakta's group with the rest of the communist groups and underestimating whatever little clarification that took place at the conference, as reflected in the decisions and in the elections to the CEC and its office-bearers.

All the same, Roy soon realised that he could not be indifferent or neglect the central executive committee formed at the conference. He could see from Bagerhatta's report that all

the communist groups—in Bombay, Calcutta, Madras and Lahore with which he was in touch—were all represented in the CEC and in key positions.

In the middle of February 1926, Mohammad Ali, on behalf of Roy, had written another letter to Bagerhatta explaining to him that the newly-formed party should be affiliated to the CI. In the next letter of 20 March 1926, written by Roy himself, the CEC formed in Kanpur is recognised and accepted as a basis for further work. In this letter written to Bagerhatta, Roy says :

“Let me begin with ratifying the reply that Comrade Mohammad Ali has already given to the question you raised. You can take that reply as reflecting also the attitude of the Communist International towards the Communist Party of India in process of formation” (emphasis added—C.A.). Thereafter he gives practical suggestions : open a bookshop; arrange for the receipt and circulation of the *Masses* via Pondicherry and Madras; arrange for the publication of a 100-page manuscript he was sending (probably *The Future of Indian Politics*). He then says further : “I must draw your attention to the suggestion of Comrade Mohammad Ali about the relations with the CI. The statements made repeatedly by Satyabhakta as well as by Mohani and Singaravelu at Kanpur made very bad impression here. In one of the articles sent to you along with my last letter, the political side of the question has been publicly dealt with.<sup>32</sup> I hope this question will be taken in the next meeting of the central committee and a resolution will be passed repudiating the previous statements. The same meeting would also resolve to affiliate the Communist Party of India with the CI and officially communicate the latter the resolution. The formal affiliation cannot be effected until the next world congress to which a delegation of the party must be sent.”

In the same letter, after outlining the tasks of the communists in the trade-union movement and in the National Congress, Roy once again repeats the Gaya programme as the minimum programme of the party on the basis of which “the Communist Party of India shall make a united front with the

32. This is the article “Indian Communists and the Communist International” in the *Masses*, March 1926.

nationalist movement". Further, after saying that he has not received the draft programme and the constitution adopted at Kanpur he goes on to give the main general principles on which the constitution of the CPI must be based. Together with the general principles, he also makes a specific suggestion: "The party will maintain the foreign bureau as the ideological centre composed of comrades who are not in a position to work inside the country. The foreign bureau 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."

In the same article Roy further gives an important warning "It is only in consequence of accidental combinations of events that attempts to organise a legal Communist Party are tolerated by our rulers. We must not have illusions on that 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."

All this shows that Roy criticised this conference not only because it failed to take a clearcut and correct attitude towards the Communist International, but also because it created the illusion that a genuine Communist Party could be organised legally under conditions which obtained then and also because it failed to adopt a clearcut immediate programme of national liberation on the lines of the Gaya programme. To that extent his criticism was valid.

The genuine communist groups from different parts of the country which went to the conference were themselves conscious of these shortcomings. Their main purpose in participating in the conference was to prevent Satyabhakta from using it to create a legal framework on a wrong basis, which would be an obstacle in the way of creating an all-India communist party or the central nucleus for building the same. This is completely in accord with what the central executive committee elected at the Kanpur Communist Conference wrote in the *Annual Report* which was adopted at its meeting in Bombay in May 1927. This printed *Annual Report* says the following about the Kanpur conference:

"This case (Kanpur Conspiracy Case) received a great publicity and created a vague idea of communism and brought into

light the programme of a national revolution that was proposed by the revolutionary leaders of world reputation for India. Kanpur being the place where the communists were tried and sentenced, the zeal for a party with the programme that came in the court was comparatively more than in other places and Mr Satyabhakta availed himself of this opportunity and started a party named and styled as the Indian Communist Party. This party attracted a number of people who got themselves enlisted as its members. Amongst the ideals, the demand for complete independence was kept in the forefront. A good deal of propaganda was made to popularise the name of the party. But it was seen that in spite of all this, there was nothing Marxian underlying the work, and, on the contrary, a number of things, which it is unnecessary to refer here, were done that would, in a country like India where communism is not generally understood, bring into disrepute the philosophy of communism. After about two years' existence, this party called a conference of communists in India at Kanpur and it was announced as 'the First Communist Conference. A few comrades decided to capture the party, the membership of which was about 200-300. The approximate number of members cannot be given since Mr Satyabhakta has not transferred to us the records he had with him. Nor has he given a statement of accounts of the funds he had collected. Though we succeeded in capturing this organisation, the party was kept in a provisional form and neither a definite constitution nor a programme could be formulated. The executive appointed four provincial organisers."

There were two positive achievements of the conference. Firstly, what emerged from the conference was not the "Indian Communist Party" *a la* Satyabhakta, which rejected the internationalist character of the party, but a "Communist Party of India"—a central consolidation of all genuine communist groups which wanted a linkup with the international communist movement, though this was not explicitly declared at the conference for obvious reasons.

Secondly, the conference gave the opportunity to the genuine communist groups to come together and form the central all-India nucleus for the first time which was crystallised in the CEC elected at the conference. The continuity of the central nucleus formed at Kanpur and maintained through the following

years became an instrument for building a legal network of workers' and peasants' parties, spread all over the country, of unleashing a mass upsurge of workers and peasants, and of building the first militant trade unions and kisan sabhas.

The CEC formed at Kanpur met at Bombay in the middle of 1927. Satyabhakta, who was included in the Kanpur CEC, had resigned before the Bombay CEC met. The CEC met again at Madras on the eve of the Indian National Congress annual session. At this meeting Bagerhatta was expelled as a police agent. It is this nucleus of leadership which organised the workers' and peasants' parties and led the mass upsurge. It met again at Calcutta in December 1928 at the time of the First Conference of All-India Workers' and Peasants' Parties. It continued its work till 20 March 1929 when it was struck down through the Meerut Conspiracy Case arrests.

True, the Kanpur Communist Conference of 1925 did not have the features of a proper foundation congress of a communist party. But the creation of an all-India nucleus of a central leadership at the conference and its continuity and role through succeeding years in building the mass base for the Communist Party of India make the conference a turningpoint in the life of the party. That is why the leadership of the united Communist Party of India in 1958 decided to adopt the date of the conference as the foundation date of the Communist Party of India.

## 1. THE FUTURE PROGRAMME OF THE INDIAN COMMUNIST PARTY

Nine months have elapsed since the Indian Communist Party came into existence. The membership of the party has reached about 250 up to this time. Its voice has gone far and wide and there is no province in India in which we have not our members. Recently several members and other persons have asked certain questions about the party and they want to know its future activities.

(1) Some persons say, "What is the Communist Party doing? It has not begun any organising work among peasants and workers, nor has it been doing any propaganda. What practical work has it done except enlisting some members?" We accept these remarks as true but we desire to say that our critics do not know the real position of the Indian Communist Party. When we started this party people generally considered it an illegal organisation and expected its immediate suppression by the government. We ourselves were not quite sure about our position and were anticipating some sort of obstruction from the government side before the party could achieve any amount of success. It was for this reason that I considered it advisable to give only my name as secretary publicly and let other persons remain as ordinary members. The only aim that we had in our mind then was to establish the right of forming a communist party in India openly. Undoubtedly the government attempted to suppress this party, but owing to our open policy and straightforward methods, it could not find its way to do so. After a long struggle the party established on a rightful basis only now occupies a position to

Several persons prove unscrupulous in money matters. Besides they become frightened at the slightest danger. It is better not to start work at all than to entrust responsibility in the hands of such persons. Therefore we think it more advisable to keep for the present only a central office and exert our whole strength in this direction. We shall be able to enlarge our organisation easily, when that will become deeply rooted.

(3) The financial position of the party is not sound. During the past nine months we could publish only four small leaflets. We were unable to send necessary messages to the press and our rules and regulations are still unpublished. It is obvious that the power of the proletariat class is increasing daily, and it is certain that after some time we shall have all necessary means at our disposal. But we have at present a most important period of history before us and it is our foremost duty to organise Indian peasants and workers and to create class consciousness among them. If we fail to fulfil this work in near future our country will remain much behind the rest of the world. Kisan sabhas and mazdur unions have done little work under their bourgeois leaders towards this end, but nothing has been done on communistic lines, which is the only way for the emancipation of these suppressed classes.

(4) Some friends advised us to affiliate the Indian Communist Party with Third International of Moscow and to send delegates to its annual session. It is a difficult task for us. Indian government is much hostile to the Third International and it has sentenced several Indian communists for being in communication with it. But we have not become hopeless altogether. The communist parties of Britain, Australia, S. Africa, etc. have been affiliated with the Comintern and send delegates to its congresses regularly. While the parties of all these countries, which are within the British empire, are entitled to have connections with the Comintern, why should the Indian Communist Party alone be deprived of her rights? We will continue our fight with the government for this right and hope that the final victory will be ours.

(5) One thing we want to make clear. The Indian Communist Party is absolutely an independent body. Our relation with the Comintern is of the nature of friendship and mutual sympathy as followers of the same principle. We are not ready to

tie our hands, nor do we want to take orders or instructions from others. No doubt we want to change the present system of Indian society and government according to the communistic principles but only with due regard to the conditions and mentality of Indian people.

#### PROGRAMME

(6) In order to organise Indian peasants, labourers and other working people and with a view to the betterment of their condition, the Indian Communist Party resolved to adopt the following programme.

(a) In these days there are several kisan sabhas (peasants' unions) in UP and other provinces. They are striving after some reforms. But as long as landlordism exists in India peasants cannot become happy and prosperous. That they should pay something to the government is after all acceptable. But there is no reason why these middlemen or commission agents be allowed to exist. But until the victory of the proletarian class, landlordism cannot be abolished entirely. Even now the government and leaders of our country, if they really desire the betterment of the peasants, can improve the present condition to a great extent. In our opinion peasants should be entitled to pay their rent direct to the government who may pay to the landlords their share. They should not be allowed to have any other connection with or control over the peasants. In this way while landlords will lose nothing of their legitimate income, they and especially their servants will no longer be able to rob peasants in the shape of unlawful taxes and gratuities. For this purpose, the Indian Communist Party will agitate among peasants and will urge upon all new and old kisan sabhas to work in the suggested manner.

(b) The Indian workers' unions are generally mismanaged. They have become tools in the hands of the bourgeoisie and the friends of the capital. According to our opinion a minimum living wage should be fixed for workers of all grades, and they should not be required to work more than 44 hours a week. Workers themselves should be office-bearers of their organisations. Other persons who are well-wishers of the working class should help them from outside. But nowadays such persons

want to be dictators and leaders of workers without doing any real service to them. Communist Party will organise workers on the new lines and will create the sense of self-help in them.

(c) We want to start communist reading rooms of clubs in every big city. Many persons wish to know something about communism, but they have no means to fulfil their desire. They cannot obtain communistic literature easily. In such places every one will be able to study communism and improve his knowledge by interchange of thoughts and views.

(d) We urgently need some newspapers in vernacular languages. It is absurd to think that we can spread communism in India through English papers. Many papers in India express sympathy with masses, but there is none to carry on regular propaganda for organising and uplifting the peasants and workers. Even staunch nationalist papers hesitate to create class consciousness in the Indian proletariat and their only purpose is to use these people in political fight.

(e) In spite of the admitted need of communistic literature there is not a single authentic book on communism in any Indian vernacular. Books should also be written on the present miserable condition of peasants and workers.

(f) Our work cannot be completed only with the help of papers and books. We have to prepare a fairly large number of propagandists who will go through villages and workshops and organise the masses.

(7) This is the only programme for the emancipation of the working class and to relieve our country from all kinds of miseries. Every commodity in the world is produced by the workers, but the parasites take away lion's share of it. When these 90 per cent people will become organised to protect the product of their labour, the remaining 10 per cent will find no other alternative but to surrender to the majority. The organised action of the peasants, labourers and other working people is a force which can remove all the evils prevailing in society and state without any injustice or violence on our part. The only necessary condition is that on seeing the growth of the power of proletarian class, the present government which is a part of the capitalist system should not become unjust and oppressive. But government even if they adopt oppressive measures cannot become successful because without the help of

workers it will soon be crippled. But in that condition the re-organisation of the society cannot be effected peacefully and the people will have to undergo much needless suffering.

(8) It is the first part of our programme. Owing to the financial difficulties it will take much more time than what is necessary. In spite of it we will be able to do some real work in this year. The next session of the Indian National Congress will be held in Kanpur. We can make a strong organisation of our party at that time and find some workers and helpers to fulfil our programme. It is expected that an Indian Communist Conference will be held at the same occasion.

(9) Our ultimate aim is to have complete freedom established in India resulting in the formation of the society in which justice will be predominant in the place of money and every person will have equal rights and opportunities. But this cannot be accomplished soon. We have therefore included only such items in our programme which are feasible at the present time. If our members and sympathisers will take up the work earnestly, we shall be able to convert the Indian Communist Party into a most powerful organisation. All other public societies and parties of India are under the control or influence of rich men and they cannot go against the capitalists and landlords. If these parties can procure swaraj for India it will be no better for the poor. The only difference in that swaraj will be that Indian officers and rulers will take the place of Englishmen, and it is not at all certain that they will prove better than their predecessors. But the Communist Party is determined to establish a true swaraj in India. We sincerely believe that all the working people and other friends of the poor will help us in this great undertaking and we ourselves shall see that day when free India shall occupy an equal place among other nations of the world, where not a child will go hungry and naked.

SATYABHAKTA  
Secretary,

## 2. THE FIRST INDIAN COMMUNIST CONFERENCE

It is now generally known that the first session of the Indian Communist Conference will be held during the coming December side by side with the session of the Congress at Kanpur. Maulana Hasrat Mohani has been elected chairman of the reception committee at the meeting of the party on 20 September last, and Mr Saklatvala, MP, has been elected president of the conference. The name of Mr Saklatvala is now familiar to every newspaper reader in India, while to the labour class he is trusted leader and guide.

It is not our intention here to dwell at any length on the need and usefulness of our conference. There are at present in the country several institutions devoted to politics such as the Congress, the Swaraj Party, the Home Rule League and the Liberal Federation etc. Similarly for the upliftment of the peasants and labourers there are the Trade Union Congress and kisan sabhas and the like. But none of these can be said to be working with a view to help the labourers and peasants in asserting their rights in the country's administration and to enhance their political importance. The kisan and mazdoor unions merely touch the fringe of the question in as much as they try to remove temporary grievances, while the Congress and other political bodies only aim at their own political aggrandisement by agitating amidst the peasants and labourers. All such activities cannot be said to flow in right channel as the real objective is left in the background. Workers and farmers are the only producers of all commodities necessary for our existence and it is therefore their right to get the highest place in the society and the first voice in the government of the country. We could say without being charged with vanity that the communist party is the only institution which aims at gaining the object in question.

And why should the communist party attach so much importance to farmers and labourers? Because we all have known the grim fact that the salvation of the country without the salvation of the man who ploughs the land and hews the wood is altogether impossible. The object of gaining swaraj must remain unaccomplished so long as the labouring classes do not

take an active part in our political fight. And this is impossible until and unless that class knows that we have cast in our lot with them. Occasional outbursts of oratory and tempting political programmes may for a while enlist their sympathy but the end is doomed, as it has proved to be at the end of noncooperation movement in 1921-22.

Our appeal is directed mainly towards the youths of the country. Let them ponder over what we say. In the recent past most powerful of our institutions have failed and expressed their impotence to find the right clue to political emancipation of India. The noncooperation movement no doubt showed a revolutionary character in its former days, but its fall was as rapid as its rise, thanks to the idealism of Mahatma Gandhi. The country requires now some practical programme and solid work and looks up to its youngmen to take it up. We hope that the work for which the communist party stands pledged should appeal to everybody.

We therefore extend our cordial invitation to all persons who have sympathy with the aims of our party to attend the conference. Those who are striving after complete independence of the country are also requested to take part in it.

To members of the party and its helpers we appeal for funds as to meet the expenses of the conference. At the lowest estimate Rs 3000 has to be collected, though on a more lavish scale a sum of Rs 10 to 12 thousand could be spent. This sum of Rs 3000 however does not include the travelling expenses of Mr Saklatvala, if we have to meet them, as most probably we will have to, so that we will require another two thousand in that case. Every member of the party can become a member of the reception committee by subscribing Rs 5. The general public can help by sending donations. From that richest class of people helping the 'big' political bodies we expect but very little, in fact nothing, and our hopes are centred mainly on that small and yet ardent section of our people who have faith in the future of communism and the freedom of the country. Our appeal for funds is free from all compulsion or undue influence, and we hope our members and sympathisers will extend their help willingly.

The following are the principal questions to be discussed and decided by the conference.

*Change of Party's Name* An important question before us is the name of the party. The principal aim of communism is the control of the wealth of country by whole society and to make every person equal partner of it. We believe in the truth of this principle and try our best to carry it into practice. But many of our friends urge us to connect the Indian communist party with the communist parties of other lands and specially with the Communist International of Moscow as an indispensable condition. Without such connection it is a misnomer in their opinion, to call this organisation a communist party. We have already pointed out in a previous communication that such a step is not possible for us owing to the fact that the government will at once try to suppress our activities on the slightest move towards this direction. It should be at once admitted that we are not in a position to employ violent methods in the pursuit of our propaganda as is the case with the communist parties of other countries. Moreover as long as we are a subject race our opinion can have no effect in international politics at all. The question therefore that confronts us is one of securing independence for the country above all other questions. Without which we are unable to accomplish any solid work either within the field of communism or other fields. It is desirable that due attention should be paid to the question of name and to alter it if the majority of the members favour such a change.

*Help from Foreign Countries* : Other friends have suggested from time to time to approach the Communist International of Moscow with the intention to get its financial help for our propaganda in this country. But those friends are evidently forgetting that such a step is quite impossible and highly injurious to our interests. We remind all our well-wishers to banish such impracticable ideas from their minds. It is by trusting our own right arm that we can do whatever little good to our country that is possible for us to do. Even if we succeed in getting financial help from across the seas, it is much more likely to corrupt and degrade us than to be of some real service to the country in the present state of India. We would there-

fore sound a note of warning to all our members and well-wishers to beware of all those who approach them, pretending to be acting on behalf of this party, with such ridiculous propositions which may proceed either out of selfish motives or from secret agents of the government. For us the way is plainly chalked out—the way of selfdenial and suffering. Through these alone we can be able of any service to the masses of India.

*Our Connection with the Congress* : Then there is a section of people who imagine that we do not desire any connection with the Congress or that we are even opposed to it. That is not the truth. We must however say that the Congress at present moment has become the exclusive property of a few particular leaders and it is far from speaking the truth that it really represents the masses of India. In spite of solemn promises in the past the leaders have miserably failed to turn their attention towards the welfare of peasants and labourers. We have in fact heard bitter complaints about the apathy of the Congress leaders from those poor people who pay towards the maintenance of the institution. It is true that the activities of the leaders are manysided and they do not possess sufficient resources which are necessary to execute this great work. Nevertheless it cannot be denied that the interests of landed aristocracy and the capitalist class have the first hold on their attention. After all the Congress is a well-established and influential institution and the best interests of the country require us to reform it and not to go against it. We appeal to all members of the party to become also members and delegates of the Congress with the intention of changing it into an instrument of service to our people.

*Subscription to Membership* : At present every member of the Indian Communist Party has to pay annas four as annual fee, but the idea often appeared to us to be against the principles of communism. We are aiming at abolishing the money standard from all the world over. We are therefore of opinion not to charge any fee from members in future but to depend on their good-will and voluntary help.

In the end we trust that all members and others who believe in the work of the communist party will consider these ques-

tions and be present at the conference, so that with their help the party may be able to justify its existence

SATYABHAKTA

*Secretary,*

*The Indian Communist Party*

Kanpur

12 October 1925

Imperial Press, Kanpur

(Meerut Case Records, P 1796 (a))

### 3. SAKLATVALA'S MESSAGE

Although owing to pressure of business on this side I shall not be at your conference I shall be with you in spirit.

I must ask you to remember that although the economic independence of the workers and peasants of India is your main task, that you must still remain friendly to the national aspirations of the Indian people, as national independence is the birthright of all peoples.

I would ask you to notice the cunning remarks in the English papers in India trying to drive a wedge between you and the swarajists. You must not fall into this trap as our swarajist friends must ultimately realise that communism is the only thing that will bring real freedom to the people of India. No nation consisting of 5,000,000 slave (driver)s and 295 million slaves can ever be really free. India stands to gain more from communism than any other nation despite the vile slanders about Russia which I hope you will do your best to dispel, and to bring home to our people that Russia in five years has given to teeming millions of peasants the same rights as university educated citizens, despite poverty, famine, blockade and war.



the form of the soviet republic on which all principles of communism will come into force. Before the establishment of swaraj to work for the freedom and prosperity of peasants and workers by all possible means and in this respect to cooperate with every political party of India so far as they help the promotion of the abovementioned objects. To arrange for the propagation of the principles of communism and create popular opinion in their favour so that they may be acted upon the moment swaraj is established.

“Our organisation is purely Indian. It is necessary to mention here that at least for the present the work of our party will be restricted to India alone. Our relations with similar parties of other countries will be only that of sympathy and mental affinity to all these in general and to the Third International in particular. We are only fellow-travellers in our paths and not their subordinates. Neither we give them any practical help, nor do they extend any financial aid to us.

“Some evilly-disposed persons incriminate communism as necessarily an antireligious movement. The fact however is that in matters of religion we allow the largest possible latitude and toleration. Whosoever accepts our principles will be accepted in our party, whether he is a Mohamedan, a Hindu, a Christian, a Buddhist or anybody with or without any religion. In other words we recognise the existence of all religions and consider even no-religion also as a religion. Some of our Moslem leaders baselessly represent communism as against Islam. The fact is however quite different. The opposition of Islam to capitalism, for instance, is stronger than even the communistic conception of it and the obligation of zakat is imposed mainly for the consideration that so long as there is one single hungry creature left the capitalists have no right to indulge in business.

“The emphasis laid on the zakat in the Qoran is next only to prayers and the first khalif had ordered jehad against those who refused to pay zakat. Besides the only reason of the prohibition of interest can be that the usurer profits by his capital alone without doing any actual labour and this is against the principles of Islam just as it is against communism.”

*(Indian Annual Register, 1925,  
Vol. 2, pp. 367-71)*

Please take this as my message to your congress which I hope will be the beginning of a large and stable communist movement in India.

(Courtesy. Satyabhakta)

#### 4. SPEECH OF HASRAT MOHANI

Maulana Hasrat Mohani, chairman of the reception committee, described the aims of the party to be the establishment of a soviet constitution in India after the establishment of swaraj. In the course of his address the Maulana said :

“The movement of communism is the movement of peasants and workers. The people of India generally agree with the principles and aims and objects of this movement, but owing to certain misunderstandings some weak and nervous people fear the very name of communism, although these misunderstandings have been deliberately set on foot by capitalists and others who are opposed to it. Some, for instance, consider that communism necessarily heads for bloodshed and terrorism. The only basis for this wrong notion is that we sanction nonviolence only as expedient and necessary and do not like Mahatma Gandhi accept it as a fixed principle for all time. Again some people wrongly allege that communism and ‘thine is mine’ doctrine are one and the same. The fact is we have divided property into two classes, viz personal (e.g. watch, umbrella, utensils, beds, clothing, etc) and private (like land, factories, etc). The communist principle applies only to private property and not to personal one.

#### AIMS AND OBJECTS

“The detailed programme of our party which resembles the soviet constitution will be discussed and passed by this conference. Our aims and objects are as follows :

“To establish swaraj or complete independence by all fair means. After the establishment of swaraj to see that it takes

the form of the soviet republic on which all principles of communism will come into force. Before the establishment of swaraj to work for the freedom and prosperity of peasants and workers by all possible means and in this respect to cooperate with every political party of India so far as they help the promotion of the abovementioned objects. To arrange for the propagation of the principles of communism and create popular opinion in their favour so that they may be acted upon the moment swaraj is established.

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5. SINGARAVELU'S PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS<sup>1</sup>

*Our Conference:* At a time when the opponents of communism are attempting to crush our beneficent movement for making this world happier and pleasanter for all human beings dwelling in it, we communists in India are meeting in this hall today to take a general view of the political and economic situation obtaining in India, and to concert measures by which we can render the life of our own countrymen better and happier. We wish that our peaceful movement will be better understood both by our countrymen and our rulers, by means of the deliberations we are having here in this conference, and we hope that our work will be better appreciated by the general public, especially the industrial and agricultural workers for whose benefit this conference is mainly held.

*Our Persecutors:* Judged by the persecution to which our comrades in this land and in other lands are put, we should think that our movement is totally misunderstood and misinterpreted by the ruling classes, and to them we have only one answer to make—that is the answer which one of the greatest of our race gave to his persecutors at Calvary 2000 years ago, "Oh, you know not what you do." It is unfortunate that in this world of ours, the pioneers of every reform, whether social or religious, political or economic, scientific or philosophical, are obliged to suffer for their thoughts, ideas and actions. But as kalachakra, the wheel of time, rolls on, the suffering which the world reformers have undergone spur others to further suffering, until in the end the whole world stands to adore them. In the words of the greatest of Americans—Walt Whitman,

*Those corpses of young men,  
Those martyrs that hang from the gibbets—those  
hearts pierc'd by the gray lead,  
Cold and motionless as they seem, live elsewhere  
with unslaughter'd vitality.*

1. Singaravelu had got his presidential address printed at B. N. Press, Mount Road, Madras, and brought copies to Kanpur.

They live in other young men, O kings!  
They live in brothers, again ready to defy you!  
They were purified by death—they were taught  
and exalted.

Not a grave of the murder'd for freedom, but grows  
seed for freedom, in its turn to bear seed,  
Which the winds carry afar and re-sow, and the  
rains and the snows nourish.

Not a disembodied spirit can the weapons of the  
tyrants let loose,  
But it stalks invisibly over the earth, whispering,  
counselling, cautioning.

This has been the history of humanity from the dawn of ages. Perhaps this may be the history of the few communists who today are put to unmerited suffering for trying to serve their fellow-men all the world over.

**Our Suffering Comrades:** Our first thought goes to those three of our noble comrades who are yet kept in prison for speeches and writings which need not have been construed as offences. But the law of the land condemned them. They have been found guilty by the highest tribunal in the country. But as fellow-beings, our profound sympathy goes to them in jail, and we express our hope that wiser counsels will yet prevail in the minds of the government who, we wish, will have the magnanimity to set them free. Next our equally profound sympathy goes to those Britishers who have also suffered in the great communist hunt that is going on in Great Britain. Those who suffer for the freedom of their land and for the freedom of their countrymen—our heartfelt sympathy goes to them all, and we earnestly hope that better days may yet dawn upon this globe in which lovers of freedom may be welcomed instead of being punished for their thoughts.

**The Great Dead:** Next we have to perform another mournful duty for those who have passed away from us. Among the noblest of woman-kind who have fallen victims to the great persecution in recent years, we may mention Rosa Luxemburg who was cruelly done to death while pacifying the mob in Berlin. We stand in mute reverence in memory of our departed

sister. Equally profound is our loss caused by the death of Karl Liebknecht who was also done to death while serving the German workers. Among Frenchmen who have passed away, we may specially mention M. Jaures whose name will ever be cherished by the workers of the world. For all those workers who have perished in Kanpur, Madras and other Indian cities, while struggling for freedom to live a decent human life, we express our profound sorrow.

*Death of Lenin:* But the greatest loss which the world communists have suffered during recent times is that caused by the death of Nikolai Lenin, by his death the world has grown sadder. Here was a man who cared nothing else in the world except the well-being of suffering humanity. Such a man was snatched away by the cruel hand of death at a time when the great workers' state in Russia needed his advice and guidance. The communist world has lost in him a real benefactor of mankind whose counsels would have immensely benefited them in these trying times. In the days of the great revolution in Russia, following the great war of 1914, the world of capital misjudged him and, as the old adage goes that truth will be out, the thinking world is now in a position to judge of this man and his actions. That greatest Christian man now living in England, George Lansbury, has paid this man one of the greatest tributes ever paid to any other human being on earth, and in the course of ages, there is no doubt that the work begun by this man in Russia has immensely benefited and will continue to shower happiness and peace upon the lives of the people. We shall quote here the tribute paid by George Lansbury to Nikolai Lenin.

phets, statesmen and scientists, philosophers and metaphysicians equally great, equally learned have appeared from time to time and tried to redeem the working humanity from its age-long suffering and serfdom, but it was reserved to Nikolai Lenin to apply the only true and correct solution for removing the great ills of life which the great capitalist interests of the world have brought upon the once happy human race.

"It was his great master Karl Marx who found the great truth of historical materialism—trodden underfoot, reviled and ridiculed by the powerful and the ignorant among mankind, but he lived long enough to see the great worker's philosophy understood by the thoughtful and accepted as the method of ridding poverty and misery from this mundane existence. It was for the first time in the history of the world demonstrated with scientific precision and accuracy that most of the misery with which the majority of the world have become affected was due to the selfish aggrandisement of a few among the powerful over the toiling many. And he taught further that it was only by rendering the few powerless to continue the evil that the suffering workers will have to get rid of their misery, and attain to the life of knowledge, labour and ease, which today is the monopoly of a very few among mortals. Today Nikolai Lenin stands unrivalled among the sons of men who have tried to alleviate human suffering and it is now left to the workers to follow his method. While all others were pursuing vague speculations as to the cause of misery and its cessation, and preached charity—dana—as the ultima thule of social justice, Nikolai Lenin found the true hethu or cause of world's sorrows lie in exploitation of the many by the few and he succeeded in rendering this social wrong impossible in his own country. The Russian workers today can be deemed to be the happiest among the workers of the world, and this is due mainly to the indefatigable worker for whose death we, his comrades, are mourning.

"The great revolution in political thought and philosophy which Nikolai Lenin wrought in his own country may be destroyed, nay, even be swept away by the selfish nature of a few among men, but it will revive again and again and ultimately encompass the world, and finally render the life of the worker tolerable and pleasant throughout the world. To him who has

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"Lenin the Great has passed away and joined the choir invisible. The world—workers' world—is today poorer by the passing away of the great teacher and redeemer. Today the vested interests which are taking shelter under ignorance and greed are silent over the great loss which the humble workers of the world have suffered by the death of their greatest protagonist. It is the worker, the true salt of the earth, that mourns or ought to mourn for him who showed him the path of deliverance from bondage, privation and misery. Teachers and pro-

phets, statesmen and scientists, philosophers and metaphysicians equally great, equally learned have appeared from time to time and tried to redeem the working humanity from its age-long suffering and serfdom, but it was reserved to Nikolai Lenin to apply the only true and correct solution for removing the great ills of life which the great capitalist interests of the world have brought upon the once happy human race.

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done so much and who has given the worker a clear vision of his glorious realm in which every human being shall have the right to labour and to live like all his other fellows, we lift up our hands in love, devotion and reverence."

*Our Country's Martyrs* : Coming nearer home, we have to mourn the loss of some of the greatest of India's sons who have struggled in their own way and according to their own lights to serve their fellow-men in various ways. On the top-most rung of the ladder stands that unique figure of Tilak—that beacon of light for all true lovers of freedom. It was only the other day that we lost the true lover of our country, our Deshbandhu Das, for whom the whole country wept. There was yet another man who left us, and whose head and heart were devoted to the freedom of our country. This was Siva of South India and we deeply deplore his loss. To all those who have suffered and died for the country's freedom and for the redemption of humanity, to all of them known and unknown, we shed our tears, and I request you to stand for a while in memory of those martyrs who have paid for the benefit of humanity with their dear life.

*Our Countrymen* : We have dwelt so far with those that have gone from us. Now we shall speak for those who are with us. Among the peoples of the world, our countrymen alone form the saddest portion of the human race on earth. Bereft of the necessaries of life, food, house and clothing, bereft of the higher necessaries of human life—freedom, equality and knowledge, the majority of our countrymen are far below the level reached by other nations of the world. It is computed that 40 million out of over 300 million of fellow-beings are scantily fed and clothed; and nearly half of this seething mass of humanity are illhoused and are devoid of decent human habitation. More than 80 per cent are illiterate. Nearly a fourth are what are known as untouchables—a species of humanity who have no other social relationship with the other classes of their countrymen than to serve their masters. They have no right of entry into public temples. They cannot bathe in public tanks. In some places they cannot use public roads. Then we have a million or two intellectuals who cannot serve their countrymen except in ways prescribed by the alien rulers of the land. In the land of ours to agitate against the wrongs under which many

of our countrymen suffer is oftentimes considered objectionable, and sometimes treated as crime. The growing taxation of the necessities of life is becoming intolerable. With it grows the expenditure, especially the military expenditure. Over sixty crores are spent annually for a mercenary army to keep out imaginary or fanciful foes. The government of the country is not merely overmanned but overpaid. In the annual budget the essentials of national wellbeing are sacrificed for nonessentials. The health of the nation is far from satisfactory. Millions and millions die of preventable diseases. If the vital statistics is in any measure a test of civilised existence, Indian cities stand at the lowest ebb ever reached by any other country in the world. Education has become so costly that only a few thousand can afford to avail themselves of the highest education and culture among these vast millions. Children of the soil are disarmed and unarmed and stand helpless to defend their home and their hearth when necessary. To recount the tale of woe under which this unhappy country suffers will require more time and energy than I could afford in this address. A few rich men are more bent upon making riches for their own comfort, convenience and luxury, than for the common weal. Of those who suffer most are the peasants of the country, and who alone number 2/3 of the population. Their life in the villages is awful. Swept by famine, pestilence and disease, their existence is kept up by the high birth rates which often accompany poverty and destitution. The agricultural labour, while providing all, can have no direct access even to a morsel of what he procures by his toil. Living amidst plenty, he cannot get even the crumbs. The industrial workers in the city are unable to meet both ends meet on account of their low wages. While all other countries are trying to secure a living wage to their countrymen, India alone does not even think about it and much less express it. This is the sum and substance of the politico-economic conditions and under which a fifth of the human race has its existence under the British administration in India. Dear comrades, how do you propose to better these deplorable conditions of human existence under which you and I, and the vast majority of our fellows, have the fortune or the misfortune to live in this ancient land of ours? In fact you should answer in this conference how we communists propose to do for effect-

ing a radical change from our present miserable life to one of joy and happiness which is the birthright of every human being on this planet. This answer I propose to give in the following pages of this address, subject of course to your correction and amendment.

*Communism and Swaraj*: In the great struggle for swaraj which is now in progress throughout the country, we communists have to take up the greatest share in the struggle. Though small, even negligible in numbers, we form the vanguard of the future workers' state of India. Therefore we have to see that the workers and peasants in the land have their rights recognised in any constitutional change that may come about in the immediate future. Whatever may be the form of swaraj which we may get, the workers' and peasants' right to live a decent human life here on earth should be vouchsafed to them. Whether swaraj is one of the home-rule or free state or republic, workers' right to be represented in the governance of the country by their fellow workers or by the intelligentsia of the country ought to be secured to them. Without this right being secured or conceded to the workers, no form of swaraj is worth having. Therefore it is the duty of the communists to be vigilant enough to see that the future form of swaraj does not essentially become bourgeois, but substantially becomes proletarian. In fact complete self-determination and universal workers' suffrage ought to be the ideal towards which we communists have to stand in the next constitutional change that may come about in the near future. I therefore request you to consider in this conference the methods our party has to adopt, with or without the conjunction of the existing political parties in the country, for securing the rights of the workers and peasants in the coming swaraj state. The motto therefore of every Indian communist ought to be: "No life without swaraj and no swaraj without workers."

*Communism and Congress*: We should define what our attitude shall be as regards this national organisation. This is one organisation whose potentiality for good was great. The National Congress was once a power in the land. Though bourgeois in origin, in scope and outlook, it was the one organisation which continually voiced the political grievances of the nation. Under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi it was a live

force for at least a year. During the campaign of the noncooperation movement the prestige of the Congress was at its height. It aimed at swaraj without defining it or much less understanding it. It spoke in the name of the people. It acted in the name of the people. When its great leader called the nation to offer nonviolent fight against the bureaucracy, thousands responded and they placed their all at the altar of freedom of the land. But it struck blindly. Instead of directing its whole weight against the bureaucracy and rendering it impotent for evil, it struck wildly in all directions. It burdened itself with the redress of all sorts of grievances, political, social, economical and religious and therefore it got itself hopelessly entangled in mutually contradictory ideas and actions. If it had only struck for swaraj and sought for the cooperation of the workers in the fight for it, it would have succeeded. But it weighted itself with all sorts of considerations including those of ethics, that the NCO campaign which opened so brilliantly under its auspices broke down under its own weight, and the retreat of the movement which began at Bardoli ended in the arrest and confinement of its great leader without a word of protest from his followers. The bureaucracy triumphed and the leaders humbled. Amidst turmoil and confusion in the nationalist ranks, the surviving leaders of the movement quarrelled among themselves and split into various parties, and the split is still undergoing further division. A very numerous party among congressmen who survived the debacle at Bardoli, formed themselves into a new party and calling themselves swarajists, they sought to capture the legislative councils and began to give fight to the bureaucracy within the councils which they once abandoned. But here again the bourgeois mentality has begun to show its cloven hoofs even in the council fight, and the Swarajist Party which under Deshbandhu showed some clean fight, has begun to degenerate into a fight for loaves and fishes of office among themselves. From this short resume of the rise and fall of various Congress parties engaged in the pursuit for swaraj, one thing stands clear before the nation, that it is impossible for the bourgeoisie of the country to secure swaraj for the nation unaided. Without the active cooperation of the working masses, the intelligentsia of the country are incapable of winning swaraj. Neither the congressmen nor the present

ing a radical change from our present miserable life to one of joy and happiness which is the birthright of every human being on this planet. This answer I propose to give in the following pages of this address, subject of course to your correction and amendment.

*Communism and Swaraj* : In the great struggle for swaraj which is now in progress throughout the country, we communists have to take up the greatest share in the struggle. Though small, even negligible in numbers, we form the vanguard of the future workers' state of India. Therefore we have to see that the workers and peasants in the land have their rights recognised in any constitutional change that may come about in the immediate future. Whatever may be the form of swaraj which we may get, the workers' and peasants' right to live a decent human life here on earth should be vouchsafed to them. Whether swaraj is one of the home-rule or free state or republic, workers' right to be represented in the governance of the country by their fellow workers or by the intelligentsia of the country ought to be secured to them. Without this right being secured or conceded to the workers, no form of swaraj is worth having. Therefore it is the duty of the communists to be vigilant enough to see that the future form of swaraj does not essentially become bourgeois, but substantially becomes proletarian. In fact complete self-determination and universal workers' suffrage ought to be the ideal towards which we communists have to stand in the next constitutional change that may come about in the near future. I therefore request you to consider in this conference the methods our party has to adopt, with or without the conjunction of the existing political parties in the country, for securing the rights of the workers and peasants in the coming swaraj state. The motto therefore of every Indian communist ought to be : "No life without swaraj and no swaraj without workers."

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dominant party of swarajists will be able to bend the bureaucracy to their will without the active cooperation of organised workers. It is enough to state that the Congress bourgeois leadership lacked sincerity in their relation to the workers of the land. The pious hope now and then expressed by various parties, of helping, educating and organising the workers, both urban and rural, will never fructify for the simple reason that their mutual interests are opposed and contradictory. Therefore it is the duty of the communists to take up the organisation of the masses, and endeavour to obtain swaraj. Whether with or without the cooperation of other political parties of the country, that is for you to decide.

*Communism and Swarajists* : Council-entry, with or without office, has become the dominant plank of the swarajists. It stands to the credit of the swarajists to have brought the bureaucracy to a halt in its triumphant career. This temporary defeat of the bureaucracy has made the bureaucracy look small in the eyes of the world. But the Indian bureaucracy, like the other bureaucracies of the rest of the world, is inexhaustible in its resources, and it is too shrewd and too powerful to be easily defeated. Swarajists will be readily mistaken, as they should learn from the split in their own ranks, if they held that unaided and with a house divided against themselves, they can bend the bureaucracy to yield to them. Single-handed they cannot. Nothing short of completely paralysing the bureaucratic administration will bring the bureaucracy to its knees, but to achieve this consummation the active cooperation of the organised labour is necessary for any party bent upon achieving swaraj. Here again the communists have to learn from the successive failure of every political party in this country that in the organisation of the workers and peasants lies their salvation and that of their country. Whether you have to agitate for direct labour representation in the councils is also one of the subjects which you may tackle in your present deliberations.

*Communism and Suppressed Classes* : Hitherto we have spoken about the relationship of our Communist Party to the various political organisations in the country. We shall now briefly deal with two other items of programme adopted by the Congress in the struggle for swaraj. We shall take first the problem of untouchability and state my opinion as to our party's rela-



thought that by clothing the nation by our own cloth, British cloth would be effectively boycotted, and to that extent, the British worker would be injured, and that this injury would give rise to such clamour that the British government will be compelled to go down and concede all what we wanted. It was further argued that if the nation, especially the workers, should take to the wholesale production of khaddar, it would substantially help the unemployed in India in earning something by which they can supplement their scanty wages paid by the capitalists and the landlords. All these sounded very well during the shortlived enthusiasm of the NCO movement, but when these theories were confronted with actualities, it was found that khaddar production had its own limitations. To wear khaddar as a national costume in our fight for swaraj, we can grant that it may be necessary, in the absence of any other national uniform, but that it would supplement machine-made cloth is an impossible feat. And that such production would effectively boycott foreign cloth is still more problematical. The Americans were never able to boycott foreign cloth during their fight for independence, in spite of their homogeneity of colour, race and religion and their intense patriotism. It was Bunker Hill that decided their independence, and not the boycott of British goods. So also the Irish in their recent fight for a free state. To hold further that it would be an economic salvation for the masses is bad economics. For the Indian working man wants higher wages and more leisure. To ask the famishing worker to drudge at the charkha for few more hours in order to supplement his scanty wages with his still more scanty earnings by means of the charkha, is simply cruel. If the agricultural labourer has no work for few months in the year, let him be provided with work which will give him higher wages or let him be given the opportunity to acquire higher knowledge so as to raise himself equal to his more cultured brethren in the cities, but let us not make him drudge again throughout his weary life without any prospect of any intellectual improvement. Mankind has been steadily growing out of manual drudgery by the aid of the machine, and this has secured him some leisure for higher pursuit of life which has raised him higher in the scale of animal existence. But to drive him again back to manual labour which he can dispense with is not simply cruel

but absurd. Hand-spinning and hand-weaving, except for some indispensable and necessary purpose, have gone the way of all flesh, and they have become extinct as the dodo and no amount of patriotism will bring back the primitive art so as to clothe a whole nation of 300 millions. But to make it in a limited scale so as to serve the fighters for swaraj as a uniform is possible, and this the Spinning Association we hope will succeed in doing. Whether it is absolutely necessary for us communists to wear it on all occasions, that you have to decide yourself individually.

Pardon me, comrades, for having taken you a long way off from our immediate objective, but as a good sapper and miner, I have had to clear our way from a better and clear understanding of our position in respect of other parties in the field. Now we shall deal with the problems of our party and the immediate task before us.

*Communism Defined*: There is good deal of misapprehension about the significance of the word communism and what it includes. Sometimes the term is confounded with bolshevism, and a good deal of misunderstanding has resulted by such confusion. This may be partly due to the mental inertia of a certain class of thinkers and politicians who do not take the trouble to study and to inquire, or it may be due to the fear of vested interests which see ghosts in every stump of a tree during darkness. It is our duty to clear our ground first through this sort of misapprehension which is doing more harm than good to innocent people. What is communism? It is a system or doctrine which aims at the betterment of humanity from almost all the ills of life. It sets out that the workers of the world are providing things more than sufficient to feed, to clothe and to house decently all the human beings on this planet. It further sets out that the whole of the world population can have all the advantage of enjoying the necessaries of higher life also. But because the means of production are in the sole monopoly of few men, the actual producers are made to starve and to suffer. Therefore such means of production should be in the hands of the producers themselves in order that everyone can have a fair share in all the things produced by them. This is all what is meant by communism. It is at once a system and a method in and by which the extreme inequality which obtains in the distribution and enjoyment of world's goods may

be corrected and regulated for the benefit of all alike. It is the only system which offers to every politician, social reformer or religious propagandist a sure method of correcting the glaring abuses which reign supreme in the present social and political systems of the world. Outside this system there is none else which is so potent as to increase the sum of human happiness. All attempts hitherto adopted by other political, social and religious systems of the world have failed to achieve their purpose because they are insincere, opposed to their vested interests and hopelessly contradictory. No rich man can ever share his goods with a poor man, either voluntarily or by social or religious pressure or persuasion. But both can be made to combine their labour for sharing the product of their labour for the common benefit of both. How this can be done for the common benefit of mankind is what communism aims to do. To preach this doctrine in India so as to benefit all classes, all castes, all parties, is the work of Communist Party in India. Communism is as old as history. It was taught by Buddha in a form and practised by his disciples. Jesus as an Essene was himself a communist. Plato, Moore, Morris and others taught mankind a form of communism which was vague, indefinite and utopian. But it was Karl Marx who gave it a scientific and a definite form so as to be applicable in practice.

**Marxian Communism:** We shall deal with Marxian communism in little more detail which should be properly understood by every communist in India. Broadly speaking, the world contains two classes of people, namely, those that have and those that have not, that is the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. These two classes are always in conflict. The one commanding all the capital and the other labour. The owner of capital has the advantage of dictating to the workers upon what conditions he would accept their services. The labouring class, not having the requisite capital, are obliged to sell their services on the conditions dictated by the capitalist. Pressed by hunger and want, the labourers accept the conditions offered, whether he is a worker of industries or of land. Productions increase, markets, fresh markets, are added for the disposal of the things produced, and these things go on in such geometrical ratio that the capitalist comes to own the whole of the world means of production. The working people are more and more divorced from

the means of production, and ultimately become wage-slaves. The worker has no property, and no home and his family relations grow weaker, and he has become a bare worker, dependent for his and his family's existence upon the existence of the capitalist. This has been the world history from the remotest times, but after advent of capitalist industry his existence has become precarious, though efforts were made to prevent further exploitation of the weaker workers. But the destitution to which the worker is driven makes him realise his helplessness, and he forms into unions to protect his interest. The unions composed of these workers are the only organisation through which the worker of today is able to protect his rights against the growing exploitation. Thus the capitalists range themselves on one side and the workers on the other. These classes are in constant conflict for the possession of the world's resources. In this conflict enter the world workers with a solution for ending this age-long conflict between these two classes. It is in the equitable distribution of the world's things brought on by the abolishment of private ownership in the essential wants of life lies the future solution of the conflict between capital and labour. Thus Marx explained the rise and growth of modern capital, which, according to him, can only be used for the benefit of all the workers themselves who form the vast majority of the world's population controlling it. This is Marx's scientific exposition of modern communism.

*Communism and Competition.* Thus it will be seen that the inequality of wealth obtaining among mankind has been the curse which is responsible for most of the ills of life. It is mainly this unequal distribution of the world's things that has been giving rise to so much of misery among mankind. The wars, the invasion of one country by another, the subjugation of weaker nations by the strong, the plunder, rapine, bloodshed that accompany them, are the direct result of this disproportionate distribution of world's goods among not merely individuals but among nations also. The so-called theory of competition among individuals and nations as giving rise to human progress is only another expression for the subjugation of one man by another or one nation by another. It is not competition or the survival of the fittest that has conduced to the human progress, but its opposite instinct, mutual cooperation and

mutual aid that has led humanity today to a higher level of existence. As beautifully said by one of the greatest of Russians—Prince Kropotkin, it is through cooperation and goodwill mainly that the human race has hitherto survived, but for which humanity would have long ago become wrecks or fossils. Therefore we again repeat that it is only through communism that future hope of mankind lies, and not through rivalry and competition. It is unfortunate that today competition rules in every sphere of political, social and economic relationships. It rules commerce, it rules industries, it rules policies of state and society. It determines the foreign relations of the state. It dominates production and distribution of world resources. Its guiding principle is profit and not use. The only way to get out of this octopus is to destroy it, and substitute for it cooperation in which human labour and production may be brought into a common hotchpot for common use and benefit. This can be done only through communism which is another name for universal cooperation. This is the communism which we have undertaken to preach to our countrymen in India.

*Indian Communism is not Bolshevism*: As I explained at the outset, Indian communism is not bolshevism for bolshevism is a form of communism which the Russians have adopted in their country. We are not Russian bolsheviks and bolshevism may not be needed in India. Bolshevism literally means the doctrine of the majority. And this Russian majority are men in power in Russia with the peculiar method of their rule, administration and propaganda. Bolsheviks are the political party in power in Russia as opposed to mensheviks, the minority party, now out of power. We are one with the world communists but not with bolsheviks. We hope this explanation of our position in India will clear all misapprehensions about our party and aims and method. We shall briefly state our aims, methods and ideals.

*Our Communist Ideal*: First, our ideal is to end the domination of capital, make war impossible, wipe out state boundaries and frontiers and weld all states into one corporate commonwealth and bring about real human fraternity and freedom. This is the dream of the communist.

*Our Immediate Aims*: And our immediate aim is to win swaraj for the masses in India, to prevent exploitation of the

workers and peasants by suitable land and industrial legislation, to secure to the bread-winner a minimum wage by which he and his children shall have the necessities of a decent life and to end all distinctions of caste, creed or sect in all political and economic relationships.

*Our Method:* "And all this, we hope to achieve through the unions of labour and peasants, through persuasion, through propaganda and when necessary, in cooperation with other political organisations in the country. We require the cooperation of all other parties in the country to secure the workers' rights in the land. But we feel no doubt that we will be the party who will ultimately succeed in securing these rights to the Indian peoples and therefore we appeal to all thinkers and workers to join our party and work both for our communist ideals and our immediate aims.

*Appeal to Workers:* To the workers of India, we say organise your unions, strong numerically and financially, for only in your organisation lies your strength. Do not dissipate your energy in futile strikes for trifles. Conserve all your strength by combining with other unions and make common cause for all your grievances, and if you have to strike, strike with full force and effect. Till now, you have not realised your own strength. Like the Giant Vee of Russia, you are blind to the world beyond. Your eyebrows are confining your eyes to your own little self. Now the communists will help you in lifting up your eyebrows so that you may see clearly for yourself and realise your strength.

*Appeal to Peasants:* To the peasants in India, we say you are the real salt of the earth. We communists know your sufferings and your wrongs. You have been neglected by your so-called masters of the soil. You are, like Cinderella of our eastern tradition, ceaselessly catering to our wants, and supplying all our comforts and needs, while the landowners have been keeping you in the background. But the denouement is fast approaching, while your haughty masters will sink into merited neglect, you the peasants will be proclaimed alike worthy and beautiful and you will become supreme. Oh! you the forlorn, the oppressed and the suppressed, let us all march together in weal or in woe singing the song Internationale:

*Away, with wreckage of past nations  
Enslaved crowd—rise to the call  
The world shall change from its foundation,  
We that are nothing, shall be all.*

*Communism in Action*: Today communism is practised in almost every country in the world in a small way in one form or another. The practice of communism is seen most in the local governments of the great cities of the world. Here the various public services have been municipalised for the common benefit. It is in New Zealand and other Australian cities that the socialisation of civic services has been realised to the fullest extent. Here the state or municipality has become the house-owner, house-proprietor, bread, milk and meat retailer, drugstore-keeper, undertaker, banker, pawnbroker, farmer, restaurant proprietor, general-store-keeper and book-maker, and a thousand and one other things covering every department of life. Here is the communism in practice in a nutshell. Here in India, we have already communalised some of the major services such as posts, telegraphs, railways (to some extent), army, navy, public buildings, etc. We have only to extend this nationalisation of services to yet more necessary services such as mines, ships, lands, houses, banks, vital industries and others and bring them under the control of the workers and producers, then we shall have communism in India which will transform this unhappy land into a paradise on earth. But a word of caution may be necessary. In applying the theories of communism to the present conditions in India we communists have to watch the progress of communism in the only country where it has been completely adopted and the great transformations that are in progress in the life of the people there. It is in Russia that communism has been completely adopted in various spheres of life. The great experiment is still going on with increasing success in modifying the life of the Russian people. By communalising public services for the common benefit, the great differences that obtain in other states of the world in the economic conditions of the people have been obliterated. All national resources have been placed for the benefit of the whole community. The cruel difference between the rich and the poor, the worker and the lazy, the master and the servant, the illfed and the hungry,

the haves and have-nots, have been removed from the social economy of the Russian people. The effect of modifying the economic inequality of the various classes and interests in Russia through communism is seen in the foreign relations of the Russian people. The spectre of the empire which haunts the rulers of other lands has been exorcised from the Russian national mind. The subjugation of one nationality under another is deemed by the Russians as wicked and unholy. A score of states which were once under the hegemony of the czar from Baltic to the Caspian have had their freedom and self-determination given and secured for mere asking. Exploitation of weaker nations by the strong for material resources of the subject peoples has been condemned by the Russian state. These are the fruits of communism as seen today in Russia. So far we have been studying and following the progress of communism in Russia, we can say without fear of contradiction that the morale of the present administration in Russia is far superior to anything obtaining in many other lands. The great camouflage of the pact of Locarno is enough to damn the signatories to the pact as the most insincere people on earth, for with the signing of the pact Germany wants freedom for its air force, England refuses to scrap its submarines, America, though not a signatory, deems the peace manoeuvres as futile. While every nation is preparing for war, for offensive war, the League of Nations pretends to adjudicate for peace on earth and goodwill among men. The International at Amsterdam, which was not merely dead, but damned during the war, wages war against the communists. This is another bourgeois enterprise to throw dust in the eyes of the unwary workers of the world. Such is the pitiful picture presented by the bourgeois democracy of the world before us communists who, while feeling sorry for the present world situation which threatens to destroy humanity altogether, still hope to raise a far better and happier world through the better sense of the world workers.

*Danger Ahead* : I crave your indulgence, dear comrades, for a short while, for I will not be doing my duty if I do not warn you of the danger ahead. The communal and religious differences which seem to destroy the harmony which once obtained among all political parties in the country during the heyday of NCO may overtake us also, for I fear that we, Indians, are

so religious minded and caste-ridden that the fire which is burning our neighbours' houses may also reach ours. Religion and caste have been the demons which have been swallowing our political unity from historic times. The country today is again torn asunder by these religious and communal differences. The leaders who flaunt these fripperies before us are traitors to our country and to our cause. The Hindu sabhas, sangathans, shudhis are mere bourgeois tactics of the leisured class. Let us therefore leave religion, caste and creed to each individual tastes and fancies, and let us pursue our peaceful course towards swaraj, free from these nightmares. We communists should look to the betterment of the economic life of the country for bringing about the unity of castes and creeds which absolutely have no bearing upon the great goal of our life.

*Conclusion* : Comrades, what we communists should aim in India is a simple life for all, a life free from anxiety for the daily bread, a life free from premature death and decay, a life free from ignorance. We communists should believe that by the gradual and peaceful application of the principles of communism, a better life can be brought about in India. The future of India is in our hands. A better India lies in our dreams. Let us therefore try to realise the dream of a free India, free from exploitation of the weak by the strong; free from drudgery which killeth our life, free from starvation, disease and death, free to express our thoughts without let or hindrance, but enjoy the highest product of art, science and culture and free to sing the song of labour that though

*Now beneath the rule of robbers the world grows  
sad and old,  
The people bound and fettered in chains of  
glittering gold,  
Yet when the trumpet soundeth, the world shall see  
a sight,  
The golden chain is broken on the coming of  
the light.  
Oh! the coming of the light, oh, the coming  
of the light,  
The golden chain is broken on the coming of  
the light.*

## 6. RESOLUTIONS

The following resolutions were put from the chair and carried unanimously:

(1) That this conference sympathises with the communist sufferers all over the world and expresses its strong, indignant disapproval of the imprisonment of the communist comrades in Great Britain as opposed to liberty of thought and speech.

(2) That this conference emphatically condemns the action of the USA in preventing Mr Saklatvala from entering the States.

(3) That this conference, while holding undermentioned comrades as not being guilty of the offences with which they are wrongly charged, places on record its high appreciation of the sacrifices undergone by them in the cause of communism.

(a) Md Akbar Khan	(10 years, still in jail)
(b) Gauhar Rahaman Khan	(2 years, released)
(c) Mia Akbar Shah	(2 years, released)
(d) Syed Habib Ahmad	(1 year, released)
(e) Rafiq Ahmad	(1 year, released)
(f) Ferozuddin (Mansoor)	(1 year, released)
(g) Sultan Md Khan	(1 year, released)
(h) Abdul Majeed	(3 years, still in jail)
(i) Md Shafiq	(3 years, still in jail)
(j) S. A. Dange	(4 years, still in jail)
(k) Md Shaukat Usmani	(4 years, still in jail)
(l) N. B. Das Gupta	(4 years, released owing to serious illness)
(m) Muzaffar Ahmad	(4 years, released owing to serious illness)

(4) That the conference resolves that the Labour-Kisan Party of Hindustan be dissolved and the *Labour and Kisan Gazettee* be the organ of the party.

(5) That this conference appreciated the protest made by the French communists against the war waged by the French government against Riffs and Druses.

M. SINGARAVELU

President

(Meerut Record, D-374/22)

## 7. CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA

### *Article 1 : Object*

The establishment of a workers' and peasants' republic based on the socialisation of the means of production and distribution, by the liberation of India from British imperialist domination.

### *Article 2 . Sessions of the CP India*

(a) The Communist Party of India shall ordinarily hold its conference every year during the month of October at a place that may have been determined by the central executive hereinafter referred to.

(b) An extraordinary session shall be summoned by the central executive on a requisition of a majority of the provincial committees or of its own motion in case of grave emergencies.

### *Article 3. The Component Parts of the CPI*

The Communist Party of India shall consist of the following:

- (a) central executive
- (b) provincial committees
- (c) district committees
- (d) other working-class unions as may be affiliated to it from time to time.

### *Article 4: Membership*

No one shall be eligible to be a member of any of the committees or unions referred to in the foregoing article unless he or she has attained the age of 18 and has expressed his or her acceptance of the object as laid down in article 1 of this constitution of the Communist Party of India.

### *Article 5: Provincial Organisation*

(a) Each provincial committee, district or other committee referred to in the article 3, shall have the power to frame rules

laying down conditions of membership and for the conduct of business not inconsistent with this constitution.

(b) Each provincial committee shall consist of representatives elected annually by members of the district organisations in the province in accordance with its number.

(c) An annual report shall be submitted by each provincial committee of the work done by the end of each year.

#### *Article 6: Delegates*

Any bonafide worker or peasant shall be eligible for election as delegate for the annual conference.

#### *Article 7: Fee*

The delegation fee shall be fixed at a minimum of eight annas.

#### *Article 8: Election of the President*

The several provincial committees shall suggest by the end of . . . to the central executive the names of persons who are in their opinion eligible for presidentship of the conference and the central executive shall submit these names to the provincial committees for final recommendations.

#### *Article 9 Central Executive*

Every union or committee referred to in article 3 will be authorised to send one representative for every 25 members. The election of the central executive shall take place at least a month before the annual conference.

The central executive shall meet as often as may be necessary for the discharge of its obligations and every time upon the requisition by 10 members thereof who shall state therein the purpose for which they desire a meeting of the central executive. The quorum shall be 1/3 of its whole strength.

#### *Article 10 : Function*

The central executive shall be committee of the party to carry out the programme of work laid down by the conference

from year to year and deal with new matters that may arise during the year and may not be provided for by the conference itself.

#### *Article 11: President of the C.I.*

The president of the conference shall be the chairman of the central executive for the following year.

#### *Article 12 Office bearers of the C.I.*

The C.I. shall have three general secretaries and two treasurers who shall be annually elected by the C.I.

(Meeting Record, P-1115)

### 8. DECLARATION FORM

*(To be signed by the members of the Communist Party of India)*

Whereas the workers and peasants of India are unable to live a human life on account of their being exploited both by the foreign and native capitalists and landlords in India. And whereas the existing political parties in this country are dominated by bourgeois interests which are diametrically opposed by the well-being of Indian workers and peasants, I, the undersigned, aged..., hereby accept and sign the creed of the COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA which stands for the establishment of a workers' and peasants' republic in India. I have carefully gone through the resolutions of the first communist conference printed on the back and fully agree with the immediate object of the party which is the securing of a living wage for the workers and peasants by means of nationalisation of public services, namely land, mines, factories, houses, telegraphs, and telephones, railways and such other public utilities which re-

quire common ownership, I belong to no such communal organisation which can debar me from joining this party.

I herewith pay eight annas—the subscription for my membership for the ensuing year.

Address in full :

Signature

(The declarant is requested to sign two such forms one of which is to be kept with the enrolling secretary and the other one should be sent to the general secretaries of the central executive).

(On the back)

The resolutions of the first Communist Conference held at Kanpur on the 26th day of December 1925 for the establishment and formation of the COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA.

Whereas the workers and peasants of India are unable to live a human life on account of being exploited both by foreign and native capitalists and landlords in India. And whereas the existing political parties in India are dominated by bourgeois interests which are diametrically opposed to the well-being of the Indian workers and peasants. This conference of the Indian communists resolves that a party be formed for the purpose of the emancipation of the workers and peasants of India. This party shall be known as the COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA and the ultimate aim of the party shall be the establishment of a republican swaraj of workers and peasants, and the immediate object of the party shall be the securing of a living wage to the workers and peasants by means of nationalisation and municipalisation of public services namely land, mines, factories, houses, telegraphs and telephones, and railways and such other public utilities which require public ownership.

For the purpose of achieving these objectives, the party shall form labour and peasants' unions in rural and urban areas, enter district and taluk boards, municipalities and assemblies, and by such other means and methods carry out the ideal and immediate programme of the party with or without the cooperation of the existing political bodies in India.

The party shall have a central office, with two general secretaries for conducting its business and the president of the conference shall be the president of the party for the year before the next conference. The party shall consist of communists only, who should pledge themselves to carry out the object of the party.

No one who is a member of any communal organisation in India shall be admitted as a member of the Communist Party.

The Communist Party of India shall ordinarily hold its congress session every year during the Xmas week.

The party shall have a central executive committee consisting of 30 members elected by various provincial organisations.

The EC shall have the following five provincial centres with Calcutta, Bombay, Kanpur, Madras and Lahore as their head-offices under its supervision to carry on the work in these circles.

The central executive shall have a council of seven members, with the president as its ex-officio member, to execute all emergency matters that may arise from time to time which come within its scope.

Every member shall pay eight annas as subscription for his membership to the enrolling secretary, 25 per cent of which will be sent to the CE as quota and the remaining part of it will remain with the provincial secretaries.

All the provincial organisations shall submit their working report to the secretaries of the central executive every quarter.

*General Secretaries*  
*CE, Communist Party of India*

(Meerut Record, P-1142)

## 9. ELECTION OF OFFICE-BEARERS

*Proceedings of the meeting of the central executive held on 28 December at 10 a.m. in the president's camp, Kanpur.*

The first meeting of the central executive of the Communist Party of India was held today dated 28 December 1925. The following business was transacted:

Comrades Hasrat Mohani, Azad Sobhani, S. Satyabhakta, S. D. Hassan, Muzaffar Ahmad, K. N. Joglekar, S. V. Ghate, Baba Rana Choube, Radha Mohan Gokulji, and J. P. Bagerhatta were present. Comrade M. Singaravelu was in the chair.

1. *The first item* on the agenda i.e. the election of office-bearers and organisers was taken and the following elections were unanimously declared:

J. P. Bagerhatta, K. N. Joglekar, S. V. Ghate and R. S. Nimbkar (Bombay)

Hasrat Mohani, Azad Sobhani, S. Satyabhakta and Baba Rana Choube (UP)

Muzaffar Ahmad and Radha Mohan Gokulji (Calcutta)

Kameswara Rao and Krishnaswamy Ayyangar (Madras)

S. D. Hassan, Ram Chandra and Abdul Majid (Lahore)

*Item no 2:* Election of the vice-president Comrade Azad Sobhani was unanimously elected as the vice-president of the CE for the coming year.

*Item No 3:* Comrades J. P. Bagerhatta and S. V. Ghate were elected general secretaries of the CE.

*Item No 4:* Comrade Krishnaswamy Ayyangar (Madras), S. Satyabhakta (Kanpur), Muzaffar Ahmad (Calcutta) and S. D. Hassan (Lahore) were appointed secretaries for the circles noted against their names to undertake committee's work in the provinces so long as no committees were formed by the people there.

*Item No 5:* The central office of the committee was resolved to be transferred to Bombay for the ensuing year.

*Item No 6:* Resolved, Comrade Ghate be paid Rs 60 a month

The party shall have a central office, with two general secretaries for conducting its business and the president of the conference shall be the president of the party for the year before the next conference. The party shall consist of communists only, who should pledge themselves to carry out the object of the party.

No one who is a member of any communal organisation in India shall be admitted as a member of the Communist Party.

The Communist Party of India shall ordinarily hold its congress session every year during the Xmas week.

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The EC shall have the following five provincial centres with Calcutta, Bombay, Kanpur, Madras and Lahore as their head-offices under its supervision to carry on the work in these circles.

The central executive shall have a council of seven members, with the president as its ex-officio member, to execute all emergency matters that may arise from time to time which come within its scope.

Every member shall pay eight annas as subscription for his membership to the enrolling secretary, 25 per cent of which will be sent to the CE as quota and the remaining part of it will remain with the provincial secretaries.

All the provincial organisations shall submit their working report to the secretaries of the central executive every quarter.

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Muzaffar Ahmad and Radha Mohan Gokulji (Calcutta)

Kameswara Rao and Krishnaswamy Ayyangar (Madras)

S. D. Hassan, Ram Chandra and Abdul Majid (Lahore)

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*Item No 5:* The central office of the committee was resolved to be transferred to Bombay for the ensuing year.

*Item No 6:* Resolved, Comrade Ghate be paid Rs 60 a month

for his own private expenses and be placed in charge of the head-office at Bombay.

*General Secretary  
Communist Party of India*

(Meerut Record, D-374/20)

## 10. COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA

### *AIMS AND OBJECTS*

As a result of the session of the First Communist Conference at Kanpur the provisional Indian Communist Party was dissolved and a formal party with its name as the Communist Party of India has been formed. The ultimate goal of the party will be 'the establishment of a workers' and peasants' republic in India. And the immediate object of the party shall be the securing of a living wage for the workers and peasants by means of nationalisation and municipalisation of public services; namely land, mines, factories, houses, telegraphs, telephones, railways and such other public utilities which require public ownership. The party shall for the attainment of the above object form labour and peasants' union in urban and rural areas, enter district and taluk boards, municipalities and assemblies and by such other means and methods carry out the ideal and programme of the party with or without the cooperation of the existing political parties in the country.

The party shall have a central executive of 30 members returned by provincial committees and a council of seven members to execute all emergency matters.

The party shall consist of communists only who will pledge themselves to carry out its objects and no one who is a member of any communal organisation can be admitted as a member of this party.

Every member shall pay eight annas annually as subscription for his membership to the enrolling secretaries.

The office of the central executive shall be in Bombay with comrades Janaki Prasad Bagerhatta and S. V. Ghate as general secretaries for the year. Maulana Azad Sobhani of Kanpur has been elected as its vice-president and Comrade M. Singaravelu the president of the conference will preside on the central executive for the ensuing year. Comrade Krishnaswamy Ayyangar (Madras), S. Satyabhakta (Kanpur), Radha Mohan Gokulji and Muzaffar Ahmad (Calcutta) and S. D. Hassan (Lahore) will be working as provincial secretaries to organise provincial committees in their respective provinces. The next meeting of the central executive will meet early in April to begin effective work and formulate a scheme of work for the year.

(Meerut Record, D-374/13)

## II. SINGARAVELU'S CIRCULAR NO 2

Dear Comrade,

We propose the general work of our party this month and thereafter, in addition to the work you may propose, to take as follows :

I request you will give this your consideration:

(1) To prepare in each presidency of our party a memorial signed by a large number of citizens to the viceroy for the release of our suffering comrades Dange and Usmani on the lines undertaken by Comrade Saklatvala in parliament for the release of the 12 communists in England.

(2) To pursue for the celebration of our party conferences in each province in the course of this year.

(3) To hold monster meetings on the First of May.

I am drafting the memorial, a copy of which will be sent to.

the provincial secretaries. Madras is arranging to hold a provincial conference in course of a month or so, and thus lead the other provinces.

11 March 1926

Yours ever,  
M. SINGARAVELU

(Meerut Record, D-374/21)

## 6. Labour-Swaraj Party—Forerunner of the Workers' and Peasants' Party

### INTRODUCTION

We are reproducing here the organisational and political documents of the Labour-Swaraj Party of the Indian National Congress as well as the editorial from the first issue of *Langal* (Plough) the weekly organ of that party. The last document—a review of the *Langal* in the *Masses* records the reaction of M. N. Roy to the emergence of the journal.

A Bengali pamphlet, *The Peasants' and Workers' Party of Bengal—Report 1927 and 1928*, published by Muzaffar Ahmad on 31 March 1928, gives in brief the history of the emergence of this party.

“This party was first organised on 1 November 1925. But at that time it was not called the Peasants' and Workers' Party of Bengal (Bangiya Krishak-o-Shramik Dal). It was first organised under the name ‘The Labour-Swaraj Party of the Indian National Congress’. Hemantakumar Sarkar, Qutbuddin Ahmad, Qazi Nazrul Islam and Shamsuddin Hussain of Birbhum district were especially active in initiating its organisation. The first inaugural communique of the party to be published in the press bears the signature of Qazi Nazrul Islam.”

The report then goes on to state that the Swaraj Party, which was formed after the suspension of the mass movement, con-

centrated almost all its energy in creating obstruction inside the legislative council. The interests of the leaders of this party were tied up with capitalists and landlords and they were opposed to class struggle. "Therefore, it became historically necessary to take up the question of organising a new party based on class struggle in order to secure the liberation of the masses."

"The main thing is that the new party was founded at a time when its need was the greatest". . . It was Qutbuddin Ahmad who gave special financial assistance for organising the party. A few others also gave something. Two rooms were rented out at 37 Harrison Road, Calcutta, and the office of the party was first established there. During the three months—November, December (1925) and January (1926)—the organisation of the party was provisional. Thereafter on 6 February 1926 a session of the All-Bengal Praja Conference was held at Krishnagar. Dr Naresh Chandra Sengupta, MA, BL, presided over the conference, which was attended by peasant and tenant delegates of Bengal. Members of the Labour-Swaraj Party also participated in the conference. The resolution to organise the Peasants' and Workers' Party of Bengal, which was proposed by Faizuddin Hussain Sahib of Mymensingh and seconded by Braja Nath Das of Bogra, was unanimously adopted at the conference. From that time the name of the Labour-Swaraj Party was changed to Peasants' and Workers' Party of Bengal. A new executive committee too was elected at Krishnagar. Dr Naresh Chandra Sengupta was elected president and Hemantakumar Sarkar and Qutbuddin Ahmad were elected joint secretaries."

The first programme and the constitution of the Labour-Swaraj Party was published on 1 November 1925. It was later printed in the second issue of *Langal* on 23 December 1925. *Langal* was started on 16 December 1925. The chief editor was Nazrul Islam and the editor was Manibhusan Mukhopadhyaya. *Langal* stopped after 15 issues and reappeared a little later on 12 August 1926 as *Ganavani*.<sup>1</sup>

We have seen in Volume One how S. A. Dange and M. N. Roy were independently of each other proposing the formation of an open mass national-revolutionary party which will concentrate on organising the workers and peasants, come

1. Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and the CPI*, pp. 414-16.

forward with a revolutionary programme for complete independence, such as the one put forward at the Gaya session of the Indian National Congress by Roy and Abani Mukherji, and be in the forefront of the struggle for national freedom counteracting the compromising tendencies of the national bourgeois leadership.<sup>2</sup> We have seen earlier in this volume how an attempt was made to organise such a party. On the one hand we have the document by Roy on organising a workers' and peasants' party and the proposed conference at Lucknow. On the other hand, we have the attempt of Singaravelu to form the Labour Kisan Party of Hindustan which Dange also supported.<sup>3</sup> But these efforts were cut short by the Kanpur Conspiracy Case arrests. One of the charges against the accused in the case was that they were trying to form a workers' and peasants' party to overthrow the rule of his britannic majesty!

We have seen how the holding of the open legal conference of Indian communists in Kanpur came about because of the initiative of Satyabhakta and his Indian Communist Party, who had a mistaken perspective and outlook.<sup>4</sup> Genuine communist groups captured the conference and made it the occasion for building the first central executive and the first all-India communist centre. At the conference, as we have seen, Singaravelu announced the dissolution of his Labour Kisan Party of Hindustan. This meant that some at least had the idea of functioning the Communist Party legally. But this was not a realistic or correct perspective. Roy who took a sharply critical and negative attitude to the Kanpur conference, nevertheless, recognised the central executive formed there and suggested the way forward, correcting the "mistakes" at the conference and going forward to forming an open people's party or a workers' and peasants' party, within which the illegally functioning CPI would be the driving force. In the given situation it was the way for the emerging Communist Party for combining the national task with the class task, to come forward as a force fighting for complete independence—for an anti-imperialist, antifeudal democratic programme, by building the class organisa-

2. See Volume One, p. 510.

3. See section 5 of 1923 above.

4. See section 5 of 1925 above.



কবি-সমিতির  
 সভাপতি, কবি-সমিতি  
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সম্মিত-প্রকাশ-কর্তৃক-প্রকাশিত-সাম্পাদিত-সম্পাদিত-সম্পাদিত

প্রথম ভাগে { পৃষ্ঠাসংখ্যা ১০১ পৃষ্ঠা, ১৩০২, ইং ১৩ ডিসেম্বর, ১৯২৫ } বিদেশে প্রকাশ

এই সংখ্যার সারসংক্ষেপ  
 কবি-সমিতি  
 সাম্পাদিত

বি. কোহিনুর ডোকোমেণ্ট এন্ড  
 পেপার প্রাইভেট লিমিটেড  
 কবি-সমিতি  
 কবি-সমিতি  
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 কবি-সমিতি

বিপ্লবাত্মক  
 কবি-সমিতি  
 ভারতে ভারতীয় আন্দোলন  
 কবি-সমিতি  
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 কবি-সমিতি  
 কবি-সমিতি

tion of workers, peasants and other toilers as a revolutionary fighting force for the same. The formation of the Labour-Swaraj Party, the precursor of the workers' and peasants' parties which later emerged in different provinces, was a step in that direction. It was actually taken a month before the Kanpur conference. It came about, not as a result of any suggestion or instruction from anywhere, but out of the natural development of events. The communist initiative gave it the necessary political and organisational direction.

How these developments took place in Bengal, how the Labour-Swaraj Party was formed, what role Qazi Nazrul Islam and his poetry played in the same has been recorded by Muzaffar Ahmad in his book *Qazi Nazrul Islam. Smritikatha*.

Round about 15 January 1920, Nazrul's novel *Byathar Dan* (Gift of Pain) was published in *Bangiya Musalman Sahitya Patrika* (edited by Dr Muhammad Shaheedullah and Muhammad Mozammel Haq). The first issue of the evening daily *Navayug* was published on 12 July 1920 with Nazrul Islam and Muzaffar Ahmad as actual editors.<sup>5</sup> On 12 August 1922, the first issue of the biweekly *Dhumketu* (Comet) came out under the editorship of Nazrul.<sup>6</sup>

On 23 November, Nazrul was arrested for his poem "Anandamoyir Agamane" published in *Dhumketu* and sentenced to one year's RI on 16 January 1923.

In 1925 Nazrul along with his friends, Qutbuddin Ahmad, Hemantakumar Sarkar and Shamsuddin Hussain (elder brother of Abdul Halim) decided to sponsor a new party. The Labour-Swaraj Party of the Indian National Congress was formed in Calcutta in November 1925. Its first manifesto was issued under the signature of Nazrul Islam. Muzaffar had not yet returned to Bengal after his release from the Kanpur Bolsheviki Conspiracy sentence.

On 16 December, the first (or special) issue of weekly *Lagal* came out as the "Weekly Organ of the Workers' and Peasants' Swaraj Party". It was published from 37 Harrison Road where the Labour-Swaraj Party had a 2-room office. Nazrul's name appeared in the paper as director-in-chief and that of his friend (since his

5. See Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and the CPI*, pp 24, 79, 82.

6. *Ibid*, pp 194-95.

army days), Manibhusan Mukherjee as editor. Nazrul's famous poem "Samyavadi" was published in the first issue of *Langal*.

The editorial from the first issue of *Langal* was obviously written by Nazrul Islam. It not only talks of the strength which will accrue from the organisation of the peasants, but says no longer now shudras for the society, but the society will now be for the shudras. One is reminded of the epigram of Sismondi quoted by Marx : "The Roman proletariat lived at the expense of society, while modern society lives at the expense of the proletariat" It is significant the first issue carried a message by C. R. Das in which he speaks of "the dire poverty and an existence bordering on death" of the peasants, in which he lyrically speaks of them as having "kept burning the fire of Bengali nationalism", of each of them whether Hindu, Muslim or untouchable being "a Narayana incarnate". But the message does not contain a word of organising the peasants. The issue contained as the main attraction the famous poem of Nazrul "Samyavadi" and the full Bengali text of the constitution of the Labour-Swaraj Party, which we have reproduced here in English translation. In a column of short comments called "Khabardari", there is caustic criticism of Swaraj Party and its leader Sengupta who voted with the government on the tenancy bill while Hemanta Babu and the leftwingers voted against it. Hemanta Babu is Hemantakumar Sarkar, the initiator of the Labour-Swaraj Party and this shows that the Labour-Swaraj Party and its organ drew support from the leftwing of the Swaraj Party.

The second issue of *Langal* dated 23 December 1925 carried Nazrul's song of the peasant, which concluded with the words: "Let's shout, brothers, all for the victory of the peasant, for the victory of the ploughshare; this time the civilised world will see how strong is the peasant." It contained articles on the peasant question in general and on the tenancy bill then before the legislative council. It carried an article on Karl Marx by Devabrata Basu. It is recorded that the 5000 copies of the first issue of *Langal* were all sold out within a few hours, the reason for its popularity being Nazrul's poem "Samyavadi". It was stated that the poem would be brought out in a pamphlet form for sale. It also recorded that several propaganda meetings were held in December by the Labour-Swaraj Party in which Nazrul's

songs were sung. There was also an appreciative report on one Johnstone—a British trade unionist who had come to India to study the conditions of Indian workers—and was reported as saying in Bombay that “very few swarajists were working for labour and had little sympathy with workers”. These last two facts are confirmed by the contemporary confidential report of the government on the internal political situation for December 1925:

“This incipient party (i.e. the Labour-Swaraj Party—G.A.) held a public meeting on 9 December to discuss the Bengal tenancy amendment bill. Qazi Nazrul Islam and Hemantakumar Sarkar, MLC, were among those who addressed the meeting... They said that the vested interests in the council (meaning the Swaraj Party) had conspired to betray the people's cause. (About the same time) Johnstone and Sime of Dundee Workers' Union of jute factories had come to see the conditions of life and work of the jute workers of Bengal.”

The third issue of *Langal* dated 7 January 1926 carried Nazrul's “Savyasachi”, the famous poem which sings of the awakening of the ancient East, and an article titled “Political Fireworks” critically commenting on the nationalist conferences and sessions held in Kanpur in the Christmas week. The article pointed out that the urgent need of the hour was not long speeches but the organisation of peasants and workers, and making the masses conscious of their democratic rights. It contained an article on “Lenin's Soviet Russia” by Devabrata Basu and the second instalment of Maxim Gorky's *Mother* which was being serialised from the second issue. Apart from another article on “Bengal Tenancy Bill”, the issue contained in its column “Khabardari”, a preliminary news comment on the First Communist Conference at Kanpur. This comment said: “No senior leaders of the Congress or khilafat attended this Kanpur conference of the Communist Party of India. Only parties of youth attended. It required courage to attend such a conference for there were no cushioned chairs here but just a rough mattress!” Under a subtitle “Nonviolent Goondaism”, the incident of the Ajmer delegates clashing with the volunteers at Congress pandal gate is described. We shall take it up in the last section on the Kanpur session of the Indian National Congress.

Number 4 of *Langal*, apart from the serialised items like

"Lenin's Soviet Russia" and Maxim Gorky's *Mother*, contained an article by Muzaffar Ahmad on "Why India Is Not Independent?" The writer calls upon the educated youth of India to enter the field of organising the peasants and workers who form 95 per cent of the population. "To spread the message of life among the peasants and workers, to identify themselves with their real life should be the only task of the new educated class... They must tell the peasants and workers that they have 100 per cent right to enjoy the wealth produced by their labour. It would not be a sign of courage but of cowardice if they gave up their right..." Therefore they must begin the fight for their own rights and then only a basic transition can take place in this country. They must be free from the influence of the deceitful sadhus and sanyasis, mullahs and moulvis. Without this there is no hope of emancipation.

Number 5 of *Langal* dated 21 January 1926 carried an article entitled "Communism and Bolshevism" with the subtitle "President's Speech at the First Communist Conference" from which we have quoted in the earlier section and a statement of Muzaffar Ahmad on "Building the Communist Party" which we have reproduced in full there. The main feature of the issue was the article "The Extraordinary Life Story of Subhaschandra Bose and His Letters". Arrested under the Bengal ordinance in 1924, Subhas Babu was in jail in Mandalay now nearly for two years. The *Langal* was sending him felicitations for his birthday on 23 January. There was also a six line poetical message from Rabindranath Tagore to Subhas Babu in jail.

In Number 6 of *Langal* dated 28 January 1926 there is an article by Muzaffar Ahmad on "What's the Remedy?" in which he makes a plea for communism and relevance of its programme for India. Apart from the abovementioned serialised articles, it contains a report on the Mymensingh district peasants' and workers' conference, and a feature on "Subhas's Letters from Abroad".

In Number 7 of *Langal*, dated 4 February 1926, apart from the serialised articles, there is an article on the Bengal tenancy bill, which quotes a message received from the Krestintern (Moscow) on the death of C. R. Das some seven months before. This message calls upon the Swaraj Party to organise

the workers and peasants. It also quotes a message from Saklatvala and some other ILP MPs of Britain calling for the organisation of trade unions.

In the same number, in the comment column "Khabardan", there is a brief notice taken of the second issue of *Samyavadi* of *Satyabhakta*. It says, "We have received the second number of *Samyavadi* from Kanpur. *Satyabhakta* is its editor. *Samyavadi* is being published with the following objectives: (1) protest against oppression of the peasants, (2) exposure of the miserable conditions of life of the workers, (3) fight for human rights for the so-called untouchable castes, (4) give real news about the communist and bolshevik movement in different countries, (5) spread knowledge of communism and collectivism among the common people... We heartily congratulate this new contemporary paper *Samyavadi*." It is significant that *Langal* with the editing of which Muzaffar Ahmad, who knew the role of *Satyabhakta* at the First Communist Conference, was associated should welcome *Samyavadi* like this. By the end of January when this issue of *Langal* went to the press, editors of *Langal* did not know that *Satyabhakta* had resigned and formed his National Communist Party. This shows that despite the differences at the Kanpur conference there were friendly feelings for *Satyabhakta* and his work, and he was elected to the CEC. Sharp differences came only when he resigned his seat on the CEC and founded another party, the National Communist Party. This issue also contained the announcement of the all-Bengal tenants' conference which was to meet at Krishnagar on 6 and 7 February 1926. It was in this conference that the Bengal Peasants' and Workers' Party was formed, which took the place of the Labour-Swaraj Party. It was decided here that *Langal* should be taken over as the organ of the party. Nareshchandra Sengupta, who was the president of the Labour-Swaraj Party presided over the conference and he was elected the president of the Bengal Peasants' and Workers' Party. In fact the leaders and workers of the Labour-Swaraj Party had taken initiative in organising the Krishnagar conference and converting the Labour-Swaraj Party into the Bengal Peasants' and Workers' Party.

Number 8 of *Langal* dated 11 February 1926 printed the full text of the presidential address of Nareshchandra Sengupta. In

this address he raises the question of the abolition of landlordism and the realisation of the slogan of "land to the tiller" which he suggests should be done by paying compensation to the zamindar for extinguishing his "right to receive rent". This issue also printed the constitution and the rules of the Communist Party of India as adopted at the Kanpur Communist Conference as well as the resolutions adopted on the first day of the conference. Besides this it contained reports of kisan conferences of the districts of Birbhum, Howrah and Bogra.

We have dealt at some length with the contents of the first eight issues of *Langal*, up to the beginning of February 1926 when it was the organ of the Labour-Swaraj Party because it is the first Indian language organ issued by communists, after *Inqilab* (Urdu) of Ghulam Hussain of Lahore issued for a few months in 1922, and perhaps after *Thozhilali* of Singaravelu (1923-24) of which we know nothing. *Kirti* (Worker) in Punjab, coming out just 3 months after *Langal* in February 1926, stands on the same footing. Started by Santokh Singh of the Ghadar Party it soon became the organ of the Kirti-Kisan Party of Punjab under Sohan Singh Josh. *Langal*, coming out at about the same time when the foundation conference of the CPI took place, carried all the documents of that conference in Bengali. *Kirti* did the same but to a lesser extent. *Langal* reflects that early period of the history of the Communist Party in Bengal when its pioneers were turning to practical work of organising peasants and workers, when they are just beginning the mass popularisation of Marxism-Leninism and scientific socialism and the experience of the October socialist revolution; when it is drawing support from the leftwing of the national movement, particularly of the Swaraj Party.

As a successor of *Dhumketu* and though more definitely communist-sponsored, *Langal* seems to have attracted considerable public attention as shown by the sale of 5000 copies of its first issue in one day. This was because of the popularity of its chief editor Nazrul Islam, who had by that time already earned the fame of being Bengal's outstanding young rebel poet. Its popularity is also proved by the fact that like *Dhumketu*, *Langal* also carried a blessing message from Rabindranath Tagore under its masthead.

The Masses, in its article headed "Langal", "welcomed the

new Bengali weekly" with delight. The editor, M. N. Roy, must have received some six or seven issues of the paper, makes detailed criticism of the contents and gives many helpful suggestions.

## 1. CONSTITUTION

(1) *Name*. The name of the party shall be the Labour-Swaraj Party of the Indian National Congress.

(2) *Object*: The object of the party is the attainment of swaraj in the sense of complete independence of India based on economic and social emancipation and political freedom of men and women.

(3) *Means*: Nonviolent mass action will be the principal means of the attainment of the above object.

(4) *Membership* Any member of the Indian National Congress who subscribes to the object, constitution and programme of the party shall be eligible to be a member of the party subject to the confirmation of the central executive. The membership of this party does not preclude anybody from being a member of the Swaraj Party so long as protection and promotion of the interest of labour and peasantry remain a part of their programme.

(5) *Subscription*: Every member of the party shall pay an annual subscription of rupee one.

(6) *Central Executive*: The central executive will consist of (more or less) fifteen members who will be elected for three years by the initiators of the party at its first meeting. The members will be in charge of one or more of the following departments and shall exercise the final power in all matters connected therewith: (a) propaganda, (b) finance, (c) party organisation, (d) labour, (e) peasant, (f) legislatures.

Every member of the executive will have one vote and the person presiding may give a casting vote in case of equality of votes. Three members shall form a quorum.

(7) *Provincial Executive (Panchayat)*: There will be a provincial executive of the party for each of the provinces into which the Indian National Congress is divided, consisting of 5 to 9 members appointed by the central executive.

(8) *Provincial Council (Parisad)*: There will be also a provincial council for each province consisting of one or more representative from each district appointed at the first instance by the provincial executive for one year.

(9) Attempts will be made by the district representatives of the provincial councils to organise district, subdivisional, union and village councils. With the growth of the district, subdivisional, union and village councils the system of election to the central and provincial executives and the provincial councils will gradually come into practice.

(10) Any matter not covered by the above will be decided by the central executive and their decision shall be final.

(Meerut Record, P 549/13)

## 2. POLICY AND PROGRAMME

Whereas in the light of the experience gained by the failure of the noncooperation movement as based on the triple boycott programme of the classes who are creations of an alien bureaucracy and whose ultimate existence depends on the continuance of that alien rule; and —

Whereas in the light of the experience gained in the assembly and the different councils by the Swaraj Party, it has been found that the bureaucracy could not be made to yield to India's national demands, even if all the legislatures were captured by the swarajists; and —

Whereas in view of the indiscriminate arrests and detentions without trial of India's soldiers of freedom and the united protest of all the political parties of India having produced no effect on the bureaucracy; and —

Whereas the only item involving direct action, viz mass civil disobedience in the sense of universal national strike and non-

payment of taxes, which means all hands off from the machinery of exploitation and administration, has been practically given the go-by by the foremost political parties in India; and —

Whereas the cult of wresting freedom by speeches or by terrorism from the unwilling hands of the bureaucracy has been of little avail in the past, and no amount of coaxing and cajoling with the bureaucracy can really improve the lot of the Indian people, nor violence can secure freedom for the masses who remain enchained in a thousand bonds and disarmed by a great military power helped by native cooperation, and the only means to establish swaraj by nonviolent methods seems to lie in the utilisation of the dynamic forces of mass movement which have really more potentialities than bombs and revolvers; and —

Whereas any scheme of swaraj without reference to the readjustment of landowning system is meaningless so far as India is concerned and "to an agricultural people the dearest and the best of privilege is that which gives them a sense of property in the soil they till; liberty of land is the one thing without which all other things are unenjoyable; and tenancy determinable at the will of a superior is but a legal definition of serfhood"; and —

Whereas competition has been the bane of modern civilisation and Indian life is based on true cooperation and there can be no peace unless competition in industry and other spheres is replaced by cooperation and spirit of mutual service; and —

Whereas the salvation of India as pointed out by Sri Aurobindo Ghose lies in the combination of young declassified intellectuals and the workers, industrial and agricultural.

Now the Labour-Swaraj Party of the Indian National Congress declares that the only means yet left for enforcing the demands of the people of India lies through the organisation of labour and peasantry in the country who form eighty per cent of the population, so that they are no longer denied the elementary rights of a human being, they may become further conscious of their political rights and wrest freedom from the unwilling hands of vested interest by their own might and for their own interest. And in giving effect to the said principles the party resolves to adopt the following programme.

(1) The party will identify itself with the cause of Labour and peasantry (labour includes those who earn their bread by hand or by brain).

(2) The party will where possible cooperate with the other parties engaged in national service.

(3) The party will help in the election of, and be represented, by members of legislature who shall fight among other things for the following labour and peasant demands :

(i) The representatives in the legislatures will make rules for their internal management and guidance.

(ii) Within the legislative bodies, the representatives of the party shall whenever possible —

(a) refuse supplies and throw out budgets unless and until the system of government is altered in recognition of our rights,

(b) throw out all proposals for legislative enactments by which the bureaucracy proposes to consolidate its power, and

(c) move resolutions and introduce and support measures and bills which are necessary for the healthy growth of national life and the consequent displacement of the bureaucracy.

(iii) No member of a legislature shall accept any office under the government except when permitted by the representatives of the party in the legislatures.

#### ULTIMATE DEMANDS

(1) *Labour* : Modern industries and public utilities such as mines, railways, telegraphs, inland waterways, tramways, etc. shall be nationalised under the control of workers' committees not for profits but for the use and benefit of the country.

(2) *Peasant* : Ultimate ownership of the land to be vested in the autonomous and self-contained village communities consisting of intellectual and physical labourers.

#### IMMEDIATE DEMANDS

(1) *Labour* : (i) Minimum wages, giving a decent living, in all the industries to be fixed by legislation.

(ii) Eight-hour day for five days and a half in the week to be fixed by law as the maximum duration of work for male adults. Special conditions to be laid down for woman and child labour.

(iii) Employers to be obliged by law to provide for a certain standard of comfort as regards housing, working conditions, medical aid, etc. for all workers.

(iv) Protective legislation to be passed for old age, sickness, accidents and unemployment insurance in all industries.

(v) Profit-sharing to be introduced in all big industries.

(vi) Free and compulsory education at the cost of the employers.

(vii) Abolition of brothels, liquor shops, etc. from industrial areas.

(viii) Introduction of cooperative organisation for the economic relief of the workers.

(ix) Labour organisations to be given a legal status and that workers' right to strike to enforce their demands to be recognised.

(2) *Peasant*: (i) Land tax to be reduced to a fixed maximum and fixity of interest at the rate of the Imperial Bank on arrear rents.

(ii) (a) Fixity of tenure, (b) no ejection, (c) cessation of illegal and extra taxation, (d) right of transference, (e) right of felling trees, sinking wells, excavating tanks and erecting pucca structures.

(iii) Fixed term of fishery rights in jolkars.

(iv) Fixity of maximum rate of interest to be levied by moneylenders.

(v) Agricultural cooperative banks to be established to provide credit to the peasants and to free them from the clutches of moneylenders and speculating traders.

(vi) Agricultural machinery to be sold or lent to the cultivators on easy terms through the cooperative banks.

\* \* \*

Persons willing to join the party are requested to communicate with the undersigned.

1 November 1925

QAZI NAZRUL ISLAM  
37 Harrison Road, Calcutta

## 3. LANGAL

It is with great delight that we welcome the new Bengali weekly *Langal*, India cries out for such journals. Indian revolutionaries must get tired of the "political fireworks" of bourgeois nationalism and find their own ways. All about there are signs of political and ideological crystallisation of revolutionary tendencies. The appearance of the *Langal* is one of those signs. It represents the tendency of "to the masses". The declassed intellectuals are beginning to recognise the importance of establishing relations with the masses. A consciously revolutionary factor is naturally drawn towards the potential forces of revolution. It is a good augury.

The first several issues of the *Langal* that have reached us show that the journal has made a hopeful beginning. As its name signifies, it proposes primarily to be an organ of the peasant movement. Its aim is to defend the interests of the peasantry. In the contemporary epoch nothing is more important than to give an adequate and faithful political expression to the grievances and demands of the peasantry. They constitute over 70 per cent of our population, and they are engaged in the principal industry of the land. To talk of the peasantry—of "village reconstruction"—has of late been a fashion in India. The fashion obtains in a variety of circles as removed from each other as the poles. Our imperialist rulers have taken up the slogan of "agricultural reforms". Attempts are made from all sides to organise an officially inspired land reform party. Non-political humanitarian bodies with the programme of teaching the peasantry the virtue of poverty are springing up like mushrooms, the nationalists also declare their intention to "reconstruct the village" by digging wells and distributing homeopathic medicines. None of these go anywhere near the root of the agrarian problem. Some of them purposely seek to obscure it. But the general attention to it proves that the problem can no longer be ignored. In spite of the enormous odds against them, the peasantry is in revolt. The acute outburst of 1919-21 temporarily subsides. Lately signs of revival are to be noticed on all sides. Neither imperialist repression nor bourgeois-nationalist (including Gandhist) treachery could successfully stem the

revolt which is one of the outstanding rising tide of peasant temporary India.

social features of conterd of the peasantry is not reform but

The objective demanntry have been sunk to the depths of revolution. Indian peasresulting deterioration by the exploitation economic ruin and the rind native landlordism. The salvation of by foreign imperialism aerefore depends upon the elimination the Indian peasantry texploitation. Agrarian reform introduced of these dual forces of ment will be calculated to intensify the by a benevolent governantry by changing the agricultural indus-exploitation of the peaser the capitalist mode of production. try more directly undè agrarian reform, where there is any, Nationalist schemes of question of land ownership. Any move-does not touch the basi;rest of; the peasant should have two ment to defend the int: (1) the cultivator should be the fundamental principles the produce of the soil and his labour owner of the soil; (2) peasant.

should belong to the pe that the *Langal* stands for these two

We are glad to notiè at the new journal will boldly propagate principles. We hope thè principles among the peasant masses—that and popularise these pripeasantry a vivid picture of the life, ex-it will hold out to the of their class, drawn in simple language. ploitation and demand plutionary bard, Nazrul Islam should be The talents of the revuffering and aspirations of the down-devoted to voice the s"—Let him sing for them—to inspire trodden "dumb million" to revolt against exploitation and with them with the courage of freedom and prosperity. Muzaffar the hope for a new er" *Why India Is not Free*", repeated with Ahmad's explanation "arity, will open the eyes of the national-more force and more cl' historical and theoretical study of the ist revolutionaries. A 1' downership is invaluable for the formu-prevailing systems of lai' of agrarian revolution which cannot be lation of a programme. iety is to progress. Lastly, India must postponed if Indian so' revolutionary thinkers and leaders of the learn from the great r' aries must arm themselves with the ex-world. Indian revolutio' of the revolutionary movement in other perience accumulated hint of view, *Langal's* practice of dealing countries. From this pe like Marx and Lenin is useful. But the with the lives of men Marx nor Lenin can be usefully studied biography of neither Mh, the theories and practice of the revo-unless in connection wit

lutionary movement they led. The articles in the *Langal* on this subject do not quite fulfil the purpose. A chronicle of facts of the life of a man is not his biography. As an example of how deficient such a biography is, we may take the liberty of pointing out that in the first sentence of the article on Karl Marx is contained a conception of history which Marx refuted. That is, the article on the life of Marx begins with a repudiation of a cardinal principle of the teachings of Marx. The article begins with the statement that the history of the world is the biography of a number of epoch-making men. Marx refuted this subjective conception of history and established that the history of human society is the history of class-struggle.

We venture this friendly criticism, because we are anxious to see that the *Langal* creditably discharges its historic mission. The proletariat and the peasantry are the inseparable allies in the struggle immediately for democratic national freedom and ultimately for socialism.

(*Masses*, Vol 2, No 3, March 1926)

## 7. The Kanpur Session of the Indian National Congress

### INTRODUCTION

The three articles on the Kanpur session of the Indian National Congress reproduced here from the *Masses* deal with the different aspects of the situation in the national movement round about the end of the year when the session took place.

The first article, written on the eve of the session, raises the question, where has the work of the Swaraj Party—pursuing the programme of parliamentary obstruction to “mend or end the bureaucracy”, which at the Belgaum session of the Indian National Congress received the official sanction of the Congress itself—led the nation? It is well known that when the Swaraj Party entered the central and provincial legislatures in 1924 beginning, they tabled a resolution before the central legislature in February 1924. It was a three-point resolution: (1) that the viceroy takes steps to revise the Government of India Act, “to establish full responsible government in India”, (2) that a round table conference be called to work out a scheme for the protection of rights and interests of the minorities, (3) that the central legislature be dissolved and the newly elected legislature should approve the scheme of responsible government with the agreed scheme of the rights and interests of the mino-

rities—and the approved scheme be sent to the British parliament to be embodied in a statute.

The response of the British imperialist government of India to this very moderate demand for a responsible government was to appoint a so-called Muddiman committee to review the working of the existing Montford reforms based on "dyarchy". In September 1925 the majority and the minority reports of that Muddiman committee came before the legislative assembly. On this Motilal Nehru, the leader of the Swaraj Party in the legislative assembly, moved an amendment. The essence of this amendment was the very same three points of the February 1924 resolution. This amendment was passed by 75 to 45 votes.

This three-point formula of the February 1924 resolution and of the Motilal Nehru amendment of September 1925 was in those days glorified by the name "the national demand". There was of course no question of imperialism accepting even this moderate demand and soon afterwards Motilal Nehru, anticipating the decision taken later at the Kanpur congress, made a statement "that the nationalists would leave the legislature, should the government not accept their demand".

This is referred to in this article in the *Masses* of December 1925, obviously written before the session, and is the starting-point of the argument in the same. The question is posed: What are the swarajists going to do after they leave the legislature? Obviously, they would engage themselves in agitation and propaganda to win the next election. And even if they are returned to the legislature with a majority, they would not be in a better position to enforce the national demand than they are at present. The article points out that imperialism itself is thinking in terms of some sort of "land reform and agricultural improvement". The article quotes what "an authoritative organ of British imperialism"—the *London Times*—says about the agrarian question in India and of "the appointment of a viceroy with strong sympathies for the agriculturists and much experience of agricultural problems" (Lord Irwin!). To anticipate further developments let it be stated here that it was under this viceroy that "the Royal Agricultural Commission" was appointed and the terms of reference of this commission

specifically ruled out any recommendations regarding any change in the property relations in land.

In contrasting the national bourgeois to imperialist solution, the article gives an exaggerated evaluation of the position of the latter. Anticipating that "the Kanpur congress cannot be expected to take any steps in this direction" it emphasises that this is the task of "a party possessing a clearly revolutionary outlook".

The second document, "Future of Indian Politics", deals with the split in the Swaraj Party and reviews the presidential address of Sarojini Naidu in that context. On the eve of the Kanpur session of the National Congress two developments had taken place in connection with the Swaraj Party. The Patna session of the AICC (22-23 September 1925) had taken a decision which virtually meant that the Swaraj Party, which used to carry on the Congress work in the central and provincial legislatures, would cease to exist as a separate organisation. The resolution of the Patna AICC said "that the Congress do now take up and carry on all such political work as may be necessary in the interest of the country... provided that the work in connection with the Indian and provincial legislatures shall be carried in accordance with the policy and programme laid down by the Swaraj Party under the constitution framed by the party and the rules thereunder, subject to such modifications as made by the Congress as may be found necessary... for the purpose of carrying out the said policy."<sup>1</sup>

This meant that the split between the National Congress and the Swaraj Party, between the no-changers and pro-changers, which was already overcome at the Belgaum congress by an agreement between Mahatma Gandhi on the one hand and C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru on the other was finally liquidated. The parliamentary wing of the Congress now was to function directly under its leadership. The Swaraj Party while it continued to exist formally became an inseparable part of the Congress and the next general election which came at the end of 1926 was fought by the Congress in its own name.

Another development was a situation of a virtual split in the Swaraj Party in the latter part of 1925. The split was between

1. *Resolutions of the Indian National Congress, Allahabad, 1925.*

"responsive cooperators" headed by Jayakar, Kelkar and others on the one hand and the majority of the Swaraj Party headed by Motilal Nehru on the other. The matter came to a head when S. B. Tambe, swarajist member and president of the Central Provinces legislative council, accepted the governorship. The government communique announcing that the king-emperor had approved of the appointment of Tambe was published on 8 October 1925. This was immediately followed by statements and counterstatements by Motilal Nehru on the one hand and Jayakar, Kelkar and others on the other. Motilal Nehru sharply criticised Tambe's acceptance of office without resigning either his council seat or from the Swaraj Party as a breach of discipline and denounced him as "a creature of the government pure and simple". Jayakar and Kelkar tried to make out as if the policy of Swaraj Party itself was one of responsive cooperation and that Tambe's accepting governorship was no different than that of Motilal Nehru accepting a seat on Skeen committee.<sup>2</sup>

Speaking before the UP provincial conference of the Swaraj Party at Sitapur on 19 October Motilal Nehru defended his acceptance of seat on the Skeen committee as being sanctioned by the Swaraj Party executive. At the same time he repudiated responsive cooperation by stating that the Congress and the Swaraj Party would never give up faith in direct action.

Later on, on 2 November 1925 at a meeting of the All-India Swaraj Party executive held at Nagpur, resolutions were adopted generally disapproving of responsive cooperation and condemning the defection of Tambe. In pursuance of this resolution, Motilal Nehru conducted a campaign against the responsive cooperators in the second week of November by holding meetings in the Marathi-speaking region where they were supposed to be relatively strong, viz Bombay city, Bhusaval, Buldhana and Akola. But at that time (latter part of November) both Motilal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi who was then in Bombay did not want the split situation in the Swaraj Party to develop to the point of no-return, especially when the

2. Skeen committee was appointed by the viceroy for reporting on the possibility of setting up a military training institute in India, like the Sandhurst Institute in England, to train Indian officers for the armed forces.

Kanpur session of the Congress was to take place only a month or so later. Motilal Nehru, with the support of Gandhiji, met the leaders of Maratha responsive cooperators in the Swaraj Party, viz Jayakar, Kelkar and Moonje and came to an agreement with them that there should be truce in the controversy on the question till the Kanpur session.

At the Kanpur session of the National Congress, the policy of "responsive cooperation" as conceived by Jayakar and Kelkar and also by Lala Lajpat Rai to a certain extent, and sought to be introduced by them into the main political resolution of the session in the form of amendments, was rejected. The "cooperators" thereafter resigned from the Congress and the Swaraj Party and also from their seats in the legislative assembly and councils. Their aim was to stand for reelection and show that the narrow middle-class electorate backed their policy of responsive cooperation. But the trick, which has been referred to in this article, did not work. In March 1926 the Swaraj Party as a whole led by Motilal Nehru walked out of the assembly and councils in pursuance of the Kanpur congress resolution and on the plea that the British government had not given any response to the national demand of the country. The scene in 1926 then shifted from the legislative assembly and councils to mass agitation and preparations for the next general election which was scheduled for the end of 1926.

*This does not mean that the Congress and swarajist leadership was not ready for cooperation under certain conditions. This has been made clear in the presidential address of Sarojini Naidu quoted in this article. After stating that the Congress stands for the national demand, which was defined as responsible government under dominion status, Mrs Naidu stated: "Below the limits of that demand the Indian nation cannot descend without irretrievable damage to its dignity and self-respect. It is now for the government to make the responsive gesture that shall decide our own future attitude. If the response be sincere and magnanimous with complete guarantee of good will and good faith on its part, it will necessitate an immediate revision of our present policy." But the Swaraj Party's offer to cooperate was conditional and coupled with the threat of a "united struggle". Mrs Naidu stated further in her address: "But if by the end of the spring session we receive no answer*

or an answer which evades the real issues or proves unworthy of acceptance, the National Congress must clearly issue a mandate to all those who come within its sphere to vacate their seats in the central and provincial legislatures and inaugurate from Kailas to Kanyakumari, from the Indus to the Brahmaputra, an untiring dynamic campaign to arouse, consolidate, educate and prepare the Indian people for all the progressive and ultimate stages of our united struggle . . ."<sup>3</sup>

The president in her address also talked about "a national militia" to be organised by the Congress, with its existing volunteer organisation as the nucleus. However neither the slogan of united struggle nor that of national militia was included in the final resolution on the political programme adopted at the Kanpur session. The second para of the preamble of the resolution of "Future Programme" stated—

"The Congress reiterates its faith in civil disobedience as the only effective weapon to be used in the last resort to enforce the national claim and vindicate our national honour, but realises that the country is not now ready for it and in view thereof this congress resolves that the guiding principle in carrying on all political work shall be self-reliance in all activities which make for the healthy growth of the nation and resistance to every activity, governmental or other, that may impede the nation's progress towards swaraj."<sup>4</sup>

Responsive cooperators headed by Jayakar as well as Lala Lajpat Rai moved amendments to the preamble and to the programme part of the resolution. They did not want any reference to civil disobedience movement and resistance to governmental activities in the preamble. As for the programme, while they had no objection to the constructive work, to the policy of walk-out from the assembly and councils in case the response to the national demand was negative or inadequate, and to the preparations to fight the next election due at the end of 1926, they had their reservations on the policy of nonacceptance of office or in the form as stated in the resolution. All these amendments were rejected and the main re-

3. *Congress Presidential Addresses (1911-1934)*, Natesan, Madras, 1934, pp. 781-82.

4. *Resolutions of the INC*, op. cit., pp. 24-25.

solution which was moved by Motilal Nehru was adopted by a majority. The present article does not go into a detailed analysis of the resolution, which is taken up in the last document in this section. It proceeds to sum up the analysis of the split in the Swaraj Party, which is further continued in the next document. Here it is pointed out that Motilal Nehru heading the orthodox swarajists, while demarcating himself from the responsive cooperators, said they are seeking "to break the nationalist politics away from revolutionary mass action" of the left-wing. Tambe, Kelkar, Jayakar, etc. are said to be seeking to free "the politics of bourgeois nationalism from the encumbrance of middle-class extremism" as a whole. The leadership of the two wings of the Swaraj Party are thus said to be opposing the revolutionary tendencies of the middle class. That there is a vital difference between the manner in which the two wings oppose the revolutionary tendencies is explained only in the next article.

Here the point is made that the real split that is developing in the Swaraj Party is not between the Maratha responsive co-operators and Motilal Nehru and his colleagues but between the national bourgeoisie to which both belong and "the middle-class rank-and-file whose voice has been raised through D. P. Sinha and Hemanta Sarkar and others". From this the Masses draws the conclusion that the middle-class masses who follow the Congress and the Swaraj Party "must come together, part company with the bourgeois nationalists doing the bidding of the capitalists and landowning classes and work out their own salvation". Attention is drawn to the emergence of parties—though yet in embryonic form like Labour Socialist Party (suggested by Dange, Bombay, 1922); Labour Kisan Party of Hindustan (Singaravelu, Madras, 1923) and to that of Labour-Swaraj Party (Hemantakumar Sarkar, 1925, Calcutta) which are all based on the working class and which propose to organise the workers and peasants for their class demands and all for the national demand of the country. The final conclusion of the article is that "people's nationalist party" be formed, which represents the interest not only of the working class but also of the peasantry, the middle class, the petty bourgeoisie (artisans, small traders, etc.) who together form 85 per cent of the population. Then the programme of this party is given—a programme of de-



democratic struggle and counteracting the compromising tendencies of the national bourgeois leadership. This is actually how the workers' and peasants' parties, which the Communist Party took initiative in organising, developed and worked as we will see in the next volume, and not in accordance with the advice given in this article.

The last document in this section, the second article on the Kanpur congress, is devoted to a more detailed analysis of the resolution on the "political programme" passed by the session. The article points out that the resolution not only rejects the policy of "responsive cooperation" but talks of the resumption of the civil disobedience movement as the only effective means of enforcing "the national demand", though it immediately points out that at present the country is not ready for the same. The main aim of the resolution is to present the Congress (and the Swaraj Party) as the party of struggle and thus keep in tune with the feeling of lower-middle-class rank-and-file mass which is demanding struggle.

The article sums up the argument by saying that "the swarajist leader (Motilal Nehru who moved the resolution) appeared before the Congress as the doughty opponent of right deviation with a resolution calculated only to keep up petty-bourgeois illusions".

The article then raises the question. Does the resolution put before congressmen a programme or a campaign to prepare the country for a civil disobedience movement? The answer is: No. Civil disobedience if seriously carried out is a militant popular resistance and leads to revolution. But the leadership of the Congress and Swaraj Party is not prepared for such a step at the present time and the Kanpur session resolution is not giving a call of struggle to the masses but making a gesture of "honourable cooperation" to the government. Has not Sarojini Naidu indicated in her presidential address that "if the response be sincere and magnanimous. . . it will necessitate an immediate revision of our present policy"?

The article concludes by pointing out that even the policy of walk-out of the legislative assembly and councils is not seriously meant. It is actually a programme of preparation for the next general election (end of 1926) while striking a militant pose for the consumption of the rank-and-file.



economic interests and political rights of the people on the altar of Indian capitalism", being noticed in the Kanpur session. The reference is not so much to the critical speeches at the session by leftwing delegates like Hemantakumar Sarkar and others, as to the incident which took place on the opening day of the session itself, when a leftwinger Arjunlal Sethi and his hundred or so delegates from Ajmer-Merwara were not allowed to enter the Congress pandal as the subjects committee had held that these delegates were not properly elected. As Arjunlal Sethi was known for his communist views, the incident was sensationalised by the press as a clash of the communists with the Congress.

## 1. KANPUR CONGRESS

The reorganisation of the movement for national freedom has been long over due. The nationalist movement cannot be reorganised without a new programme. But the Congress has met year after year since 1922 without touching the all-important question of a programme adapted to the conditions of the country. As a matter of fact it has not even recognised the necessity of reorganising the movement on the basis of a new programme. The Kanpur congress does not promise to be any more realistic than the last two congresses—Belgaum and Co-canada.

At close of the year and on the eve of the annual session of the National Congress it will be useful to make a review of the political situation. This review will show that the nationalist movement has been constantly on the decline owing to the lack of a militant programme of action. It will also show that the Congress has been unable to arrest this decline because of its failure to adopt a revolutionary programme.

At Belgaum the political bankruptcy of Gandhism was admitted by the Mahatma himself. The Congress practically adopted the programme of the Swaraj Party. Although the Congress nominally maintained its own organisation as distinct from that of the Swaraj Party (which formally was a member of the Congress) during the year following the Belgaum congress there has not been any nationalist political activity apart from that of the Swaraj Party. In one word the Swaraj Party became the leader of the nationalist movement and its programme became the programme of the latter.

It is a known fact that a considerable section of the Congress adherents did not fully subscribe to the swarajist programme and tactics. The Mahatma did not voice the sentiment of the nationalist masses when at Belgaum he defined swaraj as self-government within the empire. Nevertheless the failure of the revolutionary-nationalist elements which aspired for complete

national independence and were not satisfied with the limited field of activity prescribed by the tactics of the parliamentary obstruction handed the leadership of the nationalist movement to the Swaraj Party.

Under the leadership of the Swaraj Party the nationalist movement did not fare any better than before because the swarajist programme did not reflect popular grievances and popular demands. It is two years since the Swaraj Party inaugurated its programme of parliamentary obstruction to "mend or end the bureaucracy". It is one year since this programme received the official sanction of the National Congress. Today this programme stands naked in its impotency. Many a parliamentary victory has been recorded to the credit of the nationalists during the two years since militant mass action was substituted by parliamentary action as the weapon in the fight for national freedom. But all these "victories" have not brought the Indian people any nearer to national freedom than they were two years ago. In fact India is much further away from the goal of national freedom than it was in 1920-21.

The experiences of the year during which the Swaraj Party has *carried on its parliamentary activities with the mandate of the National Congress* prove conclusively that the national freedom, "even self-government within the empire", cannot be won under the present programme of the Swaraj Party. The swarajist programme has proved inadequate even to hold the party together let alone the entire nationalist movement. Just as the impracticability of the programme of Gandhist nonviolent non-cooperation led to the decomposition of the Congress within two years of the time when it had stood at the head of a mighty revolutionary movement, just so is the impotency of the programme of parliamentary obstruction leading to the disintegration of the Swaraj Party on the morrow of its spectacular parliamentary victories.

The weakness of the swarajist programme is in the fact that it does not make provision for backing up parliamentary demands by militant mass action. Experience has shown it without the pressure of a popular movement the government cannot be obliged to pay any heed to the nationalist resolution carried by the legislature over the head of the bureaucracy. As soon as it was found out that the Swaraj Party was not ca-



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pable—not willing—to back up its demands by extraparliamentary mass action, imperialism went over to the offensive and demanded unconditional surrender of the nationalists before any negotiation over eventual reforms could be begun. The nationalist movement under the leadership of the Swaraj Party has woefully failed to take up the insolent challenge of imperialism. Any amount of love talk cannot conceal the fact that imperialism still refuses to take into consideration even the most moderate nationalist demands as embodied in the Nehru amendment carried by the legislative assembly.

As a last resort the swarajist leader Pandit Motilal Nehru has threatened that the nationalists would leave the legislature should the government not accept their demand. This is rather a belated threat. There can hardly be any doubt as to the government's attitude towards nationalist resolutions. Besides the internal conditions of Swaraj Party do not inspire the hope that the pandit could have the entire party behind him if he carried out the threat. Then supposing the swarajists leave the legislature at this belated moment what are they going to do? The next election does not take place until the end of 1927. What is the nationalist movement going to do in the meantime? Obviously it will only carry on agitation and propaganda with the view to return a majority in the next election. In case this is realised the situation will be hardly changed. The nationalist majority in the legislature would not find themselves any better fitted to enforce their demand unless they could back up that demand by popular action outside parliament. Consequently the crux of the situation is this: how to reorganise the nationalist movement on the basis of revolutionary mass action? The nationalist movement is faced with the momentous question.

So long as the Congress or the Swaraj Party will evade this all-important question their inability to lead the struggle for freedom will not be removed. Once it is admitted that the success of the nationalist movement depends upon militant mass action there arises the question of programme; on what programme can the masses be organised and led in the struggle for national freedom?

Over three-fourths of the population of India live on land. And an infinitesimal minority of this agrarian population belongs

to the landowning class. The rest are the tillers of the soil. In order to attract this overwhelming majority of the population under the banner of the struggle for freedom, the nationalist party must have an agrarian programme. So far the Congress as well as the Swaraj Party has left this question vitally affecting the major portion of population untouched. Still worse, whenever they have expressed their views on the agrarian question they have shown bias towards the landowning class. In short the agrarian programme of the nationalists so far has not only been negative but reactionary. Consequently except during the acute revolutionary period of 1919-21 the peasant masses constituting nearly 3/4 of the population stood outside the nationalist movement. Here lies the cause of the weakness of the nationalist movement.

It is a well known fact that the passivity of the peasant masses was the guarantee of British domination in India. So long as the peasant masses remained passive and looked upon the British government as protector, imperialism could successfully cope with the discontent of the middle classes by brutal repression and satisfy the growing aspirations of the bourgeoisie by economic concessions and administrative reforms. Imperialist structure was shaken to its foundations in the years immediately following the war because unbearable exploitation exhausted the traditional patience and passivity of the peasantry. The nationalists not only failed to develop that agrarian discontent into a mighty revolutionary upheaval against foreign domination and reaction but themselves became the enemies of the peasant revolt. That lamentable failure of the National Congress to encourage the seething peasant revolts by means of a revolutionary agrarian programme was the root cause of the subsequent decline and confusion of the nationalist movement. By that failure the National Congress contributed to the safety of imperialism more than all the efforts of the government taken together.

Now the agrarian discontent, acute outburst which shook the foundation of imperialism in the years immediately following the war, has by no means disappeared. The counterrevolutionary policy of the National Congress coupled with the tenancy reform laws hastily enforced by the government in provinces where the worst agrarian conditions obtained, smoothed the surface for the time being. But the root cause of the dis-

content was not eradicated. Since last year signs of new agrarian upheaval are to be noticed on all sides. So much dangerous has the agrarian question become that land reform and agricultural improvement have become the slogans of imperialism. In the struggle between imperialism and nationalism victory will be on that side which can count upon the peasantry. But the agrarian question is so complicated in India—the cause of the economic bankruptcy of the cultivating class is so deep-rooted—as to call for a veritably revolutionary change. Whoever will have the courage to head this 'impending revolution will have the support of the peasantry. To head this great revolution is the historic role of the nationalist bourgeoisie. But the gravity of the situation is inducing imperialism to steal a march upon the nationalist bourgeoisie in this respect. If imperialism succeeds in outmanoeuvring the nationalists it will reestablish its influence upon the peasantry to the serious detriment of the movement for national liberation.

Property relations between the landowner and cultivator lie at the bottom of the agrarian question. All the multitudinous forms of exploitation to which the peasant is subjected are determined by the basic factor of landownership. The agrarian question cannot be solved without a revolution in the ownership of land. This revolution will transfer the ownership of land from one social class to another—from the parasitic landlords thriving on unearned income to those cultivating it. Neither the Congress nor the Swaraj Party approaches the question affecting the great majority of the nation from this revolutionary angle of vision. For example the programme of village reconstruction of the Swaraj Party has not got a word to say about the necessity of radical change in landownership. On the contrary on many a previous occasion the swarajist leaders reassured the landed aristocracy of the friendly attitude of the party. Besides, the infamous Bardoli resolution still stands to the credit of the Congress so also of the Swaraj Party since the latter has not yet repudiated that resolution nor has adopted an agrarian programme of different nature.

But while reactionary inclinations do not permit the Congress and the Swaraj Party to approach the agrarian question courageously imperialism is fully awake to the danger and is preparing to launch a radical programme. The National Congress

killed a revolution to safeguard the vested rights of the landed aristocracy. But imperialism is preparing to throw overboard the landowning class—its loyal and tried ally. Political as well as economic exigency is imposing this bold policy upon imperialism. On the one hand in order to regain the confidence of the peasantry the British government must introduce land reforms which will of necessity undermine the position of the landed aristocracy. On the other hand the interests of the imperialist capital demand a continual increase in the agrarian production of the country which latter in its turn today necessitates a revolution in landownership. A rack-rented indebted tenant-at-will is not a satisfactory agency of the capitalist exploitation of land. Imperialism will carry out this sinister programme with comparative ease if the ground is left to it alone by the failure of the nationalists to place themselves at the head of the exploited peasantry with a revolutionary agrarian programme.

Commenting upon the appointment of agrarian expert as the next viceroy, the *London Times* outlines the programme of the British-Indian government for the coming years. According to that authoritative organ of British imperialism, the agrarian question occupies the first place in this programme. It writes: "But the problems which are emerging from the inevitable confusions of Indian development since 1914 are not all political. Prominent among them is that of the future of the Indian agriculture or rather of the Indian agriculturists, whose troubles are not solely due to the maintenance of an ancient or—as modernising Indians would say—an antiquated social system. The balance of evidence suggests that the situation of the peasant who holds (land) from the state and is protected by it (as in the Punjab) against the excesses of usury is more secured and satisfactory than that of the tenant in many regions where absentee, incompetent or inconsiderate landlords, unconscionable moneylenders, and excessive subdivision and subinfeudation of holdings are distressingly frequent features of rural life. For political and still more for financial reasons the conversion of multitudinous tenants of many provinces into owner-cultivators is at present impossibility. It should not be impossible however to give them greater security of tenure and to improve the traditional methods of cultivation. The fact that the agriculture is now a transferred subject certainly makes it harder for the gov't

ernment of India to formulate any comprehensive scheme of agricultural betterment but the appointment to the viceroyalty of a cabinet minister with strong sympathies for the agriculturists and much experience of agricultural problems encourages the hope that a way will be found."

The significance of these words cannot be missed. Although the right of landlordism is not openly threatened, considerable modification of that right is undoubtedly contemplated. This will be done certainly not in the interests of the peasantry but "to effectively dispel the myth that the (British) government do not care for the masses" (to quote a leader of the officially-inspired peasant movement).

A realistic view of the situation should induce the nationalists to seize upon a question which is causing so much anxiety to imperialism. The reorganisation of the nationalist movement should be mainly on the basis of a revolutionary agrarian programme. Agitation and propaganda carried on the basis of such a programme will place the nationalist movement at the head of a powerful peasant revolt which will be the backbone of national revolution.

The agrarian programme of the nationalist movement should be such a readjustment of landownership as will make the cultivator secure on his holdings, lessen his burden of taxation, enable him to liberate himself from the tentacles of the usurer and make him the owner of the produce of his land. The Indian peasantry suffer from insecure tenure, excessive taxation and exactions of the moneylender. Therefore a programme to liberate them from this triple form of exploitation will be the rallying point of the peasantry, that is 70 per cent of the population. This struggle for the realisation of that programme will be a gigantic mass movement which will strengthen the positions of the nationalists, enabling them to impose their political demands upon imperialism.

Can the Kanpur congress be expected to take any steps in this direction? We are afraid it cannot. The reorganisation of the nationalist struggle must be undertaken by a party possessing a clearly revolutionary outlook.

## 2. FUTURE OF INDIAN NATIONALISM

In the open letter to C. R. Das, published immediately after the formation of the Swaraj Party, we, the Indian communists, pointed out that there was no midway between revolution and reversion to constitutionalism. It was also predicted in the same public document that the split at Gaya would be soon followed by a second split in the nationalist movement and that that split would be in the newly-born Swaraj Party. It was also pointed out that the split of the Swaraj Party was inevitable because of its incongruous social composition. While the party was mainly middle-class in composition, it began its career with a programme reflecting essentially the landowning and capitalist interests. The interests of these classes and of the exploited, economically ruined, practically unfranchised middle class (particularly the lower strata) were mutually exclusive. The capitalist nature of the swarajist programme became ever more pronounced in course of time. The swarajist politics, heralded with such oratorical pomp and show, was based upon the principle of compromise with imperialism. The search for a basis of negotiation went on till the swarajist politics reached a point when it not only had no essential but very little formal difference from liberal and independent programmes. This debacle of swarajist politics has caused growing dissatisfaction among the middle-class elements of the party. Speaking at the Postal Employees' Conference at Patna Devaki Prasad Sinha deplored the thoroughly capitalist outlook of his party. He said: "If the attitude of the members of the Indian legislature and of prominent political leaders can afford a glimpse of the working of a swaraj government in our country, I am afraid workers and the poorer sections of the community will have to be on their guard." Similar voices can be heard from other directions. The inaugural meeting of the so-called "Labour-Swaraj Party" held in Calcutta in the first week of December was attended by several swarajist MLCS. Presumably in behalf of the discontented swarajists, Hemantakumar Sarkar complained that "vested interests have conspired in the (legislative) council to betray the people's cause".

These all go to prove the correctness of what the communists predicted of the future of the Swaraj Party at the time of its

inauguration. Having broken away from the revolutionary methods of popular agitation and mass action, the Swaraj Party in the short space of three years has completely reverted to the bankrupt programme of constitutionalism. This has brought the party to the verge of a split.

When the Swaraj Party itself was in such a critical juncture, the National Congress in its Kanpur session delivered itself body and soul to the swarajist leadership. By this action the National Congress once more revealed its utter impotency. The oratorical extravagances which abounded in the Kanpur gathering might still blindfold the middle classes who are being betrayed in the interests of the big bourgeoisie. Let us dissipate any such possible illusion.

The following are the principal political points made in the presidential speech : (1) that the Swaraj Party is engaged in a combat with the bureaucracy, (2) that other political parties, irrespective of their beliefs, should be invited to join the Congress to pursue a common programme, (3) that dominion status is the ultimate ideal of Indian nationalism, (4) that the commonwealth of India bill of Mrs Besant has the support of the Congress, (5) that if the government made a sincere and magnanimous gesture of good will and good faith, the present policy of the Congress would be immediately changed, (6) that nationalist demands cannot go below this point, (7) that in case the government refuse to consider this moderate demand, the swarajists will vacate their seats in the legislatures and begin a campaign to prepare the people for progressive and ultimate stages of united struggle. The propositions about national militia and military training need not be taken seriously, for they do not come within the realm of practical politics until the question of political power has been decided. We cannot possibly presume that a devout Gandhite like Mrs Naidu would advocate illegal military preparations for an eventual armed insurrection. Except in this sense, the talk about the formation of "national militia" has no sense in a country politically dominated by a foreign power.

The political demands of the Kanpur congress however are much too moderate to warrant the raising of the question of a national army which can only be the creation of a national state. The nationalist movement as represented by the Kanpur

congress considers the swarajist parliamentary combat (?) to be most effective method in the struggle for swaraj. Then a common programme that can unite other parties "irrespective of belief", that is to say, the liberals, Nonbrahmin Party of Madras, Conservative Party of the baron of Burdwan and the duke of Darbhanga, etc., cannot possibly be very exigent. The Kanpur congress graciously gives in on this vital point and brings down its national demand to the lowest level of the Besantine constitution. Even dominion status can remain a remote ideal; the immediate boon solicited is only "a sincere and magnanimous gesture of good will and good faith" on the part of imperialism. So soon as this prayer will be granted, perhaps the prophet of noncooperation himself will lead the flock on the exemplary trail of his ex-lieutenant, V. J. Patel, at the foot of the viceregal throne "ten times a day if necessary".

Side by side with this beggar's programme, the promise of the swarajists vacating seats, etc., sounds very discordant. Even the galleries, for whom these oratorical flourishes are obviously meant, should feel insulted, because it indicates that the leaders take them for a pack of fools. Besides, the poetical ambiguity of the president was removed by the swarajist leader. According to him, the hypothetical withdrawal of the swarajists from the legislatures would be followed by the drawing up of a programme by the Congress on which programme the swarajists would fight the next elections. The president's promise "to prepare the people for progressive and ultimate stages of the united struggle" is then a mere rhetorical flight.

Whatever the promised future action may be, it will follow the resignation en bloc. This latter action again is conditional upon the government's refusal to accept the "national demand". The government has done that twice. So the condition should be considered as fulfilled and the swarajists should be showing up some new feats of valour other than oratory. The second time the "national demand" was much more moderate than on the first occasion; still it was rejected. The third "national demand", judged by the standard set at Kanpur, will be more "reasonable" than the second. So its rejection by the government is not absolutely sure. Consequently it is practically certain that the occasion to make good the pledges given at Kanpur will never arise. Then, what if it did arise? The

swarajists will simply contest the next elections on a programme drawn up by the Congress under the domination of the Swaraj Party. At best the parliamentary show will begin all over again.

But things are moving not even in that direction. The "amused spectators", Kelkar and his Mahratta following, hold the key to the situation. They watched the Pandit's stage management at Kanpur with amusement and quietly put a spoke in the wheel of his politics of "bluff and bluster". They resigned their seats in the legislative assembly and the councils concerned. Now they are going to stand for reelection from the same constituencies on the programme of "responsive cooperation". Mahratta craftiness has called the Pandit's bluff. How?

The social composition of the present Indian electorate assures the ratification of the programme of "responsive cooperation". The great majority of the voters belong to the capitalist and landholding classes. These classes are fed up with the futile tactics of parliamentary obstruction for it does not lead to any constructive progress. They want political peace, so that the economic position gained may be quietly consolidated and constitutional negotiation carried on for further political reform in 1929 and maybe even earlier. Being a parliamentary party, the Swaraj Party must obey the verdict of the electorate. The official leadership of the party has not been slow in sensing the difficulty created by the latest action of the Mahratta dissidents. The latter are out on "transforming the minority into a majority" as C. R. Das did three years ago. In this rather ugly situation the official swarajist attitude will prove very adaptable. It has already been made known that the return of the Mahratta leaders on their programme will indicate that the country demands a change in the swarajist programme; the party must act accordingly.

So in reality the swarajist policy will be determined, not by the middle-class majority of the party nor by the National Congress, but by the verdict of the electorate which embraces less than two per cent of the population. Today the Mahratta leaders are playing a role parallel to that played by C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru three years ago. Das and Nehru were pioneers in the movement to break the nationalist politics away from revolutionary mass action. Tambe, Kelkar, Jayakar and Co are the pioneers of liberating the politics of bourgeois national-

ism from the encumbrance of middle-class extremism. The inevitable split in the Swaraj Party will not be between the Mahatma insurgents and orthodox swarajists following Motilal Nehru. It will be along the class line—between the bourgeois elements (to which belong Panditji and many a follower of his, just as the Kelkarites) and the middle-class rank and file whose voice has been raised through D. P. Sinha, Hemanta Sarkar and others.

With this split a new chapter in the history of India's struggle for freedom will begin. It will mark the completion in the process of class differentiation which has been the background of Indian politics ever since the hectic days of 1920. At last the forces of national revolution will be free from bourgeois leadership and will be able to strike out their own course, with a programme reflecting their demands and under a clear-sighted, courageous, uncompromising leadership grown out of their own ranks.

Since the Congress has completely identified itself with the Swaraj Party, the debacle of the latter will mean the debacle of the former also. The Congress will gradually become the platform on which will stand the bourgeois-nationalist parties hand in hand. In that respectable company there will be no room for the middle class represented in the swarajist ranks as well as in the Congress membership. These must come together, part company with the bourgeois-nationalists doing the bidding of the capitalist and landowning class, and work out their own political salvation. To remain inside either the Congress or the Swaraj Party, deceived by the hypocritical utterances of the bourgeois leaders, will mean the politico-economical sacrifice of the middle classes on the altar of capitalism and landlordism. The middle classes have no reason thus to sacrifice themselves vicariously. They have been betrayed by bourgeois nationalism—by the Swaraj Party. They will now know the way to come out of the camp of compromisers, which extends as far as the swarajist National Congress—and join hands with other exploited classes.

A political struggle must be led by a party which is the conscious and organised vanguard of the forces involved in the struggle. From all sides come indications of an urge towards the formation of a party that will lead the movement for na-



- (2) Abolition of landlordism, ownership of land to be transferred to the actual cultivator. Reduction of land rent.
- (3) Modernisation of agriculture by state aid.
- (4) Nationalisation of the public utilities.
- (5) Abolition of indirect taxation, increase in the incidence of income tax.
- (6) Eight-hour day and minimum wages; laws for the protection of labour.
- (7) Freedom of speech and press and assembly.

(Masses, February 1926)

### 3. THE KANPUR CONGRESS

In the *Young India* of 7 January, Gandhi describes the Kanpur congress as "the annual demonstration". The expression involuntarily used by Gandhi most graphically characterises the Kanpur congress. But the Kanpur congress was not even a political demonstration. It was a demonstration of "bluff and bluster"—to borrow another very characteristic phrase from the opposite side, the liberals.

The most remarkable feature of the Kanpur congress was the political abdication of the president. The presidential address was devoid of any political value. It is a piece of "prose-poetry". That was all, nothing more. Customarily the programme and policy of the Congress hitherto used to be formulated in the address of the president. But at Kanpur this traditional practice was abandoned. The political leadership of the Congress was transformed from the president "by design to the leader of the Swaraj Party, Pandit Motilal Nehru" (Gandhi in the *Young India*, 7 January).

The concrete achievement of the Kanpur congress was the so-called resolution on political programme. This resolution was moved by Motilal Nehru and contained the essence of swarajist politics. This proportionately lengthy document

couched in parliamentary and juridical language is however not a political programme. The programme of nationalism was not touched in it, not even in broad outline. If anything, the resolution is a piece of clumsy diplomacy. It is a jumble of contradictory and hypocritical statements made with the purpose of having the entire nationalist movement as represented by the Congress commit itself to the bankrupt politics of parliamentarism. The fact that the whole session of the Congress could not produce anything better than such a resolution indicated the depth of political decline to which this traditional organ of nationalism has sunk. The resolution however did not pass without opposition. As a matter of fact, but for the manipulation of the swarajist caucus, the resolution would have the chances at least equally divided. The main factor that rallied a doubtful majority for the resolution was ostensible opposition to the demand for a frank reversion to constitutionalism. Many of those voting for the resolution did so not impressed by its intrinsic merit but as against the plea of responsible cooperation. This means that a large section of the revolutionary nationalists, who would not vote for the swarajist programme if openly put before them, were deceived by the hypocritical nature of the resolution.

In other words the Kanpur congress was converted into a scene of dispute between the two factions of the upper-middle-class leadership of the Swaraj Party. Notoriously this dispute is devoid of any serious political basis. It is only by a laboured stretch of the imagination that one can discern any fundamental difference between "responsive cooperation" advocated by the Mahratta dissidents and "honourable cooperation" preached by C. R. Das on the eve of his death and adopted as the article of political faith by the orthodox swarajists following Nehru. The Kanpur congress rejected "responsive cooperation" but ratified "honourable cooperation" as the future policy of nationalism.

What is the cause of the dispute among the swarajist leaders? It has been repeatedly admitted from both sides that there is no difference in the aim. The dispute is therefore over the means to attain that aim. The aim is to come to an early agreement with imperialism on the question of economic rights and political power. Self-government within the empire is the

ideal; fiscal freedom, provincial autonomy and some responsibility in the central government—these are the immediate demands. Substantial advance has been made towards fiscal autonomy. The right of Indian capital to exploit Indian labour in conjunction with imperialism has been largely admitted. Under these circumstances those classes of the Indian society whose interests are reflected in the programme of bourgeois nationalism demand political peace. They want to consolidate the economic ground gained and quietly negotiate for adequate political rights. The dissident swarajists represent this tendency. The opposition to this tendency must necessarily be superficial unless based upon a more radical programme of nationalism. But it is known that such is not the case with the dispute in the Swaraj Party. Not only is there no difference in the aim pursued, there is even a general agreement as regards the means to that aim. Both the sides advocate cooperation somewhat qualified. Here the dispute reduces itself to hair-splitting over words.

There is however something more than words involved in the antagonism between the dissident and orthodox swarajist leaders. It is the relation with the lower middle class—petty intellectuals, employees, and students who play such an important role in the nationalist movement. The Swaraj Party is essentially the political expression of the Indian bourgeoisie. But at the same time it draws its adherents considerably from the lower middle class. The policy advocated by the realist Mahratta school will split the Swaraj Party. For all practical purposes the Swaraj Party has, from its very birth, signified a reversion to constitutionalism, which is not the means to attain complete national independence demanded by the lower-middle-class revolutionary nationalists. But the latter have been kept spell-bound by magnetic personalities (like C. R. Das) and the wordy radicalism of the swarajist leaders. Sudden change of policy—acceptance of office without ado—advocated by the Mahratta leaders, would destroy the illusion of the revolutionary rank-and-file. The result would be a split of the Swaraj Party. The separation from the lower middle class—the revolutionary rank-and-file of the nationalist movement would reduce the Swaraj Party to the position of one of the three nationalist bourgeois parliamentary fractions. In that position it would no longer be possible for

the Swaraj Party to aspire for the dominating role in the bourgeois bloc which would eventually come to formal agreement with imperialism. The programme and action of the Swaraj Party—pronouncements by its prominent leaders—do not leave room for any doubt of the readiness of the swarajists to enter such a bloc, provided that they become the leaders of the combination. They would not be in a position to maintain this claim to leadership, if they were deprived of the support of the nationalist rank-and-file. This consideration produces the opposition to the policy advocated by the Mahratta dissidents. The official leadership of the Swaraj Party (Nehru group) believe that the time has not come to break away from the lower middle class. They are of course not prepared to budge an inch from the programme of bourgeois nationalism in order to keep the connection with the popular nationalist forces. Their policy is to enlist for the programme based on the demands of native capitalism the support of the entire nationalist movement. This they propose to do by camouflaging the policy of compromise with methods of "bluff and bluster" which successfully blindfolds the lower middle class by appealing to their sentimentality.

The "political resolution" of the Kanpur congress is the climax of the policy of "bluff and bluster". By a demagogic opposition to the "practical policies" of the Mahratta school, the Pandit and his followers have succeeded in imposing upon the Congress a policy which in no way differs from that of "responsive cooperation." In course of the debate in the subjects committee on his resolution, Panditji himself exclaimed: "But who ever said that I did not do responsive cooperation? I say I do full cooperation if need be." The Indian nationalists would be a miserable lot if their memory was so short as to forget Nehru's passionate offer of cooperation while moving the "national demand" resolution in February 1924. So the desire of the orthodox swarajists to cooperate with the government is undeniable—it is no less pronounced than that of the Mahratta heretics. The Kanpur resolution does not alter the situation in the least. As a matter of fact, the "political resolution" of the National Congress excludes the question of programme of nationalism! Obviously this question is considered settled: the swarajist programme as formulated by C. R. Das at Faridpur is

the programme imposed upon the entire nationalist movement by implication. To put this over—to have the popular forces of national revolution commit themselves to a programme of compromise with imperialism—the swarajist leader appeared before the Congress as the doughty opponent of right deviation with a resolution calculated only to keep up petty-bourgeois illusions.

The bogey of "civil disobedience" was revived. A careful examination of the resolution leaves no doubt that nothing serious is meant by it. While visualising civil disobedience "as the only effective weapon to be used in the last resort to enforce national claim", it is roundly declared in the resolution that "the country is not ready now for it". The logical consequence of these two statements is that the Congress should carry on agitation and propaganda in favour of civil disobedience. What does the resolution propose in this respect? The old hackneyed "constructive programme" of Bardoli, against which *the pioneers of the Swaraj Party revolted as impractical!* Nowhere in the resolution however is it recommended that the Congress should prepare the country for civil disobedience which is admitted as the "only effective weapon to enforce national claim".

So the bogey of civil disobedience which captivated the imagination of the revolutionary elements inside the Congress was a bluff pure and simple. We remember the report of the civil disobedience committee signed by Motilal Nehru. The conclusion of the committee was, "It is enough to state here that the country is not ready at present to undertake general mass civil disobedience, or a general no-tax campaign in any province or district" (Report, p. 65). Those who considered the situation in 1922 not suitable for a militant form of popular resistance to imperialist rule, can certainly not be taken seriously when they raise the bogey of civil disobedience today. The situation in the country has changed for the worse since 1922. The revolutionary wave that swept over the country in 1920-22 has temporarily subsided. The counterrevolutionary policy of the nationalist leaders (of the Congress and the Swaraj Party) is responsible for this depression in the movement for freedom. The very people who set their face against civil disobedience, would rather kill the movement than allow it to develop in the revolutionary way—at the

moment when the nationalist forces were eager for militant action, cannot be believed to have changed their mind. Their action during the last three years does not inspire such confidence. Have they done anything to prepare the country for civil disobedience? Have they readjusted the programme of nationalism in the least to draw the masses into an active movement? No, they have done nothing of the kind. On the contrary they have shifted the nationalist programme further and further towards moderation—on the narrow basis of purely capitalist interest. They have, in the words of a member of the Swaraj Party, “conspired with the vested interests to betray the cause of the people”.

As pointed out above the Kanpur resolution declares that the country is not fit for civil disobedience, but it does not stipulate that agitation and propaganda should be undertaken to create the necessary conditions. Outside parliamentary manoeuvres, the “political work” prescribed in the resolution is to spin and to wear khaddar, to remove untouchability etc.—in short, the “constructive” programme of Bardoli. It has been proved by experience that the country cannot be made ready for some form of militant struggle for freedom as a result of these activities. In this programme of political work is included “the organisation of labour, both industrial and agricultural, the adjustment of relations between employers and workmen, between landlords and tenants”. This additional “political work”, if executed, would operate rather against than in favour of civil disobedience.

What is civil disobedience? Once and for all it is necessary to define this term. To be “an effective weapon in the struggle to enforce national claim”, it must be analogous to some form of popular resistance to the forces that operate against the movement for freedom. Literally it means the refusal to abide by the laws given by a nonrepresentative government. Now it is evident that such refusal to be powerful enough to paralyse the machinery of the state must be on a mass scale. The masses could possibly be organised to disobey only such laws as directly affect their everyday existence. These laws obviously are those relating to taxation—direct and indirect. Hence paraphrased into comprehensive political terminology, civil disobedience (provided something serious is meant by it) is a campaign with the

slogan of "no taxation without representation". History tells us where such a campaign inevitably leads. It leads to revolution.

The "constructive programme" cannot marshal the popular forces for a revolutionary struggle for freedom. As a matter of fact it was imposed upon the country with the specific object of diverting the nationalist movement from the revolutionary path. In justifying the Bardoli resolution, Gandhi wrote:

"If depression follows the cessation of all aggressive activities and people forsake us, it would not only not hinder our cause, but help it. Then we shall not have to shoulder the responsibility for a Chauri Chaura... Whatever the result, the present excitement must be abated at any cost" (quoted in the Civil Disobedience Committee Report, p. 62).

Leaders actuated by the determination to avoid events like Chauri Chaura, Gorakhpur, Moplah uprising and "Bombay hooliganism" are enemies of civil disobedience. What does this "organisation of labour" recommended in the Kanpur resolution mean? It means that the workers and peasants should be taught to reconcile themselves to their lot. The anxiety to "readjust the relation between employer and workmen, between landlord and tenants" is caused by the will to stem the tide of a revolutionary mass movement against exploitation. We know how the present nationalist leaders would have the relation between "the classes and the masses" readjusted. The readjustment would be all in favour of the former. According to them landlordism is sacrosanct and the right of capital is divine. On more than one occasion the nationalist leaders, including the Mahatma, have called upon the workers and peasants to submit to capitalist exploitation and feudal tyranny. They have done it on the plea that "father and son" relation between the landlord and tenant—employer and the worker, is the special feature of Indian culture (spiritual, eh!) and that the masses must sacrifice for the common interests of the nation.

If all activities for rallying the exploited masses in a revolutionary struggle for the betterment of the conditions of their material existence are ruled out as undesirable and harmful, civil disobedience becomes a meaningless phrase. Separated from the possibility of a revolutionary development, civil disobedience is a threadbare bogey which fails to terrify anybody, although it

may still deceive the naive lower-middle class rank and file of the Congress. If anything more than bluff was meant by giving civil disobedience a prominent place in the Karnpur resolution, it was as Gandhi puts it: "the reiteration of faith in civil disobedience means that the representatives of the nation have no faith in an armed revolution" (*The Young India*, 7 January). Here we have the view of the man who conceived the idea of civil disobedience. He clearly says that civil disobedience as visualised by the present nationalist leaders is not analogous to a militant popular resistance to the forces operating against national freedom. On the contrary it is conceived as the safety-valve against any possible revolutionary shock.

Thus much for civil disobedience. Now let us examine the subject matter of the resolution. The real object of the resolution was to have the entire nationalist movement as represented by the Congress to commit itself to swarajist parliamentarism—to the policy of coming to an agreement with imperialism by means of constitutional negotiation. While creating an illusion of fight against constitutional deviation, the swarajist leaders (Nehru group) imposed upon the Congress a programme acceptable by the moderate nationalists. The crux of the res-

Further it is known that the "terms of settlement" formulated in the February resolution were reduced steadily to provincial autonomy and some responsibility in the central government. *The bottom was reached in the nationalist amendment to the Muddiman committee report.* The gist of that amendment, which was also called national demand, is the request for the setting up of some sort of machinery to prepare a plan of constitutional reform. Significantly the term self-government was not even mentioned in the amendment. Already by the summer of 1925, when the famous Faridpur speech was delivered, the swarajist programme had become "honourable cooperation". And it is this policy of "call once more and I will gladly come" that has been imposed upon the entire nationalist movement at Kanpur. Those who get lost in the diplomatic wilderness and hypocritical snare of the Nehru resolution can find the light in the presidential address. Once the poet president was allowed (evidently also by design) to descend from her dizzy rhetorical attitude and touch the vital political issue, she declared: "It is now for the government to make a responsive gesture that shall decide our attitude. If the response be sincere and magnanimous with ample guarantee of good will and good faith on its part, it will necessitate an immediate revision of our present policy."

Another false impression made by the Kanpur resolution is about the swarajists leaving the legislatures if the government refused to consider the terms of settlement. Although in the original draft of the resolution the question of vacating the seats was vaguely raised, in the final text adopted it is altogether deleted. On the contrary it is stipulated that the parliamentary seats should not be allowed to be declared vacant. If the government rejected the very modest terms of settlement, the swarajists would patiently wait till the next elections which would be contested on a programme formulated by the Working Committee of the Congress. No indication as to the nature of that programme is given. Once again a small caucus of politicians would commit the entire movement to a programme which, to all appearances, will necessarily be still more moderate. Had the leaders intended to do otherwise, they would have had at least the general outlines of the future programme of action sanctioned by the Congress. The authority of the

Congress fraudulently secured will be used to betray the interests of the people.

As some of the rank-and-file speakers pointed out, the whole resolution was ridiculous. How many times have the "terms of settlement"—"olive branch"—been insolently rejected by the government? Has the Swaraj Party ever dared to apply any sanction to press its terms? Never. On the contrary, each rejection has been followed by a further moderation of the terms. With this record the Swaraj Party appeared before the Congress at Kanpur to have its bankrupt parliamentary comedy sanctioned by the entire nationalist movement. The bourgeois politicians do not appear to have a high opinion of the political intelligence of the lower-middle-class nationalist rank-and-file. The Kanpur resolution was adding insult to injury to the nationalist movement

The Kanpur Congress registered the victory of the orthodox swarajist policy of "bluff and bluster" as against the "practical politics" of the Mahratta dissidents. By deceiving the naive, politically immature lower-middle-class nationalists, Motilal Nehru has defeated his rivals and saved the Swaraj Party for the time being. But just as the swarajist minority at Gaya soon became the majority, so the Mahratta minority defeated at Kanpur will surely become the majority. It is a foregone conclusion. The swarajist programme is detrimental to the interests, aims and aspirations of the lower middle class which supplies the majority of swarajist adherents. The Kanpur bluff will be soon called, and the revolutionary nationalists must break away from the party advocating a policy of compromise with imperialism almost unconditionally. The stratagem of Motilal Nehru and his followers to stampede the entire nationalist movement (based upon the oppressed and exploited majority of the people) to back up a policy of agreement between British imperialism and Indian capitalism will fail. In the very scene of this victory, Kanpur, were to be noticed signs of revolt against the policy of sacrificing the economic interests and political rights of the people on the altar of Indian capitalism.



## CHRONOLOGY

1923

- 1 January : AICC meeting after the Gaya Congress session.  
: Resignation of C. R. Das held over till next AICC meeting.  
: Swaraj Party formed—C. R. Das president, Motilal Nehru, secretary.
- 31 January : M. N. Roy to Muzaffar Ahmad asking him to come to Europe. Warning against Abani Mukherji who was in India then.
- 26 February : M. N. Roy to Shaukat Usmani : Re . Abani —“He is expelled.”
- March-April : Legislative Assembly budget session. Government proposal for enhanced salt tax rejected—viceroy certifies the same
- 26 March : Third AITUC session at Lahore. C. R. Das, president.
- March to May : Peshawar conspiracy cases judgements.
- 30 April : High court judgement on Chauri Chaura appeals.
- April-June : Ahmedabad cotton mill workers' strike.
- 1 May : First ever May Day in India —Madras : M. Singaravelu unfurls the red flag.  
: Manifesto of the Labour Kisan Party of Hindustan published in Madras
- 7 May : Roy to S. A. Dange — suggests formation of WPP —Warning against Abani.
- 11 May : Shaukat Usmani arrested in Kanpur.
- 17 May : Muzaffer Ahmad arrested in Calcutta.

- June : Nalini Gupta arrives in India (2nd time).
- September : Special session of the Congress at Delhi.
- (3rd week) : Way cleared for swarajist policy — Swaraj Party election manifesto.
- October : J. Nehru's speech at UP political conference advocating complete independence.
- 10 November : General election — Swaraj Party majority in two provinces and just less than half the seats in the central assembly.
- December : Nalini Gupta arrested.
- December (last week) : Cocanada session of the Congress.

## 1924

- 30 January : Articles on the passing away of Lenin in *Socialist* (Bombay) and *Labour Kisan Gazette* (Madras).
- : General strike of cotton mill workers in Bombay — loss of 7½ million working days.
- 5 February : Release of Mahatma Gandhi from jail.
- March : Martyrdom of Gopinath Saha.
- : IV session of AITUC, Calcutta, C. R. Das presides.
- April : Bengal provincial political conference at Serajganj.
- : Resolution on Gopinath Saha's martyrdom.
- 6 March : S. A. Dange arrested.
- : Singaravelu arrested but released on bail due to illness.
- 17 March : Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy Case begins against S. A. Dange, Muzaffar Ahmad, Shaikat Usmani and Nalini Gupta.
- 3 March : Turkish national assembly abolishes khilafat.

- 21 May : Kanpur Case session trial ends .sentencing all the four accused to 4 years RI.
- 17 June to 8 July : V Congress of the Comintern, M. N. Roy elected to the ECCI from India.
- 27 June : Case against Singaravelu withdrawn.
- 27-29 June : AICC session at Ahmedabad.
- September : Communal riots — Gandhiji's 21-day fast, unity conference.
- : Legislative assembly — Trade unions registration bill introduced by government; N. M. Joshi's maternity benefit bill, D. Chamanlal's weekly payment of wages bill introduced.
- 25 October : Bengal ordinance promulgated, arrest of Subhas Chandra Bose and other swarajist leaders.
- 31 October : 1½ lakh assemble in Calcutta — protest against Bengal ordinance.
- November : High court judgement on Kanpur appeals — sentences confirmed.
- December : Belgaum session of the Congress. *Appeal to the Nationalists* signed M. N. Roy — circulated at the session by K. N. Joglekar and Bagerhatta.

## 1925

- 7 January : Bengal criminal amendment bill rejected by the legislative assembly.
- 18 January : The same certified by viceroy.
- January : *Masses of India* starts publication.
- January (end) : Percy Glading arrives in India.
- 29 January : Subhas Bose and others arrested under Bengal ordinance taken to Mandalay.
- 14-16 February : V session of AITUC, Percy Glading attends.

- 16 February : Question in House of Commons re: deportation of M. N. Roy, from France.
- 15 March- : Enlarged Plenum of ECCI "Bolshevisation  
6 April of the Communist Parties". Resolution on India.
- 31 March : C. R. Das's speech to Young Bengal—eschew violence.
- 3 April : Bombay mill workers' strike.
- April-May : NW Rly Workers' strike.
- 2 May : C. R. Das's Faridpur speech.
- 30 May : 10,000 NW Rly strikers' procession in Lahore street carrying red flag dyed in their own blood.
- 7 June : AITUC support NW Rly strike.
- 9 June : NW Rly strikers wire to Workers' Welfare League of India, London.
- 16 June : C. R. Das passes away.
- 14 July : Birkenhead's speech in the British parliament.
- 27 July : Bombay Millowners' Association decides to impose 11½% cut in workers' wages.
- 12 August : AITUC delegation to governor re: Bombay mill workers' wage cut.
- August : Clemens Dutt refused passport to India.
- September (end) : 125,000 Bombay mill workers on strike.
- 25 October : Ordinance Day in Bengal.
- 8 November : Political Sufferers' Day in Bengal, protest meetings.
- 10 November : Labour-Swaraj Party of Indian National Congress formed.
- Policy and programme published.
- 7 December : End of Bombay textile strike.
- 16 December : First issue of *Langal* published.

- 26 December : First Indian Communist Conference opens.
- : Hasrat Mohan's address—Saklatvala's message.
- : Kanpur session of the Congress — Ajmer delegates led by Arjunlal Sethi refused admission in Congress pandal.
- 27 December : Singaravelu's presidential address to First Indian Communist Conference.
- 28 December : CEC elected at the First Indian Communist Conference meets in Kanpur.
- : CEC elects *general secretaries* and adopts the first constitution of the party.



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