

THE
**ROAD TO INDIA'S
FREEDOM**

THE PERMANENT REVOLUTION IN INDIA
AND THE TASK OF THE
BRITISH WORKING-CLASS

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also

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THE ROAD TO INDIA'S FREEDOM

Like a giant awakening after the sleep of centuries, India is stirring. The gaze of the whole world is being transferred from Europe, a Continent which has just been locked in the chains of fascism, to India, a sub-continent which for two centuries has endured the chains of democratic imperialism. With Japanese imperialism advancing, with British imperialism doped and semi-paralysed, with the Indian masses stirring to their very depths, mighty questions are serving notice on humanity that they must be solved one way or another—and without delay.

For the British workers in particular the question of freedom for India is no empty abstraction. It is bound up closely with their own problems and particularly the problems raised by the war.

The masses of the workers have supported the ruling class in the war because they believe it was being fought for the liberation of oppressed peoples throughout the world, and for the "four freedoms". The British workers in the past have jogged along comfortably with the illusion that British domination of India was being imposed for the benefit of the Indian people. But today they are beginning to realise that the Indian people regard the British not as liberators but as alien invaders and oppressors.

In Burma and Malaya the masses demonstrated by their indifference and apathy that they made no distinction between the Japanese and the British. For them the struggle was one to decide which of two contenders was to dominate them.

The whole colonial policy of British imperialism has been summed up by Sir William Joynson-Hicks:

"We did not conquer India for the benefit of the Indians. I know that it is said at missionary meetings that we have conquered India to raise the level of the Indians. That is cant. We conquered India by the sword, and by the sword we shall hold it . . . We hold it as the finest outlet for British goods."

This is, as it always has been, the policy of British imperialism in her colonial empire. India and China, together with the rest of Asia constitute the richest prize in the struggle for the redistribution of the world now being fought out on the world battlefield. The only difference today is that the British sword has lost its sharp edge, has become rusty and for this reason the bourgeoisie have been forced to resort to other methods—empty promises, fake "concessions", "national independence"—all to be implemented, of course at some future date.

Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, has always maintained a consistent policy towards India. Even when the

Tories were willing to concede minor concessions in the past to the Indian capitalists, Churchill has stood on the policy of extreme opposition to any concessions to the Indian bourgeoisie and Congress. The mere possibility of an independent India evinced from him the prophecy that it would lead to "anarchy" and the "dull roar or scream of carnage and confusion". That he did not change his policy after he became Prime Minister is testified by the fact that by July 1941, 12,129 Indians were imprisoned for political reasons, including 28 ex-ministers and 200 members of the provincial legislatures. Today, the large majority of these, particularly those who stand for complete and unconditional freedom of the Indian people, are still languishing in British jails.

If the Indians gain their independence, or even a measure of control, the Palace of Empire will crash to the ground. In the eyes of the British ruling class the road of "anarchy", that is, the road of socialist revolution, will have opened up. Of what use would be the defeat of the Axis if it meant the certain destruction of not only British, but world imperialism? For the repercussions of Indian freedom would not be limited by the boundaries of India.

The British capitalist class would far rather lose India to the Japanese than grant her independence, reasoning that, with the aid of America and at the cost of countless British and American soldiers, they would regain it, even if it took years and years of bloody slaughter. The affinity between the imperialists of Japan and Britain was eloquently demonstrated at the fall of Singapore, where the British scrupulously kept to the letter of their agreement with Japan to "keep law and order" by means of British bayonets until the Japanese took over. This precaution against the masses taking matters into their own hands predominates in the policy of imperialism—even in its most critical hour.

The farce of a "war for freedom" while hundreds of millions are in chains is fast becoming evident to the working class. In their arguments, the bourgeoisie emphasise the "lack of tranquility" within India, the "disunity" of the Indian people. But the so-called problem of Indian "disorder" is in reality a creation of British imperialism—deliberately fostered, in order through their age old policy of "divide-and-rule" to maintain their hold on the Indian masses.

In this policy one of the principal weapons in the armoury of the British are the communal organisations which are the direct agents of, paid and subsidised by, British imperialism itself. These are the "minorities" about whom the capitalist class and their lackeys the Labour leaders, are displaying so much concern in their negotiations. The most important of these organisations is the Moslem League,

which is in reality supported by only a small proportion of Moslems. In the elections of 1937 the Moslem League only secured 4.6 of the total Moslem vote—321,772 out of the total of 7,319,445. Of the 80 million Moslems 20% are Shiah, who have their own organisation, having disowned the Moslem League and support Congress. The Momins, who number about 45 million also repudiate the claim of the Moslem League to represent the Moslems, and support the demand for a Constituent Assembly. In the North West Frontier Province which contains a large majority of Moslems—Congress was returned with a big majority.

The Hindu Mahasabha—another tool of the British imperialists—is the representative of the richest section of the population and naturally, in its attempt to secure a disguise, it cloaks itself in the reactionary covering of rigid Hindu orthodoxy. It acts as a foil and a supplement to the reactionism of the Moslem League.

An example of the deliberate policy of fostering division in Indian society, which is described by the imperialists as the "Hindu-Moslem Problem", is provided by a strike in a sugar mill in Bihar in 1939. The strike was caused by the management granting the workers' demand for a holiday to the Hindu employees only. The object, was, of course, to divide the workers on communal lines. But both Hindu and Moslem workers replied to this provocation by united strike action. They won the strike.

Cripp's "horror" at the suggestion of what he calls a "dictatorship" of India by the overwhelming majority represented by Congress over the "unprotected minorities" can be seen for what it is worth. It is a horror at the prospect of the British capitalists losing control through the decayed and outlived Indian Princes and privileged minorities losing their grip over the oppressed masses. His protest on behalf of "democracy", is in fact made on behalf of an oligarchy of 285,000 British capitalists and their lackeys who dictate and decide the fate of 400 million people.

With the armies of Nippon hammering at the gates of India, and a rising ferment not only in India but among the British working class, the British capitalist class has been compelled to feign a policy of so-called "concessions". As a token of their "sincerity" they sent Sir Stafford Cripps, a left labour representative with a reputation as a "friend of India" with promises of "freedom" but after the war. Returning empty-handed, Cripps has confessed the failure of the plan to gain the enthusiastic support of the Indians in the British war effort against Japan. Before dealing with the fundamental reasons for the failure of his mission, let us examine the epoch-making proposals with which this dove set forth from its Downing Street Ark.

During the last war, too, India was promised "Dominion Status". But after the crisis was over, it was discovered

that political conditions were not sufficiently "tranquil" and the Indian people were not sufficiently "ripe" for this to be granted immediately. Nearly 25 years have elapsed since that promise. And once again, with World War No. 2 well in progress, and not going so well for the British rulers, the old promises "after the war" are refurbished with a Crippsian veneer. It is self evident that after the experience of Britain's methods for the last three centuries, promises of this nature leave the masses completely indifferent.

If the imperialists genuinely desired to grant freedom to India, they would grant it now. If freedom can be given after the war, why not now? The answer to this is provided in the manifesto of our Indian comrades which is republished in this pamphlet. Real independence for India means above all the agrarian revolution—land for the peasants; the cleansing of India of the relics of barbaric feudalism represented by the Princes and landlords.

THE FARCE OF REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT

It is proposed that the constitution-making body to be elected be a college of all the Provincial Legislatures, where not one in ten of the Indian people have the vote, and those who do have it belong to the better-off strata. Such an Assembly, to say the least, would be completely unrepresentative. Besides this, the Princes of the Indian states are to nominate a third of the members of the Electoral College. These Princes who rule over 25% of the population, only continue their corrupt and autocratic domination by the direct aid of British bayonets. The 90 million people under the domination of the princes are to have no voice, but are to be "represented" by these despots. Time and again, uprisings in one or another of the Indian States have been brutally suppressed through the intervention of troops from British India. Without the support of British imperialism the Princes—these obsolete and genile survivals of a by-gone age of Asiatic feudalism, could not continue to crush the peasants for longer than 24 hours.

The representatives in the Provincial Legislatures are not selected on the basis of an ordinary electoral role, but are artificially divided into communities of Moslems, Sikhs, Brahmans, etc. They are thus even more unrepresentative because the number of representatives between the various denominations (especially Hindus and Moslems) is not according to proportion of population. By the division of the communities into classes—workers, peasants, landlords, merchants, etc., the representation of the mass of the Indian people becomes completely unreal.

British imperialism, by manipulating kept agents is enabled to promote disruption and disunity in India.

It was the deliberate intention of the British government so to frame the promised constitution as to provoke

sanguinary conflicts and bloody civil war. The British Raj would then step in and proclaim that only Britain could keep peace between the warring factions and "preserve order". Inherent in the whole plan is the fundamental proposition that the real power was to rest in the hands of the Viceroy through the continuation of his power of veto. The farce of "representative government" has been demonstrated in the past where Provincial Governments passed measures with which the Viceroy disagreed . . . so he simply vetoed them! Furthermore, it must be pointed out, that the Provincial Governments ceased to function when the war broke out, and the control reverted openly to the Viceroy and his Council.

BRITISH TO CONTROL ARMED FORCES

When the mass of verbiage concealing the real aims and intentions of the British rulers is thrust aside, it is clearly observed that all power—the decisive power, **control of arms and the armed forces**, shall remain in the hands of British imperialism.

If the 400 million Indian workers and peasants were granted their freedom and supplied with arms and equipment, it would not be necessary to send a single British soldier to the Far East to stem a threat of Japanese invasion. India could provide an inexhaustible army of 50 millions. But the British dare not arm their slaves, any more than they dared in Burma, Malaya and Java. Far from this, legislation has been passed during the course of the war forbidding in India "unlawful drilling with or without arms and the wearing of unofficial uniforms which bear a colourable resemblance to military or other official uniforms by non-official volunteer organisations."

Control was the issue around which the discussions took place. Under pressure, the British agreed to the appointment of an Indian Defence Minister, but he was to be without power to decide policy or strategy; all decisions were to remain finally in the hands of the Commander in Chief—an appointee of Britain, such as General Wavell.

"During the critical period which now faces India, and until the new constitution can be framed His Majesty's Government must inevitably bear the responsibility for and retain control and direction of India as part of their world war effort, but the task of organising to the full the military, moral and material resources of India must be the responsibility of the Government of India . . ."

In other words, **control** was to be retained by Britain, while **responsibility** was to fall on the shoulders of Congress. In the final analysis all power rests with those in control of the armed forces. Lenin, and before him Marx and

Engels pointed out that this is the decisive touchstone of the question of power. The British have not the slightest intention of relaxing their iron grip by relinquishing control of the armed forces. When has it ever happened in history that the capitalists voluntarily and without bitter and violent struggle, give up their possessions?

It was on this decisive issue that the talks broke down. Congress, while willing to capitulate to British imperialism, desired at least a semblance of control in order to delude their followers that the British had given them some real concessions, otherwise they could expect to lose all support among the Indian masses. Congress position can be summed up in the words of Mr. Rajagopalachari:

"At the present moment defence is practically the whole Government, and if, as repeatedly declared by Sir Stafford Cripps so far, defence is to be strictly reserved, the leaders of the people feel that they cannot hope to overcome the popular attitude of apathy, if not hostility towards the British.

The leaders of the people should be enabled to honestly shout to the masses that the war is a peoples' war, and the Government a peoples' Government."

In these lines is contained the reason why Congress was reluctantly compelled to reject the plan.

Cripps may once again be sent on his errand; this time with some face-saving formula which will enable the Indian capitalists to show some pretence that power has really been turned over to the Indian people . . . while in reality it will remain in the hand of Whitehall.

Despite the breakdown of negotiations, Nehru, in the name of Congress, has appealed for the organising of the utmost resistance to the Japanese advance. The reason for this is their belief that a greater share of the exploitation of the Indian people will be their lot under British domination than under Japanese. They understand that only with the aid of one great imperialistic power or another can the weak Indian bourgeoisie maintain its parasitic role in India. They have the example of China in the last few years as a warning. The Chinese capitalists, through Chiang Kai Shek, tried ceaselessly to arrive at a compromise with the Japanese. During the seizure of Manchuria and North China they offered no resistance to Japanese encroachments. Only when it became clear that the Japanese, as at Shanghai, were destroying Chinese factories which competed with Japan and sending the machinery to Japan as scrap for armaments production, were they compelled to offer resistance.

The Japanese industrialists compete very keenly with those of India. It is fear for their investments, plus the links with British and American capital, which compels Congress to choose the British rather than the Japanese exploiters.

BACKGROUND OF THE PRESENT CRISIS—THE ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF INDIAN MASSES

According to the estimate made by Sir James Grigg, the present War Minister, the average income in all India is £4. 4. 0 a year. This includes the fabulously wealthy Maharajahs and the millionaire mill-owners, as well as the humble worker and peasant. Yet even so, it amounts to about 1/7 a week, or a little less than 3d. a day. This is the fruit of 200 years of British "protection" of India. The standard of living of the masses is even lower than at the time of the East India Company.

To give some idea of what it means to the Indian masses to exist on such an income can be gauged from the following extract from a report by two Indian bourgeois economists:

"The average Indian income is just enough either to feed two men in every three of the population, or give them all two in place of every three meals they need, on condition that they all consent to go naked, live out of doors all the year round, have no amusement or recreation, and want nothing else but food, and that the lowest, the coarsest, the least nutritious."

The housing situation is no better than nutrition. The Bombay Labour Office Inquiry into working class budgets found that 97% of the working class families in Bombay were living in one room tenements, often containing two and even up to eight families in one room. One third of the population were living more than 5 persons in a room; 258,379 from 6 to 9 in a room; 8,133 from 10 to 19 persons in a room, 15,490 were living 20 persons and over in one room.

Under the beneficent auspices of British imperialism, the average length of life in India has gone down from 24.75 years in 1921 to 23 years in 1931. Even V. Anstey, a writer sympathetic to imperialism, has reckoned that 3 deaths out of 4 in India are due to diseases of poverty. The Bengal Officer of Health stated in his report for 1927-8 that "the present peasantry of Bengal are in a very large proportion taking to a dietary on which even rats could not live for more than five weeks." Illiteracy, which amounted to 94% of the population in 1911, had been reduced by 1931 to 92%! Truly a great achievement and a testimony to the civilising influence of British imperialism.

These few figures serve to give some indication of the "horror without end" to which the rule of British imperialism has condemned a quarter of the world's population.

THE AGRARIAN PROBLEM

The basis of existence of the peasants has been taken away from them. Driven off the land, they have been forced into the status of village proletarians. Between the years 1921 and 1931 the number of agricultural labourers

increased from 21.7 millions to 33.5 millions. These are the most miserable and poverty-stricken strata in the villages. But to them must be added at least 50 millions more who earn only a bare pittance from their small plots of land, and have to supplement this by working for a big landlord. The amount of land held by these millions, and the standard of life it can afford them, can be seen from a report of the situation in the Presidency of Bombay. In that area 48% of all the agricultural holdings consisted of less than 5 acres of cultivated land, and this 48% of small peasant holders possessed, together only 2.4% of the total area. It is estimated by some experts that these two classes of landless and semi-landless peasants form more than half the population of the villages.

The vast majority of the peasants live in debt to the moneylender. The total income of the peasantry (this includes the rich peasants) has been estimated at 42 rupees (£2. 13. 0) a year. From this there is taken in rent and taxes 20 rupees. When to this are added the exactions of the moneylender (whose rate, remember is 75%) the total paid out is more than two-thirds of the income. This was confirmed by an investigation conducted by a Congress representative: "Of the net total income more than two thirds goes out of the village by way of land revenue and excise taxes, interest charges and rents to non-resident owners." After all the vultures have had their pick, the peasant is left with an **average** of 13 rupees a year, that is, 19/-.

The peasants are permanently in debt. The obliging moneylenders charge a mere anna per rupee per month—that is 75%! The total debt of the peasants in 1921 was £400 millions. By 1937 it had increased to £1,350 millions. This means that on an average every peasant is in debt to the extent of at least 5 years income! With the combined burden of the British imperialists, the money-lenders and the landlords, the slavery of the masses is growing steadily worse.

These figures constitute, as Trotsky remarked of similar statistics in Czarist Russia, "the finished programme of a peasant war." The difference is that in India the problem is even more intense than it was in Russia; the poverty, the landlessness of the peasants is even worse, the exactions and extortions of landlords and imperialists, even greater. It may be added that the links between the landlords and the Indian bourgeoisie are even more firmly united than they were in Russia. It is this that dictates the inevitable betrayal of the movement against imperialism by the organisations of the bourgeoisie, of which Congress Party has the largest support.

THE ROLE OF CONGRESS

The Congress Party is the representative of the Indian capitalist class. But it has the support of the overwhelming

majority of the Indian people—Hindus and Moslems, workers and peasants—in their aspirations for national liberation from British imperialism. But the capitalists in Congress are not really desirous of waging a struggle to the end against the British Raj.

The big capitalists in India who control the Congress are linked by many ties with the Imperialists on the one side and the landlords, moneylenders and Princes on the other. The bankers and big capitalists spring from the landlord class and have simultaneous interests in both land and industry.

In the Indian States the capitalists have investments which link them to the Princes, and British imperialism has the controlling interest in the banks. Large sections of industry in India are jointly controlled by British and Indian capital. The financial structure of India is directly linked with the City of London. Thus, the landlords, capitalists, princes and imperialists, although they may quarrel as to the division of the spoils squeezed out of the Indian workers and peasants, are united as one against any encroachment on this surplus by the Indian people.

Striking proof of this was provided in the mass struggles against British imperialism in 1922 and 1929-31. The moment the movement threatened to rouse the peasantry into action, the bourgeoisie, through Congress made haste to capitulate to British imperialism. In his book "India Today", written during the recent phase of the Comintern when Britain was the "most reactionary" imperialism. Palme Dutt writes in describing the betrayal of the mass movement by Congress:

"On a word of command from the Congress centre this process (refusal to pay taxes. Not 5% were collected in Guntur) could undoubtedly be unleashed throughout the country, and would have turned into a universal refusal of **land revenue and rent**. But this process would have meant the sweeping away, not only of imperialism, **but also of landlordism** . . . The Bardoli Resolution instructed . . . the local Congress Committees to advise the cultivators to pay land revenue and other taxes due to the Government . . . The Working Committee advises Congress workers and

* Dutt provides invaluable material in describing the betrayal of the mass movement by the native bourgeoisie. But blinded by the ignorant and reactionary school of Stalinism, he is incapable of drawing the correct conclusion—which is the theory of the permanent revolution. His conclusions demanding a "National United Front" are completely contradicted by the data he presents. Duty bound in the struggle against "Trotskyism" he shuts his eyes to the theory of the Permanent Revolution which flows inexorably out of the actual relation of forces.

organisations to inform the ryots (peasants) that withholding of rent payment to the Zemindars (landlords) is contrary to the Congress resolutions and injurious to the best interests of the country . . . The Working Committee assures the Zemindars that the Congress movement is in no way intended to attack their legal rights, and that even where the ryots have grievances the Committee desires that redress be sought by mutual consultation and arbitration."

Here can be seen the essence of the betrayal of the national struggle by the Congress in 1930-34: Fear of arousing the pent-up feelings of the peasants, which would express itself in a struggle not only against the British Government (the visible symbol of which is the tax collector) but also against the native exploiters. In the struggle for emancipation the peasant would be as little concerned with the fine distinction between landlords, tax-collectors and moneylenders as he is with the distinction between the other vermin—the lice, fleas and bugs—which prey upon him.

The striving of the peasants to rid themselves of their terrible burdens has resulted in organs of struggle being developed in the countryside to lead this movement. These organs have been the peasant committees which have arisen independent of the bourgeois National Congress. The first All-India peasant organisation was formed in 1936—the ALL-INDIA KISAN SABHA. By 1939 the membership was already 800,000. Included in their programme was the demand for complete national independence and a democratic state of the Indian people, leading ultimately to a "peasants' and workers' rule".

The leadership, for lack of a different perspective, have subordinated these independent organisations to the Congress, although increasingly coming into collision with it. If the movement is not to suffer the fate of the peasant movement in China, it must find leadership in the industrial proletariat. These peasant committees which have already reached a stage far in advance of the organisation of the Russian peasants before the Revolution of 1917, are, no doubt an expression of the pressure of the rural proletariat. Tomorrow, linked with the Committees of Action of the workers in the towns; that is, Soviets, they must inevitably play a great role in the mobilising of the Indian people in the struggle for freedom. Subordination to the bourgeoisie would mean inevitable disaster. Only by organising the peasants round their own committees and in their own interests, in co-operation with the leadership of the workers in the cities, will the agrarian revolution be successfully carried out. Subhas Bose, the radical petty bourgeois on the left-wing of Congress, after despairing of India receiving freedom from the British, has now landed up in the camp of the ravishers of the Chinese

people—the camp of military-feudal Japanese imperialism. Wang Ching Wei, who could be described as the Chinese Bose, also betrayed the masses and ended up as the head of the puppet government of Japan. This is an instructive lesson of the blind alley in which not only the bourgeoisie, but the radical petty bourgeoisie find themselves. These elements must inevitably end up in one or another camp of imperialism if they fail to base themselves on the progressive programme of a Workers' and Peasants' Government.

THE ROLE OF THE INDIAN PROLETARIAT

Owing to the stringent censorship, news of the Indian working class struggles is indeed scant. From individual reports of visiting seamen and Indian workers it is clear that there has been no suspension of the class struggle—rather an intensification.

The rapid growth of the proletariat can be seen from the fact that between the years 1921 and 1931 the number of industrial workers employed in establishments of more than 10 workers rose from 2.6 million to 3.5 million. In the intervening decade, and especially in the last two and a half years of the war with the large increase in heavy war industry, this number has rocketed by leaps and bounds. Even taking the term in the narrowest sense the industrial proletariat numbers today far more than the 5 million estimate of 1931. To this core of true industrial workers must be added about 20 million handicraft workers who work in places employing less than 10 people. These are wage workers and constitute a reserve for the industrial working class. They will follow the lead of the decisive section of the conscious proletariat. In addition to this there is an agricultural proletariat which is now estimated to number about half the peasantry—that is, approximately 130 millions.

In the ten biggest cities the population has increased during the last decade from 5,309,000 to 8,183,000. Calcutta has increased its population by 85% and Bombay by 28%. About a dozen other cities not including the above, have increased their population by from 50 to 100%. This tremendous rise in the numbers of the proletariat increase its specific weight in Indian society enormously.

From the scanty Government statistics, biased and incomplete as they are, it is nevertheless possible to gain some idea of the dynamic of events in India. In the last few years, despite the increase in industry, the only industries which showed a decrease were rice, cotton-ginning and cotton-baling. These are Indian consumption industries and therefore their decline is a measure of the worsening conditions of the masses. A Government report, confirming this decline, has estimated an average indebtedness of working class families of four months wages. This in 1939, when the effects of the war were just beginning to be felt.

The workers have been replying to the attacks on their living standards. This awakening is to be observed from the Government reports of the different Provinces, where bitter strikes against both British and Indian owned factories are recorded. In March 1940, 160,000 textile workers came out on strike for "dearness" allowance; that is for a rise of wages to meet the increased cost of living. Three leaders were arrested. The Council of Action of the Bombay T.U.C. called for a general strike in sympathy. The majority of cases tell the same story—strike after strike, leading to outbreaks of violence and pitched battles between police and strikers, and arrests. Most of the strikes, according to the reports began as strikes against personal assault, ill-treatment and victimisation of workers; strikes for the dismissal of foremen and managers, and strikes in sympathy with other workers. Once begun, however, wage demands were invariably put forward, revealing the continual underlying economic discontent.

The high level of consciousness and militancy of the Indian working class was seen in the sugar-mill strike in Bihar in 1939. Beginning as a solidarity strike, it developed to a point where demands were put forward in the course of the struggle for increased supply of fuel, bedding and better housing. But significant are the words of the official government report of the strike: "All the demands were conceded **except the formation of a committee to manage the concern and the immediate increase of pay.**" Here we see the expression of the elemental strivings of the workers to take control of industry—and through this the fate of the nation—into their own hands.

The militant movement among the workers must inevitably take an anti-capitalist as well as anti-imperialist form. The workers in the towns interpret the struggle against the hated domination into collision with the Indian bourgeoisie. The elemental striving of the working class to assume leadership, will throw up a new layer of fighting leaders, which will be hammered out and tempered in the fire of struggle. Before the outbreak of the war, the Bihar Government recognised the ominous portents of the rise of the workers' movement: Their report states:

"The year 1938 continues to be characterised by general restlessness. As reported last year this was due to the expectations raised by the emergence of political leaders amongst the labouring classes. There were 16 strikes including one lockout in 1938 as compared with 11 in 1937."

The elemental striving of the working class to assume leadership, and its preponderance in the struggle, was shown in the movement of 1929-31, which was ushered in by a strike movement of colossal dimensions. At the Calcutta Congress held just prior to this upsurge, 50,000 workers

demonstrated with the slogan "An Independent Socialist Republic of India!" This tendency towards independent working class leadership of the national struggle manifested itself again at the outbreak of the war in a political anti-war strike of 80,000 workers of Bombay.

Under the exceptional conditions, with the awakening of the workers and peasants throughout India, this layer will find itself at the head of the whole nation. All they require is a policy which will make conscious in them the role which instinctively they are striving to play. The continuous reverses and defeats of the British will imbue the oppressed masses of India with a new confidence to face their imperialist masters. As an Indian student expressed it after the fall of Singapore: "Good God! For years we have imagined these fellows were so strong, but look at them! We have been afraid of a phantom!"

The failure of the bourgeoisie to conduct a struggle for the emancipation of the masses, due to the same reasons as in Russia, gives the young proletariat the possibility of victoriously accomplishing the tasks which in the past had been carried out by the national bourgeoisie, and of laying the path for the new development of society. In India the proletariat is the only class which can solve the problems of the masses and lead the nation consistently in the struggle against imperialism, feudalism and landlordism. The small, but rapidly growing class, can lead the scattered peasantry, and by taking power into its own hands, proceed first of all to carry out the tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution. From there, by the logic of its position it will advance inevitably to the socialist tasks. This in a nutshell is the sole solution to the Indian revolution which is now begun—this is the permanent revolution.

The Indian proletariat is not isolated. Like the proletariat of Russia it springs directly from the peasantry. The vast majority have been peasants themselves, or have relatives in the villages. The workers have direct connection with the peasants, and above all, with the scores of millions of rural proletarians and rural semi-proletarians.

Coupled with the rise in militancy has emerged the awakening of tens of millions by the war crisis. The masses do not want the victory of Japan; they have seen the terrible exploitation and suppression of the Chinese and Korean masses at the hands of Japanese imperialism. Their critical attitude not only towards British imperialism, but towards the traitors of the bourgeois National Congress, drives them irresistibly towards attempting to organise on an independent class basis. The bitter struggles the workers have waged against their employers, and the struggles of the peasants against the landlords, drives into their consciousness the need for independent class organisation.

THE PERMANENT REVOLUTION AS APPLIED TO INDIA.

The theory of the Permanent Revolution is based on the incapacity of the bourgeoisie in backward countries to solve the tasks of the bourgeois revolution; the national liberation from the shackles of imperialism, the ending of the feudal division of the country into separate provinces and its unification into a single whole, the dividing the land among the peasantry, and the adoption of the democratic Constituent Assembly. In the past these tasks were solved, as in France and Britain, by the young and vigorous bourgeoisie. But now under the conditions of world imperialism, the colonial bourgeoisie is no longer capable of carrying through these progressive tasks. It is this that makes it imperative, if the struggle for liberation is to be successful, that the proletariat should assume the leadership of the entire nation, weak in numbers though it is. It is only thus that the tasks of India can be solved. The rebellious peasantry must find an ally and a leader in the city workers.

But in order to accomplish this it will be necessary for the proletariat to take power. Once having done this, they will advance not merely to the solution of the bourgeois tasks, but to the socialist tasks. In this they will need the support of the international working class, that is by the extension of the proletarian revolution to other parts of the world.

In analysing the Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution, Comrade Trotsky wrote:

"Not a single one of the tasks of the 'bourgeois' revolution can be solved in these backward countries under the leadership of the 'national' bourgeoisie, because the latter emerges at once with foreign support as a class alien or hostile to the people. Every stage in its development binds it only the more closely to the foreign finance capital of which it is essentially the agency. The petty bourgeoisie of the colonies, that of handicrafts and trade, is the first to fall victim in the unequal struggle with foreign capital, declining into economic insignificance, becoming declassed and pauperised. It cannot even conceive of playing an independent political role. The peasantry, the largest numerically and the most atomised, backward, and oppressed class, is capable of local uprisings and partisan warfare, but requires the leadership of a more advanced and centralised class in order for this struggle to be elevated to an all-national level. The task of such leadership falls in the nature of things upon the colonial proletariat, which, from its very first steps, stands opposed not only to the foreign but also to its own national bourgeoisie."

L. TROTSKY (Introduction to "Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution" by H. Isaacs).

In China, the revolution of 1925-27 could quite easily have achieved success. If the colonial bourgeoisie could play a progressive role—this would surely be the case more so in China than in India, where the native capitalists were at least nominally independent of imperialism. But as in India, the Chinese bourgeoisie placed itself at the head of the mass movement in order to extract concessions from imperialism. But as soon as the peasants began to move in the direction of the agrarian revolution and the workers strove to take control of industry, the alarmed bourgeois, led by Chiang Kai Shek, betrayed the Chinese revolution and arrived at a compromise with imperialism. They were compelled to capitulate to imperialism because they could not solve a single major problem due to their links with the landowners and militarists.

It was in justification of their unconditional support for the Chinese bourgeoisie (Stalin's Bloc of Four Classes) that Trotsky's "Permanent Revolution" was attacked by the Comintern. This support led to the defeat of the Chinese revolution, and betrayed the Chinese workers and peasants to the mercies of the counter revolution. By the end of 1930 the Red Aid estimated that no less than 140,000 Chinese workers and peasants had been killed or died in the prisons of the Kuomintang under the leadership of Chiang Kai-Shek.

In Russia, the bourgeoisie was incapable of conducting a struggle against Czarist feudalism, the Church and the landlords due to the self-same ties as in China and India. This gave the young proletariat the possibility of victoriously accomplishing the tasks which in the past had been carried out by the bourgeoisie and of laying the path for a new and higher development of Russian society. In his thesis on the Colonial Question adopted by the Second Congress, Lenin wrote:

"There are to be found in the dependent countries two distinct movements which every day grow farther and farther apart from each other. One is the bourgeois democratic Nationalist movement, with a programme of political independence under the bourgeois order, and the other is the mass action of the poor and ignorant peasants and workers for their liberation from all sorts of exploitation. The former endeavour to control the latter, and often succeed to a certain extent; but the Communist International and the parties affected must struggle against such control and help to develop class consciousness in the working masses of the colonies. For the overthrow of foreign capitalists, which is the first step towards revolution in the colonies, the co-operation of the bourgeois Nationalist revolutionary elements is useful. But the foremost and necessary task is the formation of Communist Parties which will organise the peasants and workers and lead them to the revolution and to the

establishment of Soviet Republics. Thus the masses in the backward countries may reach Communism, not through capitalist development, but led by the class-conscious proletariat of the advanced capitalist countries.

"The revolution in the colonies is not going to be a Communist revolution in its first stages. But if from the outset the leadership is in the hands of a Communist vanguard, the revolutionary masses will not be led astray, but will go ahead through the successive periods of development of revolutionary experience . . . In the first stages the revolution in the colonies must be carried on with a programme which will include many petty bourgeois reform clauses, such as division of land, etc. But from this it does not follow at all that the leadership of the revolution will have to be surrendered to the bourgeois democrats. On the contrary, the proletarian parties must carry on vigorous and systematic propaganda for the Soviet idea and organise the peasants and workers Soviets as soon as possible . . ."

Armed with this policy the Russian proletariat were led to victory; with this policy alone will the Indian proletariat be led to victory. But what a far cry this is from the present policies of Stalin and the Comintern! Today Stalinism is crowning its ignominious record with an even more base betrayal. From the struggle against imperialism for which they stood in words, they have now advanced into the position of agents of British imperialism since the attacks on Soviet Russia.

At a time when the mass struggle was rising, they subordinated the struggle to the demands of the bourgeois National Congress, and remained inside that organisation as a loyal opposition. Instead of fighting for the leadership of the working class through the building of the Communist Party, independent of the capitalists, they organised so-called Worker-Peasant Parties which appeared out of the ground as mysteriously as they vanished. Having burned their fingers thus, they advanced to the ultra-left policy in the period of mass upsurge 1929-32; they denounced Congress as "Fascist" and succeeded by these methods of isolating themselves from the mass movement, and at the same time lowered the class consciousness of the Indian masses.

At the present period they are supporting, as far as they dare without completely discrediting themselves, the position taken by Congress. They differ from Congress principally, in being more servile towards the imperialists, whom they now claim are fighting a progressive anti-fascist war. Like their fellow-compatriots in Malaya, Singapore, Java and Burma, they demand "unity" with British imperialism against Japan. But such a policy can only have the same results as in these countries.

The call for a "National Government" in India is the call for an agreement on the part of the Indian capitalists and landlords with the British Imperialists, which would be directed against the masses.

Stalinism merely demoralises and confuses the vanguard of the working class. Their policy of collaboration with the oppressor cannot gain the support of the downtrodden masses in the colonial countries against any invader. This road leads only to the continued rule of one imperialism or another, and to the inevitable defeat of the masses in their struggle for both national and social emancipation. Far from weakening the power of the Axis, insofar as they have any effect at all, these policies, serve only to assist Japan's advance by spreading disillusionment and demoralisation among the masses. Far from aiding the Soviet Union, they are helping its enemies.

FOR A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

The Indian Trotskyists, the vanguard of the Indian working class, basing themselves on the teachings of Lenin, are putting forward the demand for the immediate convening of a Constituent Assembly. This is the elementary democratic demand—the right of the people to elect their own representatives by means of universal suffrage. The struggle for a Constituent Assembly involves the struggle for elementary human rights which are denied to the Indian people by Churchill and his government: the right of free speech and organisation; the release of thousands of political prisoners languishing in Indian jails; an election throughout the country to be held on the basis of universal adult suffrage from the age of 18 without property or other restrictions; land to the peasants; living wages for the proletariat including the 8 hour day; the prohibition of child labour; expropriation of war profits.

This slogan will immediately receive support from the workers' organisations: from the unions, from the councils set up in the factories, from the strike committees and the area committees. It will evoke an immediate response from the peasants' councils which have been set up as organs of struggle against the landlords and tax collectors, and which still continue to function despite all repressions. In the course of the struggle for the Constituent Assembly the masses will become convinced by their own experience that the solution to their problems lies in their own hands. Only by the dictatorship of the proletariat supported by the peasantry—that is, only by basing themselves on Lenin's formula, can the liberation of India be achieved.

The complete incapacity of Congress and the Indian capitalists to wage a struggle for freedom is demonstrated by their failure to conduct a consistent agitation for the convening of a Constituent Assembly. We say "consistent" because from time to time the issue has been raised by sections of Congress. But at a time when British imperial-

ism is at her weakest and posing as a great "democrat", they dare not put forward the demand for the Constituent Assembly because of their fear of the Indian masses. This alone, reveals more than anything else, the role of the Indian bourgeoisie as agents of British imperialism. Even if they were to put forward the slogan, they could not carry the matter beyond words and into action.

In Russia in 1917 the capitalists were forced to "accept" the slogan in words, but vigorously sabotaged and resisted all attempts to convene the Constituent Assembly. In India the capitalists have not even gone to that length. Instead of the present position being utilised by Congress to wage a struggle against British domination, it resorts to a desperate attempt to arrive at agreement with Whitehall. The main struggle in Congress has been for the different sections to out-do each other in grovelling at the feet of British imperialism.

In the first place the struggle in India must be waged against all imperialisms—and above all the treachery of the Congress as the tool of imperialism, must be ruthlessly exposed. Had Congress so desired, the difficulties of the British imperialists position, coupled with the reawakening of political life of the Indian masses, could have served to lay the way for the complete victory over the forces of British domination. The taking of power by Congress, and the mobilisation of the workers and peasants—arms in hand—would render the threat of Japanese invasion impossible. No army in the world could conquer, and hold down the peoples of an entire sub-continent who were thus genuinely fighting for their freedom. The arming of the workers and peasants for the struggle against all imperialisms; the giving of the land to the peasants; the destruction of the power of the princes; the taking over of industry by the workers—these would sound the death-knell of all imperialisms and would immediately topple the Japanese militarists from their throne, for the Japanese soldiers, mostly peasants themselves, would respond to the slogan of "land to the peasants". The Indian revolution would spread to Japan and light up the whole of Asia.

POLICIES OF BRITISH WORKING CLASS ORGANISATIONS

In this situation it is necessary to analyse carefully the policies of the organisations which claim to represent the interests of the British working class. For, as Lenin once remarked, the acid test for those who claim to be socialists in the metropolitan countries, especially Britain, was their attitude to the colonial question; the road to the liberation of the workers of Britain lay through India; the test was not merely that of opposing in words the iniquities of imperialism but systematically clarifying the workers of Britain and assisting the workers and peasants of India to fight against the same oppressor.

THE LABOUR PARTY

The Labour and Trade Union bureaucracy have shown clearly that they stand as watch-dogs in the interests of British imperialism. They are even more zealous in defending the vultures' grip on India than the imperialists themselves. The loss of India would mean for them the end of the privileges enjoyed by the Labour and Trade Union upper crust and the better paid stratum of the workers, which have fallen to them as the crumbs from the table of the bourgeoisie, only because of the super-exploitation of the Indian and colonial masses. The only difference between the Labour leaders and Churchill on this question, is that the former are more hypocritical and dishonest.

In a recent speech Bevin came out in defence of India's "underdogs". Shedding crocodile tears, he vowed that the labour movement would not be prepared to leave the 50 million Untouchables to the mercies of the majority of the Indian people—that is to the mercies of the Indian workers and peasants! Apparently he wishes to convey that the British have subjugated India for the past 200 years merely to safeguard the interests of the unprotected "minorities". During the entire period of their domination, the British imperialists have succeeded in perpetuating the most abominable slavery—especially of the Untouchable caste—on the pretext that they could not interfere with Indian customs!

Bevin and his confreres had the opportunity to demonstrate the sincerity of their concern for the welfare of the Indian "underdog" in the Labour Governments of 1924 and 1929-31. But they were too busy jailing, suppressing and shooting those Indians who demanded that they should put into effect Labour's promises of freedom to India. No less than 60,000 Indians were imprisoned by the Second Labour Government.

The Labour "lefts" gathered under the banner of the "Tribune" play an even more dangerous role. They "reason" with Churchill and Bevin, pointing to the benefits which would accrue to Britain by granting of concessions to India. It is a classic expression of the role of the "left" wing of the Labour Party, that the British bourgeoisie should have entrusted their dirty work in India to one of them—Sir Stafford Cripps. Beneath the left sounding phrases which cover the policy of the "Tribune" like a coating of inferior varnish, can be seen the same old stains of official Labour.

"What is now at issue is a different question. It is the participation of India in the struggle to defeat the common enemy. If the Japs win, self-government for India will cease to have even academic interest. Therefore we repeat: what now requires to be done is to agree on the amount of immediate self government which will enable that first object to be achieved. If

the Indian leaders press their claims beyond that necessity they will betray their own cause. If the British terms fall short of that they will miss the target."

"Give the Indian masses just enough to create the illusion that they have something to fight the Japanese for"—that is the policy of the Labour Lefts. "Loosen the chains of the Indian people in order that the master can gain their services in hour of need."

THE COMMUNIST PARTY

The Communist Party instead of explaining why the vultures of British imperialism will not release their chains and exposing the fraudulency of their claim to be fighting a war against fascism, the Communist Party covers up the real imperialist aims of the war. In the party declaration issued after the failure of the Cripps mission they state:

"The negotiations broke down because the British Government will not agree to the formation of an Indian National Government, which alone can rally the peoples of India and organise all their resources in the struggle against fascism."

In actuality the talks broke down because the British are not prepared to give even the Indian bourgeoisie—never mind the Indian people—the pretence of national independence. The statement goes on:

"The British Government has not yet learnt the lessons of its defeats in Hong-Kong, Malaya, Singapore and Burma where we failed to win the peoples for the fight alongside Britain against Japan."

They have not yet learnt the lessons! As if the ruling class could operate any other policy. To get the enthusiastic support of the masses in the fight against Japan the first prerequisite is that they have something to fight for. To plead piteously to the ruling class for a change of heart is to ask the vampires of imperialism to kindly leave off sucking the blood of the colonial masses on humanitarian grounds.

Contrast this with Dutt's statements at the beginning of the war, when the role of Britain was correctly characterised as imperialist.

"Nothing could be more dangerous than for the new tone of official utterance to give rise to any illusions, as to the iron realities of imperialist policy and power, or as to the intention of imperialism by every means at its command to maintain that power."

It is not possible to reach any conclusion other than that Palme Dutt and the leaders of the Communist Party, fully schooled in the Marxist characterisation of imperialism and its colonial policy and aims, are deliberately deceiving the British workers.

In "World News and Views", April 25, 1942, Ben Bradley writes:

"The Congress proposal, that a National Government be set up which commands the confidence of the people, was rejected by the British Government, but is receiving widespread support in India, even from such British official newspapers as the Calcutta 'Statesman'. All sections are agreed on the postponement of major issues until after the war."

All sections, including the Communist Party. The demand for a "National Government in India Now" does not deceive the Indian masses and it will not deceive the British working class. What is this so-called "National Government"? Is it to be a coalition government of the Princes, Congress, Moslem League, Liberals, Hindu Mahasaba, Communists and others? We know that the slogan of a "National Government" has always been used to deceive the masses into believing their interests are being catered for, when in actuality it is a cover for the continued rule of the oppressors. The Communist Party are well aware that the only method whereby the Indian masses will be led to the path of freedom is by the calling of a Constituent Assembly on the basis of universal suffrage. But freedom for India—that is freedom for the workers and peasants—would cut across the policy of the Stalinist bureaucracy in appeasing Churchill.

The C.P. leaders attempt to justify this false policy by saying that it is part of the policy of defending the Soviet Union. But far from doing this, such a policy can only result in disaster for the Soviet Union as well as for the British and Indian workers.

THE I.L.P.

Instead of attempting to reach the Indian workers and help them organise their own independent party, the I.L.P. graciously advised them to seek salvation in Nehru. The role of the bourgeois National Congress has been clearly foreseen by the Fourth International long in advance; especially the role of that section which, under the pressure of the aspirations of the masses, adopted a "socialist" coloration. Nehru, who was on the left wing of Congress and claiming to be a supporter of socialism, has become the most zealous advocate of capitulation to the niggardly concessions offered by Britain.

For years Brockway and the other centrist leaders of the I.L.P. pictured Nehru both to the British and Indian workers, as the genuine leader of the struggle, not only for national but for social freedom in India. We consistently pointed out that Nehru was interested in neither. The logic of his position would lead him into the open camp of imperialism. The "New Leader" published articles and pictures of Nehru as their "socialist" comrade.

Brockway will no doubt shake his head sadly at this "unfortunate" betrayal, or will plead "exceptional circumstances" to justify Nehru's treachery, as Cripps is even today being justified. At an election speech their candidate deplores the fact that Cripps—an honest man—is being used by the capitalist class!

As always the centrists are led by the nose by the radical bourgeoisie and middle class. The position of the I.L.P. on India is the inevitable fruit of the entire centrist position over the past period. Such a party is incapable of leading a genuine struggle for Indian freedom, and therefore cannot lead the struggle for workers' power in Britain, for the two are indissolubly bound together.

TASKS OF THE BRITISH WORKERS

By extending the war over the entire planet, the imperialists have given a more profound significance to the permanent revolution. By drawing the whole of the colonial world into the conflict, they have placed their very existence in jeopardy. The last war and its repercussions in the Russian Revolution provoked a whole series of colonial uprisings and revolutions: Turkey, Persia, India, Arabia, etc. By drawing these areas **directly** into the struggle they have linked the colonial struggle for national freedom and independence directly with the struggle of the British workers for power.

It has been a truism of revolutionary politics that the fate of the workers in Britain was irrevocably bound with that of the colonial peoples—especially with the Indian revolution. The events of the war have tied in one knot the destiny of the Indian and British workers and unless the working class of this country understands the urgent need to break with their capitalist class and their imperialist politics, and extend the fraternal hand to the oppressed colonial workers and peasants, they will rapidly find themselves reduced to the status of their colonial brothers.

If the British workers want to win as allies the Indian and colonial masses in a genuine struggle against oppression they must take the road, not of supporting the British imperialist oppressors, but of struggling against them and taking power into their own hands.

Only when the Indian people see a genuine war of liberation being waged by the British workers and not the present imperialist war for world domination will they be won as enthusiastic allies.

An unprecedented opportunity confronts the British workers today—and an opportunity which, if missed will not recur under such favourable circumstances. A real alliance between the toilers of India and Britain can be brought about today by a complete break with their common exploiters, British imperialism, and the establishment of a Workers' Government. Only such a government which can

point to the expropriation of British capitalism, which can point to a complete break with their brutal and age-old exploiters, can win the friendship of the masses of India for the common struggle against capitalist reaction everywhere. The programme on which we appeal to the organised British labour movement, a programme of minimum democratic demands for India, is one which every British worker will support. As a first step towards unifying the toilers of India with the British workers, it is essential that they fight for power in Britain and put the following programme into operation: (1) Freedom for India. (2) A Constituent Assembly and full democratic rights. (3) Arming of the free Indian people to fight for their freedom. (4) Supplying of India with all the necessary arms and equipment. (5) Release all political prisoners.

THESES OF INDIAN FOURTH INTERNATIONALISTS, 1941

The following document is a section of a thesis adopted in the latter part of 1941 by the Formation Committee of the Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India as the programme on which all Marxist revolutionists could form a single revolutionary party. Together with certain other groups, the original committee has now constituted the Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India as an adherent of the Fourth International. The party is now centring its agitation on the central slogan of the Constituent Assembly.

Together with the Ceylon Socialist Party (the Lanka Sama Samaja Party) and a recently-formed organisation in Burma, our Indian comrades have established the Federation of Bolshevik-Leninist Parties of Burma, Ceylon and India, for the revolutionary destiny of these three peoples is closely linked together.

THE NATIVE PRINCES

The revolt of 1857 represented the last attempt of the old feudal ruling class of India to throw off the British yoke. This revolt, which despite its reactionary leadership laid bare the depth of mass discontent and unrest, alarmed the British rulers, and led to a radical change in policy in India. Seeking for bases of social and political support, the British abandoned the policy of annexing the Indian states within British India, instead guaranteeing the remnants of the feudal rulers their privileged and parasitic positions in innumerable petty principalities, buttressing their power and protecting them against the masses, and receiving in return the unqualified support of these elements for the British rule. The princes of the Indian states, maintained at the cost of a chaotic multiplication of administrative units, are today only the corrupt and dependent tools of British imperialism, and the feudatory states, checker-boarding all India as they do, are no more than a vast network of fortresses erected by the British in their own defence. The variety of the states and jurisdiction of the feudal princes defies a generalised description but they bolster alike the reactionary policies of imperialism in India. The despotism and misgovernment practiced by the great majority of these rulers in their territories have created and perpetuated conditions of backwardness extreme even in India, including the most primitive forms of feudalism and slavery itself. Their collective interests are represented by the Chamber of Princes, instituted in 1921, which is the most reactionary political body in India.

THE LANDLORDS

The most solid supporters of British rule in India, after the princes, are the landlords. In fact the majority of the princes are no more themselves than glorified landlords, playing the same parasitic role as the landlords of British India. The landlords of India have a record of medieval oppression, of rack-renting and usury, and of unbridled gangsterism over a disarmed peasantry, which has made them the most hated exploiters in India. The rapid extension of landlordism in modern times through the development of intermediary and new parasitic classes on the peasantry, has not only increased the numbers of those who receive land rents, but firmly linked their interests with those of the Indian capitalist class, by ties of investment and mortgage. The political role of the landlords has always been one of complete subservience to British imperialism, as well as the greatest obstacle in the way of agricultural development which demands a thorough-going democratic revolution in the agrarian field and the liquidation of landlordism in all its forms.

The second half of the nineteenth century saw the rise of an Indian capitalist class in Bombay and other industrial centres. The Indian bourgeoisie of the early period, conscious of its own weakness and dependent position in economy, offered no challenge whatever to British rule. But the deep economic conflict between their own interests and those of the twentieth century, to utilize the national political movement to strengthen their bargaining power against British imperialism.

THE INDIAN BOURGEOISIE

The bourgeoisie, in the absence of any competing class and especially of an independent proletarian movement, assumed complete leadership of the national political movement through its party, the Indian National Congress. The bourgeoisie leadership of the movement was clearly demonstrated in 1905, by the choice of the economic boycott of foreign goods as the method of struggle against the partition of Bengal. The aims of the bourgeoisie were defined during this period as the attainment of "colonial self-government within the Empire" as junior partners of the imperialists. They abandoned the struggle and adopted a policy of co-operation with the British after the grant of the Morley-Minto reforms, their own aims being satisfied for the moment.

The last years following the first World War, and the years which immediately followed it, were marked by the development, for the first time since 1857, of a mass struggle on a national scale against imperialism based on the discontent and unrest of the peasantry and the working class. This discontent was especially marked in Bombay, where the wave of working-class strikes was on a scale

hitherto unknown in India, and reached its highest point in 1920 for which year the number of strikes reached the gigantic total of 1½ millions. The Montague-Chemsford reforms were designed to meet this rising threat by buying off the bourgeois leadership, and they succeeded to an extent, that section of the bourgeoisie who wanted whole-hearted co-operation with the government seceding from the Congress to form the Liberal Federation (1918). But the growth of the mass movement compelled the Congress bourgeoisie either to enter the struggle or be isolated from the masses. Launching under its own banner the passive resistance movement, and later the mass civil disobedience movement of 1921-22, the Congress entered the struggle but only to betray it from the inside.

The mass movement which, despite its timed and unwilling leadership, had attained the undeniable character of a mass revolt against the British Raj, was abruptly called off when at its height by the bourgeois leader Gandhi, and a period of demoralisation followed for the masses. The reactionary and treacherous character of the bourgeois leadership was shown clearly in the Bardoli Resolution of 1922, which condemned the no-tax campaign of the peasantry and insisted on the continuation of rent payment to the landlords, assuring the zamindars (landlords) that the Congress "had no intention of attacking their legal rights." The bourgeoisie thus demonstrated its reactionary attitude toward the land question in which lies the main driving force to revolution in India.

With the worsening conditions of the late 20's, the mass struggle developed again at a rising tempo, and was again led to defeat by the Congress (1930-34). The aims of the new struggle were limited by Gandhi beforehand to the celebrated 11 points which represented exclusively the most urgent demands of the Indian bourgeoisie. Nevertheless the movement developed in 1930 far beyond the limits laid down for it by the Congress, with rising strikes, powerful mass demonstrations, the Chittagong Armoury raid, and the risings at Peshawar and Sholapur. Gandhi declared openly to the Viceroy that he was fighting as much against the rising forms of revolt as against the British imperialists. The aim of the bourgeoisie was henceforward to secure concessions from imperialism at the price of betraying the mass struggle in which they saw a real and growing threat to themselves. The Gandhi-Irwin settlement was a settlement against the mass movement, and paved the way for a terrific repression which fell on the movement during its ebb in 1932-34.

Since 1934 Gandhi and the leaders of the Congress have had as their chief aim that of preventing the renewal of a mass struggle against imperialism, while using their leadership of the national movement as a lever to secure the concessions they hope to obtain from imperialism. They see in the rising forces of revolt, and especially in the emergence

of the working class as a political force, a threat to their own bases of exploitation, and are consequently following an increasingly reactionary policy. Reorganising the party administration so as to secure to the big bourgeoisie the unassailable position of leadership (1934), they transferred the centre of activities to the parliamentary field and to working the new Constitution in such a way as to secure the maximum benefits to the bourgeoisie, until the intransigence of the British parliament and the Indian government in the war situation and the withdrawal of many of the political concessions of provincial autonomy again forced the Congress into opposition (1939). The Congress bourgeoisie then engaged in a restricted campaign of individual "non-violent" civil disobedience with narrowly defined bourgeois aims, and under the dictatorial control of Gandhi himself. By this move they hoped to prevent the development of a serious mass struggle against imperialism, the leadership of which will be bound to pass into other hands.

The main instrument whereby the Indian bourgeoisie seeks to maintain control over the national movement is the Indian National Congress, the classic party of the Indian capitalist class, seeking as it does the support of the petty bourgeoisie and if possible of the workers, for its own aims. Despite the fact that under these conditions revolutionary and semi-revolutionary elements still remain within the fold of the Congress, despite its mass membership (five millions in 1939), and despite the demagogic programmatic pronouncements (Constituent Assembly, Agrarian Reform) which the Congress has repeatedly made, the direction of its policy remains exclusively in the hands of the bourgeoisie as also the control of the party organisation, as was dramatically proved at Tripuri and after. The Indian National Congress in its social composition, its organisation, and above all in its political leadership can be compared to the Kuomintang, which led the Chinese revolution of 1925-27 to its betrayal and defeat.

The characterisation of the Indian National Congress as a multi-class party, as the "National United Front," or as "a platform rather than a party," is a flagrant deception and calculated only to hand over to the bourgeoisie in advance the leadership of the coming struggle, and so make its betrayal and defeat a foregone conclusion.

The more open reactionary interests of the Indian bourgeoisie find expression in many organisations which exist side by side with the Congress. Thus the Liberal Federation (1918) represents those bourgeois elements who co-operate openly with the imperialists. The sectional interests of the propertied classes are represented by various communal organisations, notably the Moslem League (1905) and the Hindu Maha Sabaha (1925) which are dominated by large landlords and bourgeois interests and pursue a reactionary policy in all social and economic issues, deriving a measure of mass support by an appeal to the religious and communal sentiments of the backward masses.

THE PETTY-BOURGEOIS INTELLIGENTSIA

Because of their position of dependence on the capitalist class, and in the absence of a real challenge to their leadership from the proletariat, the various elements of the urban petty bourgeoisie and of the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia have always played a satellite role to the bourgeoisie. The radicalisation of the petty bourgeoisie under imperialism found its first and strongest expression in the prolonged terrorist movement in Bengal and elsewhere, the failure of which, despite the heroism of its protagonists, demonstrated finally the utter inability of the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia to find an independent solution of its own problems.

Today the urban petty bourgeoisie find its political reflection mainly in the various organisations within the fold of, or under the influence of the Indian National Congress, such as the Forward Bloc, the Congress Socialist Party, the Radical Democratic Party of M. N. Roy, etc.

Within the Congress, the petty-bourgeois leaders have repeatedly lent themselves to be used by the bourgeoisie as a defensive colouration before the masses, bridging with their radical phrases and irresponsible demagogy the gap between the reactionary Congress leadership and the hopes and aspirations of the masses. Thus the demagogy of Bose and Nehru, as well as the "socialist" phrases of M. N. Roy and the Congress Socialist Party, to say nothing of the "Marxism" of the National United Fronters of the Communist Party of India, have in turn served the Gandhian leaders as a smoke screen for their own reactionary manoeuvres.

The humiliating capitulation of the Congress Socialist Party to the Congress leadership, the conversion of M. N. Roy and his Radical Democrats to imperialist war-mongering, and the departure of Subhas Chandra Bose from the Indian scene, are symptoms of the diminishing political role of the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia, which however theatrically it may posture before the masses in normal times, exposes in times of growing crisis its political bankruptcy, and exists only to be utilised by the bourgeoisie in its deception of the masses.

THE PEASANTRY

The peasantry comprises the vast majority of the Indian population (70 per cent). The stagnation and deterioration of agriculture, the increasing land hunger, the exactions of the government, the extension of parasitic landlordism, the increasing load of rural debt, and the consequent expropriation of the cultivators, are together inevitably driving the peasantry on to the revolutionary road. Peasant unrest, leading frequently to actual risings (Santhal Rebellion of 1855, Deccan Riots of 1875), have been a recurring motif in Indian history. In the last two decades, and especially since the world economic crisis (1929), the peasant

movement has been on the rise, and has taken on a more and more radical character.

It is precisely the depth and scope of the agrarian crisis that places the revolution against imperialism on the order of the day, contributing to it the driving force and the sweep which are necessary to accomplish the overthrow of the ruling power. Nevertheless the agrarian revolution requires the leadership of another class to raise the struggle to the level of a national revolution. The isolation and the scattered character of the peasant economy, the historical and political backwardness of the rural masses, the lack of inner cohesion within the peasantry, and the conflicting aims of its various strata, all combine to make it impossible for the peasantry to play an independent role in the coming revolution.

The invasion of moneyed interests has sharply accelerated the disintegrating tendencies within the peasantry. The creation of a vast army of landless peasants, share-croppers and wage-labourers on the land has immensely complicated the agrarian problem, and rendered necessary revolutionary measures of the most far-reaching character. The basic antagonism between landlord and peasant has not been reduced by the entry of finance capital into agriculture, since this did not bring with it any change for the better in farming methods or in the system of land tenure. On the contrary, the landlord-peasant antagonism has been given a sharper emphasis by the extension of parasitic claims on the land, and the overthrow of landlordism by the transference of the land to the cultivator remains the primary task of the agrarian revolution. Nevertheless, this basic antagonism has been supplemented by a new one, which is reflected in the growth of an agricultural proletariat in the strict sense of the word. Beside this, the invasion of finance capital has made the problems of mortgage and of rural debt more pressing in some parts of India than in others, and these facts taken together will probably give to the agrarian revolution, at least in some areas, an anti-capitalist character at a very early stage.

LEADERSHIP OF THE PEASANTRY

The leadership of the revolution, which the peasantry cannot provide for itself, can come only from an urban class. But the Indian bourgeoisie cannot possibly provide this leadership, since in the first place it is itself reactionary through and through on the land question, sharing as it does so largely in the parasitic exploitation of the peasantry. Above all, the bourgeoisie, on account of its inherent weakness and its dependence on imperialism, is destined to play a counter-revolutionary role in the coming struggle for power.

The leadership of the peasantry in the petty-bourgeois democratic agrarian revolution that is immediately posed can therefore come only from the industrial proletariat,

and an alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry is a fundamental prerequisite of the Indian revolution. This alliance cannot be conceived in the form of a "workers' and peasants' party" or of a "democratic dictatorship" in the revolution. The revolutionary alliance between the proletariat and peasantry can mean only proletarian leadership of the peasant struggle and, in case of revolutionary victory, the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship with the support of the peasantry.

THE PEASANT MOVEMENT

The growth of the peasant movement in recent times has led to the formation of various mass organisations among the peasantry, among which the most important are the Kisan Sanghs (Peasant Committees) which are loosely linked up in a district, provincial, and finally on an all-India scale in the All-India Kisan Sabha, whose membership in 1939 was 800,000. These associations, whose precise character varies from district to district, are in general today under the control and influence of petty-bourgeois intelligentsia elements who, as pointed out before, cannot follow a class policy independent of the bourgeois, although the growing mass pressure upon them is reflected in the more sharply radical demands they are forced to put forward. There is no means of deciding in advance the exact role of the Kisan Sanghs in the coming revolution. This will be determined by the correlation of forces within them, which in turn will depend largely on the consciousness and militancy of the lower layers of the peasantry and the measure of control they exercise in the Kisan Sanghs. But it can be stated beforehand, on the basis of the experience of the Russian and Chinese revolutions, that the existence of Kisan Sanghs on however wide a scale does not offer a substitute for the separate organisations of poor peasants and agricultural labourers in rural Soviets, under the leadership of the urban working class. Only the Soviets can assure that the agrarian revolution will be carried out in a thorough-going manner.

THE WORKING CLASS

The industrial proletariat is the product of modern capitalism in India. Its rapid growth in the period since 1914 can be illustrated by a comparison of the Factory Acts Statistics for 1914 and 1936:

	No. of Factories	No. of workers employed
1914	2,936	950,973
1936	9,329	1,652,147

The numerical strength of the industrial proletariat can be estimated at five millions, distributed mainly as follows (1935 figures):

(a) Workers in power driven factories (including those of the Native States)	1,855,000
(b) Miners	371,000
(c) Railwaymen	636,000
(d) Transport workers	361,000
(e) Plantation workers	1,000,000

The Indian working class is chiefly employed in light industry (cotton, jute, etc.) but also to some extent in the iron, steel, cement, and coal mining industries. The degree of concentration in industrial establishments is relatively high, owing to the recency of industrial development and the typically modern character of many of the new enterprises. The proletariat holds a position in Indian society which cannot be gauged by its actual size; the true gauge is the vital place it occupies in the economy of the country.

The wage rates of the Indian proletariat are among the lowest, the living conditions the most miserable, the hours of work the longest, the factory conditions the worst, the death rate the highest in the civilised world. The fight to remedy these intolerable conditions and to protect themselves against the steadily worsening conditions of exploitation bring the workers directly to the revolutionary struggle against imperialism and the capitalist system, the destruction of which is necessary for their emancipation.

WORKING CLASS STRUGGLES

The record of proletarian struggle in India dates back to the last century; but the movement took on an organised character only in the post-war period. The first great wave of strikes (1918-21) signalled the emergence of the Indian working class as a separate force, and gave to the national political movement during this period a truly revolutionary significance for the first time in its history. In 1920, on the crest of this strike wave, the Indian Trade Union Congress was formed. The second great strike wave of the late twenties, especially in Bombay, showed an immense advance in the working-class movement, marked by its growing awakening to communist ideas. The increasing millions of the workers and the growing influence of the Communists caused the trade union movement to be split in two by those leaders who sought the path of collaboration with the bourgeoisie. Thus the reactionary Trade Union Federation was formed in 1929. The policy of the reactionary labour leaders was facilitated by the disastrous "Red Trade Union" policy followed by the Communist Party of India on orders from the Comintern bureaucracy. With the arrest of the Communist leaders on a trumped-up charge (the Meecham Conspiracy case) and the further splitting of the Trade Union Congress in 1931, the wave of working-class struggle subsided once more. It was in this period (1930-31) that the Communist Party of India, which commanded the confidence of the awakening workers,

made the grievous political mistake of standing aside from the mass movement which was again assuming revolutionary proportions.

The tendency towards economic recovery commencing in 1936, combined with the mass activities in connection with the election campaign of the Congress led to a revival in the mass movement which entered once again on a period of rise. The Congress Ministries saw a resurgence of the working-class strike movement with the Bengal jute strike (1937) and the Cawnpore textile strike (1938), a resurgence which was arrested only by measures of increased repression introduced by the government since the outbreak of war; but not before the Indian working class had clearly demonstrated its attitude towards the imperialist war, particularly by the mass political anti-war strike in Bombay of 80,000 workers.

LEFT GROUPS

The Communist Party of India, which alone in the last two decades could have afforded the Marxist leadership that above all things is needed, made instead a series of irresponsible mistakes, which find their expression in bureaucratically-conceived policies of the Comintern. In conformity with its false central programmatic aim, the "democratic-dictatorship" of the proletariat and the peasantry, the C.P.I. fostered the growth of workers' and peasants' parties from 1926 to 1928, at the expense of an independent working-class party. This policy was shelved in 1929 to make way for an ultra-left sectarian policy (in the celebrated Third Period days of the Comintern), the signal expression of which came in the splitting of the trade union movement by the formation of "Red Trade Unions." This sectarian policy of the C.P.I. led to its isolation from the mass struggle of 1930-31, and made the bourgeois betrayal of the struggle so much the easier. In the period of ebb which followed (1934) the C.P.I. was illegalised and has remained so since. From 1935 onwards, the C.P.I. (again at the behest of the Comintern now openly and flagrantly the tool of the Soviet bureaucracy), reversed its policy once more and held out the hand of collaboration to the bourgeoisie through the policy of the National United Front which credited the bourgeoisie with a revolutionary role. The C.P.I. was transformed into a loyal opposition within the Congress, having no policy independent of that organisation, a state of things which continues today.

Mechanically echoing every new slogan advanced by the Comintern to suit the changing policies of the Soviet bureaucrats, the C.P.I. has shown its reactionary character by its attitude towards the imperialist war. With its false theory of national united front, the C.P.I. is making ready to repeat its betrayal of the Chinese revolution by handing over the leadership of the revolutionary struggle to the

treacherous bourgeoisie. The Communist Party of India, because of the prestige it seeks to obtain from the Russian revolution, and the Soviet Union, is today the most dangerous influence within the working class of India.

Openly preaching collaboration with the bourgeoisie, and today with the British imperialists at war, is the party of M. N. Roy. With a narrowing base within the working class, Roy has turned for a following to the labour bureaucrats supporting the war, and to the bourgeoisie itself.

The Congress Socialist Party (1934) has from the beginning followed a policy of utter subservience to the Congress bourgeoisie, and remains today completely without a base within the working class. Surrendering its claim to an independent existence, the C.S.P. has been split wide open by the Communists who worked inside it, and is today an empty shell devoid of political substance.

To the left of the Communist Party, disgusted with its bureaucratic leaders and its reactionary policies, there exists a number of small parties and groups, occupying more or less centrist positions. Such are the Bengal Labour Party (Bolshevik Party of India), the Red Flag Communist (Communist Party) led by S. N. Tagore, etc. Without a clear-cut revolutionary policy and without making a decisive break organisationally and politically with the Comintern, these parties and groups are unable to offer the working class the independent leadership it requires. Nevertheless these groups and parties contain many tried fighters and able Marxist theoreticians, who would be invaluable in a revolutionary working-class party.

This party can be only the Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India, the party of the Fourth International in India, which alone with its revolutionary strategy based on the accumulated experience of history and the theory of permanent revolution in particular, can lead the working class of India to revolutionary victory. This party has still to be built on an all-India scale, though many groups exist already whose fusion in the Formation Committee of the Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India has provided the nucleus for its formation.

Despite its subjective weakness in organisation and consciousness, inevitable in a backward country and in the conditions of repression which surround it, the working class is entirely capable of leading the Indian revolution. It is the only class objectively fitted for this role, not only in relation to the Indian situation but in view of the decline of capitalism on a world scale, which opens the road to the international proletarian revolution.

THE PERMANENT REVOLUTION

India faces a historically belated bourgeois-democratic revolution, the main tasks of which are the overthrow of British imperialism, the liquidation of a semi-feudal land system, and the clearing away of feudal remnants in the

form of the Indian Native States. But although bourgeois-democratic revolutions occurring in the advanced capitalist countries in previous centuries found leadership in the then rising bourgeoisie, the Indian bourgeoisie appearing on the scene only after the progressive role of the bourgeoisie in the world as a whole has been exhausted, is incapable of providing leadership to the revolution that is unfolding in India.

Connected with and dependent on British capital from the beginning, the Indian bourgeoisie today displays the characteristics of a predominantly comprador bourgeoisie, enjoying at the best the position of a very junior partner in the firm British Imperialism & Co. Hence, while they have been prepared to place themselves through the Indian National Congress at the head of the anti-imperialist mass movement for the purpose of utilising it as a bargaining weapon to secure concessions from the imperialists, the bourgeois leaders have restricted the scope of the movement and prevented its development into a revolutionary assault on imperialism. Incapable from the very nature of their position of embarking on a revolutionary struggle to secure their independence, and fearful of such a struggle, the bourgeois leaders have maintained their control over the mass movement only to betray it at every critical juncture.

Secondly, unlike the once revolutionary bourgeoisie of former times which arose in opposition to the feudal land-owning class and in constant struggle against it, the Indian bourgeoisie has developed largely from the landowning class itself, and is in addition closely connected with the landlords through mortgages. They are therefore incapable of leading the peasants in the agrarian revolution against landlordism. On the contrary, as is clearly demonstrated by the declared policy and actions of the Congress both during the Civil Disobedience movements and in the period of the Congress Ministries, they are staunch supporters of zamindari interests.

Finally, unlike the bourgeois-democratic revolutions of former times, the revolution in India is unfolding at a time when large concentrations of workers already exist in the country. The industrial proletariat numbering five millions occupies a position of strategic importance in the economy of the country which cannot be measured by its mere numerical strength. It is important to remember, moreover, that a hitherto uncalculated but indubitably very high proportion of these workers are employed in large concerns employing several hundreds of thousands of workers. The high degree of concentration of the Indian proletariat immeasurably advances its class consciousness and organisational strength. It was only in the post-war years that the Indian working class emerged as an organised force on a national scale. But the militant and widespread strike waves of 1918-21 and of 1928-29, which were the precursors of the mass Civil Disobedience movements of 1930-21 and

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