

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT IN INDIA

(Conclusion)

WORK IN THE TRADE UNIONS.

The activity of the working masses is shown at the present time in the development of the strike movement, and the spontaneous growth of the opposition in the reformist trade unions led by the Joshi-Giri-Shiva Rao group.

The "left" national reformists, especially the group of Kandalkar-V. N. Joshi and Co., are trying, partly using mass forms of struggle, to get at the head of strikes and the growing opposition. In a number of places (Bombay, etc.) they have had some success.

The struggle of the Communists for the masses always and in all conditions presupposes an energetic *every day* participation in the economic struggle of the working masses, in the organisation of mass trade unions, factory committees, and not only participation, but especially the preparation and organisation of the struggles of the working class.

This in turn presupposes the *initiative* of Communists in the organisation of the economic struggle of the working masses, and every-day work among the rank and file. It presupposes the participation of Communists in all the actions of the workers also in places where they take place under the leadership of the national reformists.

In the sphere of the trade union movement is repeated the same mistake, on the whole, which the Communists made in respect to the anti-imperialist movement. The mistake consists in the fact that the Indian Communists consider the treacherous leaders of the reformist, and national-reformist trade unions, and the rank and file workers who follow them, equivalent. The Communists forget that the task is to win over these working masses to the side of Communism.

For many workers, entering a trade union is the first step in their class development. On

entering a trade union, a worker puts forward the task of defending his everyday elementary interests. The trade union is a wide organisation of the proletariat which accepts not only the advanced workers but also the backward strata of the proletariat. Therefore the trade union is an important connecting belt to the broad masses of the proletariat.

The task of Communists consists in participating in all trade unions (including the reformist unions), by their everyday work winning the confidence of the working masses, raising their class-consciousness and carrying them with us, isolating and exposing the reformist leaders. The Indian Communists must realise this.

Many Indian Communists identify the trade unions and the political parties. This, to some extent, is explained by the history of the labour movement in India. The first mass Red trade union in India—the Bombay Girni Kamgar—was formed before the rise of the political party of the working class. In the course of events it stood at the head of the political actions of the Bombay workers in 1928-1930. As the result, it happened that the splits in the labour movement were transferred to the trade unions mechanically. The Communists forgot the distinction between party and trade union, and therefore succumbed to the provocation of the national reformists with exceptional ease, who successfully carried on the policy of splitting in the trade union movement (Bombay, Calcutta). The national reformists, taking advantage of the mistaken position of the Communists, were able to split the trade unions, and the Congress of trade unions in Calcutta, hiding behind phrases on unity.

The task of the Communists was, and is, to hinder the policy of splits carried on by the reformists and national-reformists, establishing a united front also with the lower organisation of the reformist trade unions, to be always and everywhere with the workers, fighting for the carrying out of the unity of the workers' ranks and exposing the reformist, splitting, anti-worker policy of the national-reformists. This is the duty of the Communist Party, but the Indian Communists have not yet learned this.

The practice of the trade union movement and the strike struggle shows a number of serious shortcomings in the work of the Indian Communists, shortcomings which are also explained by the relics of the past. In previous years, strikes usually arose spontaneously. After the beginning of a strike, the reformists usually appeared—lawyers, intellectuals without any definite profession, young business men from the National Congress, etc., assuming the pose of defenders of

the "poor workers," acting as lawyers and intermediaries and taking upon themselves the task of negotiating with the employers. By disorganising the workers' ranks, they hindered the formation of mass trade unions in every way. These "leaders" of the workers took the line of forming trade unions for the *leaders*, occupying leading posts in several unions at once (presidents, secretaries, etc.).

These traditions were seized on by the national-reformists. But these traditions were partially absorbed also by the revolutionary trade union movement, aiding the separation into leaders—and the patronised masses, disbelief in the forces of the proletariat, and failure to understand the mass trade union movement.

Such traditions of "representation" were also fostered by the fact that those who arrived on the scene first, after the beginning of a strike usually became the leaders, beyond all competition, so to say. The others did not interfere. These traditions have not yet been completely uprooted in the revolutionary trade union movement. This is partly explained by the fact that the revolutionary wing up to the present has not begun an energetic struggle for those workers who follow the reformists. Recently in Bombay, for example, there has been a series of big strikes, and the Communists have remained on one side. By this manoeuvre the Communists have isolated themselves from the mass open meetings of the workers organised by the reformists, instead of developing their agitation among the workers on the spot.

All this only assists the national-reformists to strengthen their influence and to split the ranks of the proletariat, hiding behind phrases on "unity."

However, it is precisely at the present time, when the opposition in the reformist trade unions is growing, when the strike wave is rising, when the strivings towards mass organisation are extending, and the workers are leaving the National Congress, that the task of the Communists is to develop the tactic of the united front in the most determined manner, rallying the working class ranks, carrying on joint actions and forming the organs of the united front from below. Hence follows the obligatory task of energetically participating in all strikes, and in those reformist trade unions which lead masses of workers. In India, the majority of the proletariat is not organised, mass trade unions are few, and unions of the leaders are many. Therefore the task is different in every case. Therefore it is necessary to take the concrete circumstances into account on each occasion. It should be considered a serious mistake that in those places where there are mass national-reformist and reformist trade

unions, the Communists have taken the line of self-isolation from work in these unions.

The exposure of the national-reformist leaders presupposes the most energetic everyday work among the rank and file, among the working masses, especially in the factories, who follow the reformists.

The same should be done with still greater insistence and stubbornness during strikes led by the reformists. The tactics of passivity and isolation from such strikes would be criminal shortsightedness, which plays into the hands of the bourgeoisie and imperialism. The open letter of the three Communist Parties raises all these questions sharply, simultaneously stressing the task of forming mass Red trade unions, factory committees and the promotion of worker functionaries.

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The attitude of the Communist groups towards the mass anti-imperialist movement, and mass national-reformist trade unions shows a serious danger which exists in the Communist movement. This is the danger of sectarian self-isolation, conversion into small propagandist groups, without vitality, isolated from the masses, incapable of rousing and leading the working masses to the struggle for their liberation. The danger is that the correct policy of forming an independent Communist Party, the conversion of the proletariat into an independent class force, raising and solving every question from the point of view of the interests of the struggle for socialism, will be *contrasted* (by some Indian Communists) to the task of the struggle for the masses, the struggle for the rallying of its allies (the peasants, the poor of the towns), the struggle for the liberation of the petty-bourgeoisie of the towns and villages from the influence of the bourgeoisie, the attraction of all revolutionary democratic elements to the struggle against the enemies of the people. Hence, in such circumstances, we find such mistakes as the identification of the leaders of the National Congress and the masses who follow them, neglecting the work in the reformist trade unions, the split at Calcutta, self-isolation from strikes led by the national-reformists, repudiation of relations with the revolutionary students, etc.

A danger of the opposite kind is the fact that some Communists, acting against sectarian mistakes, sometimes slip into a position which, in practice, leads to a denial, a smoothing over of the struggle for the separation of the working class as a separate force, the undermining of the struggle for the hegemony of the proletariat in the movement of the people as a whole. Such a right opportunist position leads to the softening down of the criticism and the exposure of "left" national reformism, a glossing over of the class

character of the National Congress, an under-estimation of the growth of the class-consciousness of the proletariat and the strength of the workers' activists, etc.

And, moreover, only by fighting against these two mistaken positions is it possible to achieve the formation of a mass Communist Party and expose the "left" national-reformists, including the group of Roy.

The Roy group is trying to utilise separate mistakes of the Communists so that, while slanderously accusing the Comintern of "ultra radicalism," it can hinder the formation of a Communist Party, keep the working class in the position of an appendage of the reformist, treacherous Indian bourgeoisie, and disorganise the revolutionary struggle of the toiling masses for independence, land and bread.

THE RELATIONS OF THE INDIAN COMMUNISTS TO THE PETTY BOURGEOISIE.

The practice of the last year and a half has shown that there is a great deal which is unclear and mistaken in the policy of the Indian Communists with regard to the broad strata of the petty bourgeoisie of the towns. As late as 1927, and even in 1928, there was an opinion among many of the revolutionaries that the National Congress is a petty bourgeois organisation, led by petty bourgeois leaders and following Gandhi's philosophy, which they claimed was petty bourgeois ideology. This point of view was mistaken, and the whole experience of the class struggle has clearly shown that the National Congress is a bourgeois organisation. But in 1930, when the Communists split with the national-reformists and formed themselves into an independent movement carrying on a struggle against the bourgeois National Congress, in practice, however, they acted both against the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie, regarding them as identical. This was a gross mistake.

Hence followed the position, according to which, in practice, no distinction was made between the bourgeois leaders of the National Congress and the rank and file followers who were deceived by it (students, small handicraftsmen, the poor, the workers, etc.), and the task of liberating the revolutionary elements of the petty bourgeois who were prepared to fight against British imperialism from the influence of the bourgeoisie was not raised. The task of forming a common front of the toiling masses (including the poor of the towns) under the hegemony of the proletariat for a struggle for "independence, land and bread" was not raised.

The Communist Parties of China, Great Britain and Germany, in their open letter to the Indian Communists, opposed a series of mistaken views,

such as : (1) the statement that in 1930 the working class followed the petty bourgeoisie, a statement which, in practice, glosses over the bourgeois character of the National Congress and the struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie for the leadership of the masses of the people ; (2) the underestimation of "left" national-reformism and the replacement of an exposure of its policy and manoeuvres by a struggle against individual persons ; (3) the mistaken proposal to fuse the C.P. with the revolutionary petty-bourgeois parties, etc. ; simultaneously the letter correctly points out, in connection with the position of the revolutionary wing to the trade union Congress split in Calcutta that :—

"It is also necessary to distinguish the revolutionary patriotism of the toiling masses who are suffering from national oppression, from the treacherous counter-revolutionary pseudo-patriotism of the bourgeoisie. We must learn to prove that the section of the trade union congress which followed Bose, Kandalkar, Roy and Co., is carrying on a struggle against the real patriotism of the revolutionary people. Anyone who separates the class interests of the proletariat from the struggle for independence *in practice* drives the toiling masses and the revolutionary strata of the petty-bourgeoisie into the embraces of the National Congress and its "left" wing, strengthens the position of the bourgeoisie, instead of leading the toiling masses with him and fighting for the hegemony of the proletariat."

A number of factors show that many Indian Communists have not realised this. The C.P. of India correctly pointed out the difference *in principle* between the Communist Party and all the revolutionary petty-bourgeois groups, including the terrorist groups. But is it right to class these groups which carry on a struggle against imperialism, in any case, as being equivalent to the reformist treacherous bourgeois National Congress? No, it is not correct. However, a leaflet of the Calcutta committee of the Communist Party says :—

"The Parties of struggle and revolvers are also the parties of the parasites. These parties (Hindustani, the Socialist Party, Samayaraj) have strengthened owing to the secret help of the native parasite classes, and carry out their orders. They do not fight for the liberation of the workers and peasants from exploitation."

An ideological struggle against the terrorists, criticism of their programme, explanation of their class essence (some terrorist groups consist of representatives of small ruined landlords, etc.), which Communists must *always* carry on, will only be successful when the Communists take into consideration the distinction between these groups

and the bourgeois National Congress, and set themselves the task of isolating the bourgeoisie, and winning all the revolutionary elements who are prepared to struggle against imperialism to the side of the Communist Party.

The Indian Socialist Revolutionary Party which is one of the organisations of the revolutionary youth, in its first circular advocates the mass revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and puts forward the following immediate tasks in its work :—

"(1) To carry on propaganda for the basic demands of the masses, to commence with the explanation of the 20 points of the Karachi programme (i.e., the National Congress) and to explain the correctness of the present movement for non-payment of taxes and rent . . . The connection between the present poverty-stricken situation of the peasants and the present social order. The formation of a free society by means of the mass revolution . . . The explanation of how to destroy the present government and how to form free society after the mass revolution.

"(2) To discuss the uselessness of the policy of the National Congress.

"(3) The formation of revolutionary centres among the workers and peasants.

"(4) To prove the necessity of the mass revolution."

This programme of a revolutionary organisation, which is struggling against the National Congress, but which is still entangled in the question of "fundamental rights" adopted at the congress, not only raises the question of revolution, but advocates the agrarian revolution. Here the revolutionary intelligentsia already reflect the interests of the peasants. Groups such as the socialist revolutionary party are being born in various parts of the country. The elements of such groups exist among the members of the leagues of youth, Naujavan, Bharat, Sabha, etc. The Communist Party must take them into account. And therefore *unwillingness* to work among the revolutionary strata of the petty bourgeoisie, and the identification of the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie not only weakens the struggle against imperialism for independence, but *assists* the bourgeoisie to preserve their positions and bring disorganisation into the ranks of the toiling masses. Moreover, the *isolation* of national reformism is an obligatory strategic task, signifying a powerful development of the national revolution. Therefore we must even now carry on energetic work among the petty bourgeoisie. This is confirmed even by the small experience of the Indian Communists.

A document of the Bombay Party organisation (June, 1930) states :—

The May-Day strike at Calcutta showed that it is possible, not only to bring out the real working masses to a strike under our slogans, but also to draw part of the petty bourgeoisie with them in connection with the struggle for independence."

The same was shown by the experience of the movement of protest against the shooting of the dockers in Calcutta (1930). The meeting at which the student youth participated was organised by the proletarian revolutionists and took place under their slogans (including the slogan of the general strike, refusal to pay rent and taxes in the zemindar districts, etc.). Examples of such individual actions can be found in other districts. In spite of the mistakes, errors, etc., such actions show that with a correct conducting of the anti-imperialist struggle, if the political initiative is seized by us (the protest movement against the shooting of the dockers formed the beginning of a mass movement in Calcutta), fighting against counter-revolutionary Gandhism, it is possible to liberate the masses from the influence of the National Congress.

The events of recent months show that the drift of considerable strata of the petty bourgeoisie to the side of the revolutionary methods of struggle continues to grow. A leftward swing of the petty bourgeoisie is taking place. The terrorist movement is emerging from the limits of individual acts. In its spread, it is beginning to include the elements of the mass movement. And this is not surprising, because the ruin of the petty bourgeoisie is going on at an accelerated rate. The small landlords are also being ruined. The treacherous conciliatory policy of the National Congress is leading to greater and greater discontent and disillusionment. The growth of discontent of the masses of the people and the weakening of the influence of the appeals for non-violence has found expression in the fact that the Roy group has been compelled to state that it conceives of the establishing of a Constituent Assembly by a revolt. In expressing its sympathy for a revolutionary revolt now, the Roy group simultaneously undermines the developing peasant movement for the non-payment of taxes, breaks the preparations for the railway strike, carries on negotiations with Mehta, Giri and Co., slurs over the bourgeois class character of the National Congress and its connections with the landlord system, etc., i.e., interferes with the real preparation and mobilisation of the masses for the revolutionary revolt. Thus, by continuing in practice their treacherous work, the Roy group is *compelled* (in 1932) to say that it is in favour of a rebellion. This once more emphasises the mistaken position of those Communists who, in practice, do not understand the task of mobilising all the demo-

cratic forces for the struggle against British imperialism, a struggle which is connected with the isolation of national-reformism in all its forms.

COMMUNISTS AND THE AGRARIAN MOVEMENT.

The lagging behind of the Communist movement is also shown in the weak contacts of Communists with the agrarian movement. In some places, for example in some districts of the Punjab and Bengal, the Communists are connected with the agrarian movement through the peasant organisations. In the other parts of the country the activity of the Communist Party has not progressed further than propagandist work (and that chiefly among the town workers). The Communist groups carry on agitation in their papers, in some towns they have held a series of demonstrations of solidarity with the peasants (in Bombay a demonstration in defence of the peasants of Burma, etc.), have issued a series of leaflets (some of them illegal), have carried on some work among the workers who are connected with the villages. The platform of action of the C.P. India has an agrarian section. For the first time the peasants have had a whole revolutionary programme put before them, representing the interests of the toiling peasants. The wide distribution of this programme, and the mobilisation of the broad masses around it, is a most important task.

However, the immediate task which is the key link in respect to the development of the revolution and the growth of Communism and the weakening of national reformism is a mass movement for "non-payment of rent, debts, taxes." The movement for non-payment has at present a mass *spontaneous* character and, at the given stage, is the chief form of the peasant movement. The movement for non-payment has swept over the head of the National Congress. The leaders of the National Congress, who in 1931 played with the slogan of non-payment, have now, when the movement has become a fact, abandoned it and are beginning to sabotage it and hinder it. In the question of the mass Indian movement for the non-payment, the interests of the bourgeois National Congress, connected with the landlord system, and the interests of the peasants widely diverge. Thus the mass Indian movement for non-payment will *assist* in the exposure of the National Congress, the growth of class differentiations and the liberation of the peasants from the influence of the nationalist bourgeoisie. The nation-wide movement for non-payment means a tremendous strengthening of the revolutionary struggle of the toiling masses of India against British imperialism. The Indian bourgeoisie and the imperialists well understand this. Against it they now concentrate their main blow.

In the near future the Communists are faced with two tasks: One is to take part in the spontaneous movement for non-payment and take the line of converting it into an all-Indian movement, forming peasant committees, etc., in general following the instructions of the platform of action of the C.P. India. The second is to call together, mobilise and utilise all the revolutionary democratic elements for the development of the non-payment movement. Practice shows that among the members of the youth leagues, among the rank and file supporters of the National Congress, among the members of the trade unions who follow the National reformists, etc., there are many people capable and prepared, not only to support, but to take an energetic part in the organisation of the non-payment movement.

The attraction of these elements is an *obligatory* task. It is also connected with the fact that the agrarian and anti-imperialist streams of the movement are beginning to join, and in the conditions of deepening crisis, the discontent of the toiling masses, the revolutionary hate, and the struggle against the existing order, and national oppression are developing and will develop ever wider. The Communist Party, taking part in the movement for non-payment and organising it, sending organisers, utilising workers connected with the villages, attracting the revolutionary democratic elements and launching proper slogans, will not only be able comparatively rapidly to grow into a big force, but also to start in practice to win the leadership of the movement of all the people. The Communist Party is beginning by the concrete experience of the struggle of the peasant masses to isolate the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois National Congress, and, liberating the peasants from the influence of national reformism, will be able to energetically put forward the preparations for the anti-imperialist and agrarian revolutions in India.

PROBLEMS OF CONSTRUCTION IN INDIA.

The open letter of the Communist Parties of China, Great Britain and Germany analyses in detail the chief shortcomings and the immediate organisational tasks of the Indian Communist movement.

The structure of the Communist Party has not yet emerged from the stage of single isolated local Communist groups and organisations with little contact with the working masses. There are such facts as the existence in some towns of several Communist groups or groups counting themselves Communist, not connected with each other, issuing their own papers, etc.

However, the tremendous upsurge of the mass movement, the degree of class differentiation, the experience and the present stage of development of

the Communist movement sharply raise as an *immediate* task the necessity of a struggle to unite all Communist groups and *found a united* All-Indian Communist Party.

It is also a struggle for the Party to develop initiative from below, to strengthen the local organisations, to build up local organisations, calling on the class-conscious workers to gather the revolutionary workers in their factories into trade union groups, without waiting for an organiser to come from outside. At present in India the struggle for the Party is not only the work of a small number of existing groups, but of all thinking class-conscious workers and revolutionary intellectuals who stand on the platform of the Communist programme, and who are ready to struggle for independence, and the interests of the working class and the peasants.

In direct connection with this is the elimination of the provincialism which exists among the Communist groups, the habit of being engrossed in local tasks, of contrasting local tasks to all-Indian tasks. Such a position objectively leads to a strengthening of the position of national-reformism and the weakening of the tempo of development of the Communist Party, including agitation and organisation in the localities.

In practice it happens that in some of the chief questions of all-Indian significance—the all-Indian trade union movement and the organisation of the unorganised workers, the general strike, the struggle for the unity of the workers' ranks, the movement for non-payment of rent and taxes, the anti-imperialist struggle—the Communists lose initiative and do not take the line of winning influence, of converting the working class into the leader, the hegemony of the masses of the people. With this is connected the vacillations on the question of the slogan of the general strike, the underestimation of the degree of class-consciousness of the proletariat, the rôle of the petty bourgeoisie, the weak connections with the peasants, the unprincipled group struggle, etc.

The elimination of these mistaken views in the struggle for an all-Indian Party is the *fundamental* political question, on the rapid solving of which depends to a great extent the further course of development of the revolutionary struggle in India.

The Indian Communists must firmly realise that the struggle for the Party is a struggle for the independent proletarian class movement (and connected with this, is the struggle against national reformism in all its varieties) on the basis of a struggle for the masses. *To the masses*, exposing the national reformist leaders—*this at present is the path* to the formation of a strong Bolshevik Communist Party and the conversion of the working class into the hegemony of the toilers of India.