

**against
the
stream**

an anthology of writings of
Saumyendranath Tagore



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VOLUME I

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INTRODUCTION

This is an anthology of political writings of Saumyendranath Tagore. In recent years, Saumyendranath had become known as an outstanding authority on Rabindranath's music, songs and literature, and also on the history of Bengal Renaissance in general and on Raja Rammohun Roy in particular. It has almost been forgotten that he was also one of the pioneers of Marxian thought in India.

The writings selected in this volume deal with the application of Marxism to Indian conditions. Covering a period of over a decade beginning from the late twenties, they represent a comprehensive and critical commentary on the politics of the parties generally considered to be Marxist. Even though most of the pamphlets which are gathered together here have long been out of print, yet their interest is far from historical. Time has shown that in the perspective of the Indian revolution and its line of development as expounded by Saumyendranath lie the clue to a better understanding of the present crisis which confronts the Marxist movement in the country.

Saumyendranath repeatedly emphasized that Marxism was not merely a set of chopped-up quotations. Marxism could not be conceived of without theoretical breadth, without a critical analysis of the material basis of the political process. The weapon of Marxian investigation must be constantly sharpened and applied. Not to do so was to transform Marxism, which demanded application, initiated critical thinking and ideological courage, into a canon which demanded nothing more than ideological superficiality and theoretical slovenliness. Precisely because of these reasons, the Marxists in India have found it well beyond them to apply independently the methodology of Marx to Indian conditions.

In order to understand clearly the inner connections of the controversies mentioned by Saumyendranath in these articles and pamphlets, it would be necessary for the reader to have some idea of the broad outlines of his political development as a Marxian thinker.

Saumyendranath took up active political work under the inspiration of Gandhiji during the non-cooperation movement in the twenties. Those were the days when there was thunder

in the political sky of India. The Great War of 1914-18 had ended, but the people had no respite from economic distresses, epidemics, food shortages, restrictions on civil liberties, which had made their lives a prolonged nightmare. During the war years, they had waited patiently, hoping that Britain would be true to her promises of granting extensive political and economic concessions to the people after the war. But the reward for the sufferings came in the form of the infamous Rowlatt Act. The smouldering discontent then exploded. At this critical turning point of India's history, there appeared a man on the scene who was capable of organising this mass discontent into an organised movement and rouse the down-trodden millions from their century-old stupor. This man was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.

Gandhiji's call for "progressive non-violent and non-cooperation as a weapon to force the British Government to grant Swarajya within one year", fired the imagination of the masses. People from all walks of life—young and old—joined the movement in thousands. The mass defiance of the British might on a scale not witnessed since 1857, convulsed the country from one end to the other. It reached its apogee in 1921, when the horizon was ablazed with the smouldering flame of peasant revolt.

As the movement was about to reach the climax and the British Government became visibly nervous, the Mahatma suddenly called off the movement, because of an outbreak of violence in Chauri Choura—a small village in U.P. The whole country was aghast at this incomprehensible decision. Though Mahatmaji's dictates were followed, disillusionment and resentment were widespread. Particularly, the younger people who had sacrificed their careers and left their homes to join the movement, were not only disillusioned but disgusted with what they thought was a betrayal, and a surrender to the British. Politically, they were in a predicament. Gandhiji's constructive programme of "charka" and communal harmony had lost its appeal. Nor could they go back to the terrorist movement which had for decades commanded their allegiance, after having witnessed the inherent strength of the wide sweep of a mass movement. Furthermore, the anaemic obstructionist parliamentarism of Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru failed singularly to inspire them and win them over. They were like a rudderless boat wandering aimlessly in a turbulent sea not knowing in what direction to advance.

Four such young men, Hemanta Kumar Sarkar, Kutubuddin Ahmad, Shamsuddin Ahmad, and the poet, Kazi Nazrul Islam, formed a small party in Calcutta in 1925, called the Labour-Swarajya Party. The objectives of the party was to achieve complete independence of India based on political, social and economic equality irrespective of caste, creed or sex. The means to achieve this objective was defined as the "use of the combined strength of unarmed mass movement."¹

Opposing both the impotent path of constitutionalism and the futile growth of terrorism, the political resolution, of the party declared: "Experience has conclusively shown that dynamic mass movement is far more powerful than bombs and pistols and our unarmed people can win freedom only through this way"²

The party began publishing a weekly paper, called "Langal" (Plough) which made its appearance on December 25, 1925. The two well-known Communist leaders of that time, Nalini Gupta and Muzaffar Ahmad who were convicted earlier in connection with the "Cawnpore Bolshevik Conspiracy Case" along with Shaukat Usmani and Shripat Dange, were released prematurely in 1925. Under instructions from M. N. Roy, they, too, joined this new party.³

Saumyendranath, who was then busy spreading the message of "charka" among the villagers and adivasis of Birbhum, came across the first issue of the new weekly on his return to Calcutta. The policy expounded by "Langal" appealed to him and he immediately wrote a letter to the editor. The very next day, Shamsuddin Ahmad, who was once a teacher at Santinekatan and knew Saumyendranath, met him at his Jorasanko house and had discussions with him. Saumyendranath enthusiastically joined the new party.

A few weeks after his joining the party, its first conference was held in Krishnanagar in 1926. The well-known novelist, Dr Naresh Sengupta, presided. At this conference, the name of the party was changed to the Workers' and Peasants' Party of Bengal. Dr Sengupta was elected president, and Hemanta Sarkar and Saumyendranath were elected sectional secretaries. Muzaffar Ahmad became the editor of the weekly paper, which

in the meantime had changed its name to Ganavani (Voice of the People).

After the reorganisation of the party, serious efforts were made to establish contacts with industrial workers. Saumyendranath and Kutubuddin visited Badartala and Bhatpara where the jute mills were then located, and contacts were established. Meetings were organised. And in co-operation with Sibnath Banerji and Kalidas Bhattacharya, the Bengal Jute Workers' Association was formed with Sibnath as secretary.

In the meantime, Hemanta Sarkar had succeeded in organising a large number of fishermen in Nadia, Goalanda and Chandpur. Through Nalini Gupta, the party was able to establish contact with members of the terrorist parties. Indeed, the party was coming out of its shell of isolation, and was beginning to feel the ground under its feet.

Saumyendranath was not only active in the trade union movement but had become closely associated with many terrorist groups with a view to winning over the younger members of these parties. He felt the terrorists were both sincere and self-sacrificing and if they could be won over to the new party then it would add substantial strength to it. In this propaganda work, he alone among the leaders of the new party could help Nalini Gupta who, because of his knowledge of bomb-making, enjoyed the confidence of the terrorist leaders. At that time, Muzaffar was not a persona grata with the terrorists because his statement to the police on the eve of the Cawanpore Bolshevik Conference Case had implicated Nalini Gupta.¹ In April, 1926, an informal meeting of the Indian Communists who were members of the then non-functioning Communist Party of India was held in Calcutta. Janaki Prasad Begerhotta who was then the secretary of the party, came to Calcutta along with Shamsuddin Hasan of Lahore in this connection. It was at this meeting that Saumyendranath was

¹ In this connection, Abdur Rezak Khan has stated : "In his statement, Mazaffar pleaded innocence and implicated Nalini Gupta fully and squarely. This statement was shown to Subhas Bose who too was in prison then, and immediately after his release he launched a blistering attack on the Communists in general and Muzaffar Ahmad in particular, characterising them as highly unreliable freedom fighters." See "Communism and Bengal's Freedom Movement"—Gautam Chattopadhyay ; page 156. Muzaffar Ahmad's statement was : "Nalini (Gupta) told me that he was CI's (Comintern) representative and... it was the intention of CI to see people's government was established in every country... I was told that CI would render advice and give monetary help in the matter"—Home/Pol/F. No. 2.1/1924.

invited to join the Communist Party which he did. At this time, George Allison, the well-known British Communist leader, arrived in Calcutta with a false passport under the name of Campbell. He became friendly with Saumyendranath, and when he was arrested on the discovery of his false passport during a police raid on the office of the Jute Workers' Association at Bhatpara, Saumyendranath stood bail for him. Allison was sentenced to two years' imprisonment and was deported at the termination of the sentence. Saumyendranath was to meet him again in Moscow and Berlin when he was in Europe.

After Allison's arrest, Fazl Elahi, an emissary of M. N. Roy, also visited Calcutta and stayed with Saumyendranath.

The Second Annual Conference of the Workers' and Peasants' Party was held in Calcutta in February, 1927. Atul Gupta, the well-known lawyer, presided and Saumyendranath was the Chairman of the Reception Committee. The famous British Communist M.P., Shapurji Saklatvala, who was then touring India, addressed the conference. A new programme of the party was adapted, and Saumyendranath was elected general secretary.

The organisational and propaganda work went apace. A peasants' conference was organised at Kusthia presided over by Atul Gupta. Strenuous efforts were also made to strengthen the various trade unions under the party's influence. At this time, a group of Anusilan party members led by Dharani Goswami and Gopen Chakravarty joined the executive committee of the party. Gopen Chakravarty was introduced by Saumyendranath to Kalidas Bhattacharya to work among the jute workers as an organiser of the Jute Workers' Association.¹ Meanwhile, Saumyendranath along with Sibnath Banerji, Muzaffar Ahmad and others organised the Kankinarah Paper Mills Labourers' Union with Saumyendranath as president.

As we have said before, Saumyendranath was assiduously trying to cultivate contacts with the terrorists and win them over. His activities in this connection brought upon him the wrath of the police. A decision was taken to arrest him and, if possible, involve him in one of the conspiracy cases. Sir Charles Tegart, the then Police Commissioner of Calcutta, however thought that it would not be politic to arrest a member of the Tagore family as it might lead to adverse publicity.

¹ See Gopen Chakravarty's statement in "Communism and Bengal's Freedom Movement" by Gautam Chattopadhyay; page 134.

In order to avoid this embarrassing situation, he sent word through Maharaja Prodyot Kumar Tagore, who was a close friend of his, that if Saumyendranath left India he would be allowed to do so. Otherwise, he would be arrested and would be involved in a serious conspiracy case. When Saumyendranath came to know of this, he discussed the problem with Nalini Gupta and Muzaffar Ahmad. It was decided that rather than spending years fruitlessly in British prison, it would be better if Saumyendranath could take advantage of the situation and leave the country to visit Soviet Russia. Accordingly, Saumyendranath applied for a passport which was sanctioned by the police with exemplary speed. Later, however, Tegart was taken to task by the Secretary of State of India for granting a passport to such an "undesirable character" as Saumyendranath and "letting him loose in Europe". With a mandate from the Peasants' and Workers' Party, Saumyendranath left for Paris en route to Moscow in April, 1927.

At the time when Saumyendranath left India, contact of the Indian Communists with the Communist International was more a myth than a reality. Truly speaking, it was a contact with M. N. Roy and his emissaries. Neither the programme of the Communist International nor its various resolutions on organisational and theoretical matters were known to the Communists in India. Ideologically they were totally unarmed. Furthermore, financial difficulties paralysed the activities of the party. In the words of Sir David Petrie, the Chief of Imperial Intelligence Bureau, the party "had not succeeded in becoming a force in the political world because it laboured under an ever-present threat of bankruptcy. The main reason for this seem to have been the inability of its office-bearers to refrain from peculation. At the end of 1926, for example, a sum of £66 was received from abroad. Of this a small portion was distributed among the few members as loan or for their private expenses while the balance was appropriated by another to finance his poultry business."¹ He added : "As already indicated, there were strong grounds for believing that money received from abroad by the Communists in Bengal was being misappropriated and in the early part of 1927, Nalini Gupta fell out with Gopen Chakravarty and Muzaffar Ahmad on this account and wrote a letter to M. N. Roy, accusing these two persons of having used for their personal needs money

sent to them, and asking Roy to correspond in future with Soumyendra Tagore.”¹ He further pointed out : “In April 1927, speculation, referred to previously was again causing dissension in the Communist camp, and a member of some importance named Halim threatened to resign from the executive committee because of questions asked by Tagore and others about money he had received some months previously. To put the finances of the party on a sounder basis was one of the motives of Tagore’s visit to Europe.”²

It would be interesting to know what the Imperial Intelligence Bureau had to say about Saumyendranath and his activities during this period. “Another member of this committee (the executive committee of the Peasants’ and Workers’ Party) was Saumyendra Nath Tagore, a grand-nephew of Rabindra Nath Tagore and a member of the Indian Communist Party. Saumyendra had been introduced to the leaders to the Anushilan Party by Jotin Mitra, and he rapidly attained considerable importance both as a revolutionary and a Communist. There is information on record to show that he was concerned in assassination plots on the revolutionary side, while, on the Bolshevik side, he was put in touch with M. N. Roy by Nalini Gupta, with whom he became very friendly. In the early part of 1927, Nalini Gupta was living with Saumyendra Tagore, and these two harboured the Bolshevik emissary, Fazl Elahi (who was subsequently arrested in Bombay) when he came to Calcutta in January. At the same time Calcutta was visited by the Communist emissary, George Allison, *alias* Donald Campbell, who met some of the principal members of the Bengal revolutionary-cum-Communist Party and discussed with them organisation and finance. In May 1927, Saumyendra Tagore left India, having obtained a passport for the United Kingdom and other countries in Europe. There was definite proof that one of the main objectives of his journey was to improve the connection between the Communist-revolutionary elements in this country and anti-British forces abroad.”³ In the “Who’s Who” prepared by Sir David Petrie which was appended to the main report on the Communist movement in the twenties, Saumyendranath was described as follows : “Tagore, Saumyendra Nath, of Calcutta. Is said to have taken

a vow of celibacy and ascetism until the freedom of India is achieved. A youth of avowed Communist sympathies, who had closely identified himself with the Labour movement in Calcutta and its environs ; also associated with many dangerous revolutionaries and is said to be a party to their plans. Associated with George Allison *alias* Donald Campbell prior to the latter's arrest. Elected Chairman of the Reception Committee of the All-Bengal Communist Conference held in Calcutta in February 1927 under the name of the Bengal Peasants' and Workers' Party. Proceeded abroad in May 1927 on a definite mission to the Comintern to obtain funds for Communist work in India and to make a practical study of the working of the Communist Party abroad and to enlighten them as to conditions in India. A zealous and dangerous Communist and revolutionary."¹

When Saumyendranath left for Europe, he did not resign from the post of general secretary of the Workers' and Peasants' Party. He took a long leave. "Muzaffar Ahmad was suggested as his successor. He, however, was considered unsuitable and Abdur Razak Khan—a leading light of the Calcutta Seamen's Union, was appointed to fill the vacancy."²

The question has been asked by some as to why Saumyendranath carried a mandate of the Workers' and Peasants' Party and not of the Communist Party. To understand the reason, it will be necessary for us to look back and see the condition of the Communist Party prior to his departure for Europe. The Communist Party of India was first formed by M. N. Roy in Tashkent on October 17, 1920. After having formed this party which Roy represented at the Comintern, he made attempts to send emissaries to contact and recruit suitable members in India in order to set up a proper central committee to guide the Communist activities.

Nalini Gupta was one of his emissaries who established contacts on his behalf with S. A. Dange, Muzaffar Ahmad and others. Up to the time of the Cawnpore Bolshevik Conspiracy Case in 1924, there were only a few Communists scattered all over the country who kept contact with M. N. Roy and functioned as members of his party.

In 1924, shortly after the Cawnpur Conspiracy Case, a man in

¹ Communism in India 1924-1927 ; page 343.

² Ibid ; page 132. Also see Gopen Chakravarty's statement in "Communism and Bengal's Freedom Movement" by Gautam Chattopadhyay; pages 135 and 136.

U.P. named Satya Bhakta had decided to organise a legal Communist Party. This party had not attracted much attention during 1924. But in December 1925, Satya Bhakta convened a Communist conference in Kanpur. This conference was attended not only by Satya Bhakta and his colleagues like Hazrat Mohani and Singaravelu Chetty, but also by those who had been maintaining contact with M. N. Roy such as Muzaffar Ahmad, C. Krishna Iyer, K. N. Joglekar, S. V. Ghate and R. S. Nimbkar and Janaki Prasad Begerhotta. At this conference, although a central committee of sorts was elected, and Begerhotta and Ghate were made joint secretaries, the committee never functioned properly because of two different ideological trends which plagued it. Satya Bhakta and his colleagues believed in "national" Communism and were against the Bolsheviks while the M. N. Roy group wanted the party to be associated with the Comintern. As a result the committee was still-born. Furthermore, with the transfer of the headquarters of the party from Bombay to Delhi where Begerhotta became virtually the secretary, the committee became almost non-existent and the party headquarters remained almost completely inactive.

With the success of the Workers' and Peasants' Party in Calcutta, M. N. Roy at this time suggested dropping of the name of the Communist Party of India and substituting that of the Workers' and Peasants' Party, which, in his opinion, should be "a veiled Communist Party."¹ Accordingly, the Communist Party of India decided at a meeting of the Executive Committee held in Delhi in March 1927, "that a formal dissolution of the Party was not necessary, and that it should be allowed to exist though remaining inactive."² It is because of this reason that when Saklatvala arrived in India in 1927, he "refused the Communist Party any kind of recognition" and supported the Workers' and Peasants' Party whose conference in Calcutta he attended. That the Communist Party of India virtually existed only in name before May, 1927, has also been admitted by Philip Spratt, the British Communist who arrived in India on December 30, 1926, and played a valuable role in reorganising the Party in 1927. He has said : "There was the CPI and Muzaffar Ahmad was a member of it, though it began to work only in 1927."³ In fact,

¹ Communism in India 1924-1927 ; pages 107 and 112.

² Ibid ; page 107.

³ Gene D. Overstreet and Marshall Windmiller, Communism in India (University of California Press, 1959); page 111.

the first most important meeting of the party was held after Saumyendranath had left India.

On May 31, 1927, at the annual session of the party held in Bombay, "the title of the 'Communist Party of India' was resuscitated contrary to Roy's advice."¹ At this conference, the constitution of the party was adopted and an 'Annual Report' was issued giving a historical survey of the formation of the party which presented a sorry tale of dissension among its leaders. This conference also elected a new Central Executive consisting of Muzaffar Ahmad, Shaukat Usmani, Dange, Ghate and Saumyendranath among others. Ghate was elected general secretary in place of Bergerhotta who broke with the party. So, at the time when Tagore left for Europe there was no Communist Party functioning in India which was recognised by the Communist International.

In order to avoid needless controversies about the validity of the mandate, Saumyendranath preferred to carry with him the mandate of the Workers' and Peasants' Party, which was then not only a functioning party, but a growing one.

Saumyendranath arrived in Paris in May and met Mohammad Ali Sipassi who represented the Eastern Bureau in Europe. He was also introduced by Sipassi to Clemens Dutt, the other member of the bureau. The most important member, M. N. Roy, was then in China. Sipassi made arrangements for Saumyendranath's visit to Moscow. On his way to Moscow, Tagore went to Berlin and stayed there for one month before his papers for travelling to Soviet Russia could be finalised. In Berlin, Saumyendranath had the opportunity of meeting the famous revolutionary, Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, and Agnes Smedly. He also took the opportunity of his stay in Berlin to read as much of Marxist classics as he could lay his hands on, because his ideological training in Marxism in India was meagre, to say the least. Finally in June, 1927, Saumyendranath arrived in Moscow.

As M. N. Roy was away, Saumyendranath met Gulam Ambia Lohani who was looking after Indian affairs at the office of the Comintern in the absence of Roy, and was in turn introduced to D. Petrovsky (alias A. G. Bennet) a Russian who was the head of the British section of the Comintern.

After a few days, Tagore was asked to meet Ossip Piatnitsky,

¹ Communism in India 1924-1927 ; page 112.

the head of the Org-Bureau of the Comintern, who had the responsibility for over-seeing the activities, of the affiliated Communist parties. During the meeting, Piatnitsky asked Tagore questions about the conditions of the Communist movement in India. When Saumyendranath told him that the actual number of Communists in India did not exceed more than a dozen, Piatnitsky was quite taken aback. He said that it seemed unbelievable as Roy had reported the existence of hundreds of Communists in India. Saumyendranath also informed Piatnitsky very little money was received in India and the growth of the Communist movement was handicapped due to lack of funds and literature. Saumyendranath's charges against M. N. Roy—that he had not sent funds to India and had misrepresented the size of the Communist party—are corroborated by the British Intelligence sources. A detailed Intelligence report prepared in 1927 records that a long list of Indian Communists fell into the hands of British agents but when it was checked by the police it was found to be entirely fictitious. The report concludes : "In short, the whole consideration of these lists serve to raise a doubt how far Roy was playing straight with Moscow, that is, whether he was dealing with them honestly, or whether he was making his living (and probably large expenses) out of them by representing that he had established in India a vastly large organisation than in reality existed."¹

As for Saumyendranath's allegation that enormous sums had been placed at the disposal of Roy, this, too, is corroborated by the British Intelligence. Evelyn Roy, the first wife of M. N. Roy, admitted in a letter in March, 1924, that "almost unlimited funds have been made available" to Roy for work in India.² There is little doubt that the amount of money that actually got through to the Indian Communists was rather small. Of this, a significant part went into the private pockets and was never employed for Communist activities. Therefore, there can be little doubt that Saumyendranath's report to Piatnitsky jeopardised Roy's position.

In pursuance of the established procedure of the Comintern, Saumyendranath was asked to submit two reports—one on organisation and the other on political conditions in India.

The organisational report was submitted to the Org-Bureau

¹ Sir Cecil Kaye, *Communism in India* (Delhi : Govt. of India Press, 1926); pages 16,53,69.

² *Communism in India 1924-1927* : page 78.

presided over by Piatnitsky. The political report was presented to the Political Secretariat of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI), presided over by Nikolai Bukharin. As the political reports submitted by Saumyendranath led to the famous controversy regarding "decolonisation" and to the exit of M. N. Roy from the Communist International, it will be useful for us to look back and review the political policies of the Comintern regarding the Indian question in the twenties.

It was at the Sixth Plenum of the E.C.C.I. held in February and March, 1926 that the role of the British imperialism in India was discussed. It characterised the general economic situation in the capitalist countries as one of "tottering stabilisation". With respect to British imperialism, it declared that a decline of British capital was leading to a strengthening of native capitalism in India. But, at the same time, it also emphasized that "economic concessions to sections of the native bourgeoisie did not entail political concessions, but on the contrary were accompanied always by a policy of increased political oppression, which thus over-ruled the possibility of a compromise between the imperialist bourgeoisie and the native bourgeoisie. Thus the native bourgeoisie retained its revolutionary character."

At the Seventh Plenum held later in the year, M. N. Roy expressed a similar view. In the following year, Saumyendranath submitted his report to the Political Secretariat of the E.C.C.I.

In his report, Saumyendranath pointed out that capitalist developments were taking place in India. But the whole objective of the British policy of industrialisation was to secure industries under British control. This change in the British policy took place during the Great War of 1914-18.

Up to that time, the policy of the British imperialism was to keep India as a source of raw materials and as a market for industrial products of British industry. But during the war, in order to supply war materials to the middle-eastern theatre of war, it became imperative to manufacture many war materials in India. Furthermore, as Japan and U.S. posed as a serious economic challenge to her monopoly over the Indian market, Britain had to provide differential protection to industries in India. In fact, industrialisation of India created an additional market for engineering and metallurgical industries of Britain and the cheap Indian labour helped British capitalism to stabilise itself.

The political implication of this changed economic policy was that the native bourgeoisie were willing to come to political terms with British imperialism to the extent to which the hindrances to capitalist developments were removed by British imperialism. To that extent, the native bourgeoisie were moving towards and co-operating with British imperialism and were capitulating to them. Furthermore, as the Indian bourgeoisie had close ties with feudalism, they could not rouse the masses and lead them in an all-out onslaught on imperialism. Therefore, the Indian bourgeoisie were not likely to be a revolutionary factor in the struggle for national liberation. On the contrary, the rising tide of the national revolution would find the native bourgeoisie actively opposing the revolutionary forces in collaboration with British imperialism. At the same time, Saumyendra-nath pointed out, that it would be wrong for the Communists in India to underestimate the differences that still persisted between the native bourgeoisie and the imperialist bourgeoisie.

The native bourgeoisie would oppose the British imperialism to get further concessions from it, but would not lead a mass struggle which would mean a complete destruction of imperialism. For, such a conclusion of the national struggle would mean that the capitalist system would also be destroyed.

Saumyendranath also emphasized that the development of capitalism in India was creating, on the one hand, larger and larger number of proletarians and, on the other, was intensifying the agrarian crisis. This was laying the foundation for a socialist revolution which would fulfil the democratic tasks in passing. Thus, the nature of the national revolution was becoming transformed into an intimate part of the world socialist revolution.

At the conclusion of Tagore's report, Bukharin, while summing up the discussions, casually mentioned that it would appear that a process of "decolonisation" had started in India. He used the term for the first time, evidently in a tentative and relative sense. He also suggested that a commission be set up to go into the question in greater detail. Accordingly, the commission was set up with M. N. Roy, Hugh Rathbone and G. A. Lohani.

In his policy statement which was later placed before the Indian Commission, Roy pointed out that there was a distinct possibility of a political compromise between the imperialist bourgeoisie and the native bourgeoisie because of the new

alignment of economic forces. He, however, treated the question mechanically and completely overlooked the conflict of interests between the two sections of the bourgeoisie who would unite only at the teeth of the developing mass movement.

This underestimation of the contradiction between imperialism and Indian capitalism led him to give a reformist content to his theory of decolonisation. Roy wrote that "the implication of the new policy (of British imperialism) is gradual decolonisation of India which would allow eventually to evolve itself from a state of 'dependency' to Dominion Status... the unavoidable process of gradual decolonisation has in it the germ of destruction of the Empire." In other words, the economic problems of Great Britain, which had brought about changes in its economic policy, would lead automatically to Dominion Status regardless of the development and growth of the mass movement. Such a conclusion resembled very closely the Social Democratic theory of super-imperialism and the "civilising" role of imperialism.

However, at the Ninth Plenum of the E.C.C.I held in February, 1928, which by then was in control of Stalin's adherents, the colonial question was reviewed, and a new line expounded. Eugene Varga, on behalf of the dominant group, presented a thesis which held that industrialisation in India had been exaggerated, that Great Britain was attempting to arrest industrial growth in India and that it had resumed its general policy of treating India as an agrarian appendage and as a source of raw materials and as a market for British exports. At a meeting of the Indian Commission which again met in March and April, Varga's thesis was challenged by Petrovsky and some other members of the British Communist Party and by Saumyendranath.

Saumyendranath's presence in Moscow and his participation in the working of the Indian Commission appeared to have unnerved M. N. Roy because his position as the sole representative of India at the Comintern was being seriously jeopardised. So, he was most eager that Tagore should leave Moscow as soon as possible, and, in fact, in December, 1927, he wrote a letter to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India in an attempt to undermine Saumyendranath's position. This letter was to become famous as the "Assembly Letter" as it was read out in the Legislative Assembly in the course of a debate. In this letter, Roy stated in reference to Saumyendranath "that even

though he is a member of the CC of the CP (although he is no Communist)... that he should be removed from the CC of the CP if not altogether from the party."¹ However, with Bukharin's assistance, Saumyendranath managed to stay in Moscow because he wanted to attend the Sixth World Congress. He then joined the International Lenin School in order to train himself thoroughly in the theory and practice of Marxism. The International Lenin School was meant for only the leading cadres of the various Communist parties of the world. Here, Saumyendranath had the opportunity of studying the Marxian philosophy, economics and the history of the Marxist movement under such teachers as Bukharin, and other leading theoreticians.

Saumyendranath's arrival in Soviet Russia coincided with the historic period of the Stalin-Trotsky struggle for supremacy in the Russian Communist Party. During his stay at the International Lenin School he was drawn into the debates that were going on among the foreign Communists. At that time, Saumyendranath could not by any stretch of imagination be considered a Trotskyist, for he had no opportunity of studying Trotsky's writings, which were well-nigh impossible to get on the eve of Trotsky's expulsion from the Russian Party.

In fact, Saumyendranath was then of the opinion that Trotsky was defying party discipline. But at the same time, he could not bring himself to condemn Trotsky, the leader of the October insurrection and the builder of the Red Army, as a counter-revolutionary agent. He also felt that Trotsky was being hounded out of the party without given a fair chance to defend himself, because Saumyendranath had the opportunity to attend the Congress of the Russian Party held in October, 1927, when Trotsky was expelled. So, when a resolution was moved at the meeting of the International Lenin School condemning Trotsky as a "counter-revolutionary spy", Tagore was the only student who defended Trotsky, not once but twice. This revolt against the establishment—ineffective though it was—was noticed and frowned upon by Stalin who got Saumyendranath hauled up before the Control Commission of the Comintern. However, at Bukharin's intervention, he was allowed to stay in Moscow and attend the Sixth World Congress.

¹ Home-Pol Dept F. No. 190/28. This letter was produced in the Meerut Conspiracy Case as a prosecution exhibit. It is now kept in the National Archives, New Delhi.

The Sixth World Congress of the Communist International was held in Moscow from July 17 to September 1, of 1928. Nicholai Bukharin, who was then the President of the Communist International, presented the E.C.C.I.'s report to the Congress. In dealing with the colonial and semi-colonial areas, he acknowledged that the Communist Party of China had "suffered a severe defeat", but, he contended, it was not the tactics which had been at fault but "the political actions and the practical applications on the part of the Chinese Communists." After thus defending Stalin's policies in China, he, however, strongly argued against applying the same line in India, where, he pointed out, the situation was entirely different. In China, the bourgeoisie had conducted an armed struggle against the imperialists but it was inconceivable that the Indian bourgeoisie would play a comparable role. The Indian bourgeoisie would much rather manoeuvre against the British rulers, but this was a far cry from an armed struggle. Moreover, he predicted that they would desert to the camp of counter-revolution at the first manifestation of an independent mass movement. Hence, the Indian Communists must come out against the bourgeoisie and expose their half heartedness.

The spokesman for the E.C.C.I on the colonial question was Otto Kuusinen. In his speech, he incorporated Varga's economic analysis. He minimised the economic concessions which Great Britain had made to Indian industries and stated that he was not asserting that a complete throttling of industrial development in India was occurring, but industrial development would continue very slowly. He also held that the colonies in their relations to the so-called imperialist "motherland" were always transformed into industrial hinterlands for the industrial cities, into an agrarian appendage to the vastly bloated body of the capitalist big industries.

Saumyendranath pointed out that the Kuusinen thesis flew in the face of the widespread industrial unrest involving thousands of workers that was taking place at that time in India. Furthermore, if India were an agrarian appendage, there would be no prospect for the development of class struggle. Instead of an increased number of the industrial working class, there would then be only hordes of pauperised peasants, and the only revolutionary class would, therefore, be the bourgeoisie. At the open session of the Congress, Tagore was supported both by Petrovsky and Clemens Dutt. Shaukat Usmani, however, supported Kuusinen.

Finally, Kuusinen yielded to the force of criticisms and acknowledged that the ECCI draft thesis contained errors of "fundamental nature". But what finally emerged as a compromise between the Bukharin and the Stalin faction was a most eclectic document incapable of guiding the Communist movement in the colonial countries.

Furthermore, Kuusinen criticised the Workers' and Peasants' Party because it was supposed to be a two-class party and strongly suggested that the party be dissolved and replaced by a proper Communist Party. He stated : "Special workers' and peasants' parties, whatever revolutionary character they may possess, can too easily, at particular periods be converted into ordinary petty bourgeois parties and accordingly the Communists are not recommended to organise such parties."¹ Saumyendranath opposed this formulation and stated : "The petty bourgeoisie intelligentsia, the urban petty bourgeoisie, have a role to play in the revolutionary movement in the colonies. What would be the organisational expression of the anti-imperialist front and the petty bourgeois elements ? Can we afford to swamp the Communist Party with the petty bourgeois elements ? On the other hand, the Communist Party of India should utilise the revolutionary energies of the petty bourgeoisie. I think it is clear that this anti-imperialist front can only take the organisational form of a workers' and peasants' Party composed of the urban intelligentsia and the petty bourgeois elements under the leadership of the proletariat."²

He characterised Kuusinen's opinion as "pure and simple dogmatism against which Lenin warned us so many times."³

In addition to his disagreement with Kuusinen on the basic thesis, he also had a brush with him regarding the role the British Communist Party was to play in India. India being a colony

¹ "Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semi-Colonies ; Inprecor, December 12, 1928 ; page 1668.

² Inprecor, October 30, 1928 ; page 1391.

³ Ibid ; page 1391.

Clemens Dutt supported Saumyendranath's stand. In his speech at the Congress, he stated : "The point I want to make is that the question of the Workers' and Peasants' Party cannot be dismissed with a phrase... The characteristic feature of the Workers' and Peasants' Parties in the present stage of development in India is that they are forming an important route through which Communists are finding their way to the masses". (Inprecor—Oct 30, 1928 ; page 1465.)

of British imperialism, it was natural that the Communist parties of India and Great Britain would evolve special contacts for revolutionary activities. But what was actually happening was that the British Communist Party wanted to monopolise and control the Indian party. Saumyendranath criticised this policy and pleaded that the Communist Party of India should be allowed direct contact with the Communist International. Saumyendranath's independent stand during the Congress did not endear him to the Stalin faction, whose main spokesmen were Kuusinen and Varga. At the end of the World Congress, Saumyendranath who was then seriously ill with tuberculosis, went to a Black Sea resort for rest and recuperation. During his stay at a small village on the Black Sea, he wrote two books in Bengali, "Revolutionary Russia" and "Soviet Republic". These were the first books written in Bengali on the Russian Revolution and its outcome from the first-hand knowledge and experience. In these books, although he praised Soviet Republic and the Russian people for achieving tremendous progress, he at the same time pointed out certain features of the Soviet society which he considered to be inimical to the development of a socialist society. He criticised the "almost-religious" deification of Lenin, and the gradual suppression of Soviet democracy, especially the inner-party democracy in the Russian Party and the Communist International. He also opposed the use of terror and threat to control the creative activities of the writers and artists in the name of proletarian art. These two manuscripts were brought to India by Rabindranath after he had met Saumyendranath in Berlin in 1930.

At the end of December 1928, Saumyendranath left Moscow for Berlin on his way to India.

In Berlin, Saumyendranath wanted to spend a few weeks to arrange a closer contact between the Workers' and Peasants' Party with the League Against Imperialism, of which Viren Chattopadhyaya was a joint secretary, and also to work out ways and means of maintaining contacts with the Comintern. Just as he was about to leave for India, he came to know of the country-wide arrest of the Communist leaders on March 20, 1929, in connection with the Meerut Conspiracy Case. In this case, Tagore was named as one of the accused. In fact, in the preliminary report of Mr. R. K. Horton, D.I.G., who was in charge of the investigations, Saumyendranath was among the twenty-two persons against whom "there were sufficient evidence to establish

a strong case of conspiracy".¹ Furthermore, he featured as a conspirator in a list prepared of the persons "whose presence in India was considered undesirable."² It was feared that if he returned to India, he would have to waste his time in British prison. Instead of doing that, he thought it would be better, to stay in Europe and help the movement from abroad by maintaining contact with the Comintern and render all possible financial assistance to his Indian co-workers. During this period, after the exit of M. N. Roy, Virendranath Chattopadhyaya and Clemens Dutt established a secretariat in Berlin to guide Communist movement in India. Tagore was closely connected with this Bureau, and was one of its main propagandists. He addressed dozens of meetings every day exposing British terror in India, and was also actively involved in propaganda work among the workers against the rising tide of Nazi terror.

After Saumyendranath's departure from Moscow, Stalin, after having defeated Trotsky, openly moved against Bukharin. So long he was contending with Trotsky, he needed Bukharin to match Trotsky in debate, which Stalin himself was quite incapable of doing. So after the Sixth World Congress, Stalin shifted to the left in order to win over a section of supporters of Zinoviev and Trotsky. Accordingly, at the Tenth Plenum of the E.C.C.I, held in July, 1929, Stalin excluded Bukharin from the Communist International and forced an ultra-left policy on it. The so-called "Third Period" was born. The United Front tactics with the socialists were abundant and the Social Democrats were branded as Social Fascists, and the trade union movement was split by creating the Red trade unions. In India, Stalin moved from the rightist position of supporting the bourgeoisie to the ultra-leftist position of declaring them as wholly reactionary. Under the plea of opposing the bourgeoisie, the Communists were asked to sever all ties with the nationalist movement. This policy isolated them, reducing them into a small sect. The Comintern also recommended the dissolution of the Workers' and Peasants' Party.

Saumyendranath opposed this ultra-leftist stand adopted at the Tenth Plenum. In order to give expression to his opposition

¹ Communism in India, Unpublished Documents : 1925-1934 edited by Subodh Roy (Ganasahitya Prakash, Calcutta, 1972) ; page 107.

² Ibid ; page 153.

to the new line, he began publishing a paper called "Red Hindustan" in which he opposed the ultra-leftist policies recommended by the Comintern for India, and also urged a policy of united front of the Communists and the Socialists in Germany to stem the tide of Nazism. His articles also began to appear regularly in a magazine called "Bharat", which was published by the Indian students in Great Britain.

While Tagore was in Berlin, dissension paralysed the Communist movement in India, but he continued to maintain contact with Abdul Halim in Calcutta, and attempted to guide the activities of the Calcutta Committee of the Communist Party to the extent possible.¹

He raised funds for the defence of the Meerut prisoners, and sent them to Halim. It was at this time, Halim published Tagore's Bengali translation of the famous Communist Manifesto, "Sadharan Swattabadia Ishatar" which was the first Bengali edition of this Marxian classic.² While Halim was maintaining contact with the Communist International through Saumyendranath, S. V. Deshpande set up another committee in Calcutta with A. M. A. Zaman as his representative. Zaman formed the Workers' Party of Bengal and contacted Virendranath to represent this party. Virendranath attempted to discredit Saumyendranath who was then in touch with the Third International on behalf of the Workers' and Peasants' Party.³ "Saumyendra Tagore did not improve his own position by writing articles and those opposing the 3rd International - and found himself without the supporter of Abdul Halim in this respect."⁴ Although Abdul Halim did not agree with Tagore's criticism of the Third International, he did not also implement at that time the Stalinist policy of dissolution of the Workers' and Peasants' Party, which he finally did only in 1932. Even then, Saumyendranath along with Viren Chattopadhyaya represented India at the World Conference of the League for Defence of Human Rights that was held in Berlin in 1930.

Just after this conference, Rabindranath Tagore visited Berlin on his way back from Oxford University where he had gone to

¹ Communism in India—Unpublished Documents, 1925-1934 ; Edited by Subodh Roy (Ganasahitya Prakash, Calcutta, 1972) ; page 384.

² Communism in India, 1925-1934 ; page 384. The first edition of this book is preserved in the Marx-Lenin Institute in Moscow.

³ Ibid ; page 386.

⁴ Ibid ; page 386.

deliver a series of lectures. He met Saumyendranath who spoke to him about the progress made by Soviet Russia, and arranged for the Poet's visit to Moscow through Lunacharsky who was then the Minister of Education. Along with Rabindranath, Saumyendranath re-visited Soviet Russia as the Poet's interpreter. After a fortnight's stay in Moscow he once again returned to Berlin. But under the dual ravages of incessant labour and tuberculosis, his iron constitution finally broke down. As doctors in Berlin suggested that he should go and stay in a milder climate, he left for Capri for treatment where he stayed for a considerable period of time. It was in Capri that he wrote three biographies ; those of Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Leibnecht in Bengali. They were later published by Abdul Halim on behalf the Calcutta Committee of the Communist Party. During his stay in Capri, he met Maxim Gorky in the nearby Sorrento. Gorky was very interested in meeting a young Indian who had spent more than two years in Soviet Russia, and had long discussions with him regarding his impressions.

After completing his treatment in the later part of 1932, Tagore left for the Italian Alps for recuperation. While he was returning to Germany from Italy in 1933, he was arrested by Gestapo on April 23, at Kieferfelsen on the Austro-German frontier on the charge that he had plotted an attempt to assassinate Hitler. Reginald Bridgeman, the Secretary of the League Against Imperialism, British Section, wrote in a letter to Sir John Simon, the then Secretary State for Foreign Affairs, "the only way in which Tagore could explain this absurdly false charge was that it was made against him for propaganda purposes both inside and outside Germany. Outside Germany this charge is intended to justify the terrorist methods of the Fascist Government in the eyes of the world, while in Germany itself the charge was an attempt to revive the waning sympathies of the German people in the Fascist regime."¹ In this connection, questions were asked in the House of Parliament on April 27, by Col. Wedgewood, a Labour Member. Finally, for reasons best known to the Gestapo, he was released on the evening of April 27 and he left for Paris on April 28. On arriving at Paris he gave an interview to the newspapers regarding his experiences in the Nazi prison. The article was published under the headline, "My arrest as a would-be assassin of Hilter and my experiences in prison in Munich."

¹ Home-Pol. Dept. F. No. 6/3/33

The Marxist movement in Europe was then at its lowest ebb. Thousands of German Communists, Socialists and Radicals had left Germany and settled down in Paris. Paris in the thirties was the centre of the revolutionaries from all countries of the world. The German debacle of the Communist Party and the phenomenal rise of Fascism in Europe had caused anxious heart-searching among the revolutionaries. Discussions were going on among revolutionaries of all shades of opinion regarding the strategy and tactics to be adopted by the world proletarian front to stem the Fascist tide. Saumyendranath was in touch with a large number of them. When an anti-Fascist demonstration took place in Paris in September, 1933, Saumyendranath was one of the main speakers.

In the meantime, he had also met Romain Rolland and had long discussions with him about Gandhism and the future of the Indian national struggle. It was at this time that Romain Rolland sent a message through Saumyendranath to the youths of India, "Un appel a la jeunesse de le Inde," appealing to them to build up an anti-Fascist front. Saumyendranath also met Henri Barbuse, the President of the World League Against Fascism and War, who gave him a mandate on behalf of the international body to set up an Indian section on his return to India. The day after his meeting with Barbuse, he left Paris on his way to India, and arrived in Calcutta in January, 1934.

At the time when Saumyendranath returned to Calcutta, the Communist movement was been split up into many small groups. The Workers' and Peasants' Party was dead. Of his old co-workers most of them were in jail excepting Abdul Halim, who was then heading what was known as "the Calcutta Committee of the Communist Party of India." Other groups in existence were the Calcutta Communist Party of Niharendu Dutta Mazumdar, the Atma Shakti group of Dr Bhupendranath Dutta, the Royist group of Rajani Mukherjee, and the Congress Socialist Party of Sibnath Banerji. On his return he commenced work with Abdul Halim who published the books he had written while in Europe. However, his disagreement with Abdul Halim became pronounced when he submitted the manuscripts of the articles he had written on Hitlerism while in Paris. Although the articles gathered together in this book dealt mainly with barbaric terrorism of Hitlerism, there were two articles which were political in nature. One was an attack on the Socialists. The other was a summary of articles criticising the ultra-leftist

tactics of the German Communist Party which he had published in Berlin and Paris. Initially, Abdul Halim had not objected to the inclusion of these articles. However, before the pamphlets came to be printed, a resolution of the Communist International on the German debacle was received in Calcutta. Immediately, Halim wrote a letter to Saumyendranath stating that they had received the resolution passed by the Communist International. In that resolution, the German Socialists were wholly blamed for the Nazi victory in Germany, and the policy and tactics of the German Communist Party were declared to be correct. Saumyendranath in his reply pointed out the necessity of a thorough study of the causes of the German tragedy and forming an opinion on the basis of such studies irrespective of the resolutions of the Comintern. Halim did not agree. As Saumyendranath was still a member of the Communist Party, he withdrew the disputed article and himself published the book, "Hitlerism or the Aryan Rule in Germany", on behalf of the Ganashakti Publishing House, which was the publishing house of the Calcutta Committee of the Communist Party of India. This was the beginning of Saumyendranath's break with the C.P.I.

After the publication of the book in 1934, Saumyendranath travelled all over India, met various Communist leaders and came to the conclusion that the bureaucratisation of the Communist International had also affected the Indian leadership of the Communist movement to such an extent that no independent thinking and application of Marxian methodology were possible in the stifling atmosphere of the official Communist Party. In August, 1934, he decided to start a parallel Communist organisation called the Communist League of India.

It would not be out of place to summarise here Tagore's political differences with the "official Communists".

So far as the general perspective of the national revolution was concerned, there were no differences in 1934. The official party also followed Tagore's thesis that the bourgeois democratic revolution in the epoch of imperialism, in the era of capitalist decay and in the social and economic conditions in which the tide of the world proletarian revolution was visibly rising could only be a socialist revolution, which would complete the democratic tasks "in passing". Thus, the approaching bourgeois revolution in India would be completed by the proletariat under the leadership of its political party in the teeth of opposition of the

bourgeoisie. Although the bourgeoisie were then playing an opposition role, as the national revolution would acquire wide sweep and approach a basic agrarian transformation, the bourgeoisie would join hands with the imperialists to suppress such a movement. In the statement made by the Communist prisoners before the Meerut court, this perspective of the Indian revolution was reiterated. "Today, in the period of imperialism, that is of the decline of capitalism, the bourgeois has allied itself with the remnants of feudalism, is thus incapable of carrying through the tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution. This is true of the imperialist as well as the colonial bourgeoisie. The Indian bourgeoisie is, as we have seen, bound by ties of common interest partly with imperialism and partly with the landed aristocracy. It cannot carry out these tasks without endangering its own interests. The national revolutionary struggle is undoubtedly a struggle of the Indian people against foreign domination but it is at the same time a class struggle."¹

It was only after Stalin's prompting at the Seventh Congress of the Comintern, that the bourgeoisie became "revolutionary" and the betrayal of the class collaborationist policy began.

However, there were differences of opinion between Tagore and other Communist leaders on the question whether the petty bourgeois intellectuals would be able to play an important role in the Marxist movement. The "official Communists" underestimated the revolutionary energies of the pauperised petty bourgeoisie. By doing so, they alienated the most radical section of the intelligentsia who were capable of injecting Marxian ideology in the working class movement as professional revolutionaries. Tagore underscored the point that in India in 1934, it was only the intelligentsia that could supply professional revolutionaries.

On the trade union tactics, he strongly condemned the creation of a Red trade union congress in opposition to the existing All-India Trade Union. This ultra-leftist move was suicidal. On the one hand, the newly developed and weak trade union movement was further weakened by this split, and the Communists were also isolated from the broad masses of the organised workers on the other. Moreover, he opposed the slogan of "economism", the policy of limiting the working-class movement merely to economic demands—a policy then strongly

advocated by Dutta Majumdar and his group of Communists of the Bengal Labour Party. He strongly pressed for developing the working-class movement as a political movement as well, which would not only participate in but actively lead the movement for the defence of civil liberties in particular and anti-imperialist struggles in general.

Lastly, he was of the opinion that the Indian Communists, even though they should maintain contact with the International movement, should develop Marxian tactics and strategy on the basis of political conditions in India and should not follow blindly dictates from either the CPGB or the Comintern.¹

It is interesting to note that Philip Spratt, who visited Calcutta after his release from prison in September, 1934, met Tagore and his group and had long discussions regarding the policies to be pursued by the Communist movement. He broadly agreed with Tagore and suggested to him that he should not make a complete break with the Communist International.²

At this time on the basis of his policy of organising the unorganised workers, Tagore started work at Kidderpore to organise the seamen and the inland transport workers. While Spratt was in Calcutta, he worked with Tagore in this union.³ However as Spratt differed with other Communist leaders, he finally left the movement.

Along with the trade union activities, Tagore took up the agitation against police repression. He vehemently attacked the unparalleled repression that was then prevalent in Bengal to suppress the terrorist movement. He took the initiative in setting-up the Political Prisoners' Relief Committee, of which he was secretary. On behalf of this committee, he published a number of tracts and pamphlets on the unbridled repression in Chittagong, and on the conditions of the political prisoners in the Dacca jail. On behalf of this committee, Saumyendranath initiated a mass movement for the release of Subhas Chandra Bose and a meeting was held at the Calcutta maidan to demand his release. At this mammoth meeting, he delivered a fiery speech against British imperialism, which led to his arrest and one year's imprisonment. Immediately on his release in April,

¹ For details of this controversy, refer to Tagore's "November Revolution and India", (in Bengali) first published by Ganavani Publishing House, Calcutta, in 1934. It has since been reprinted.

² Communism in India, Unpublished Documents, 1925-1934 ; page 207

³ Ibid ; page 207.

1937, he published a book on the pitiable conditions of the terrorist prisoners detained in the Andaman Cellar Prison. In order to develop a movement for the repatriation and release of these prisoners, he set up a committee with Rabindranath as the chairman. This committee succeeded in making the demand for repatriation of the Andaman prisoners, not only vocal but effective as well. In August, 1937, a huge rally was held in Calcutta at which Rabindranath spoke condemning the policy of the Government.

Saumyendranath published Rabindranath's speech along with one of his own articles in a pamphlet called "The Andamans—the Penal Settlement of British Imperialism." As the movement grew, the Government of India had no other alternative but to bring the prisoners back and repatriate them to various jails in India. All the prisoners belonging to States other than Bengal were released by the Congress Ministers. But the Muslim League Government in Bengal refused to release them. To demand the release of the Bengal prisoners, Saumyendranath set up another committee with Sarat Chandra Bose as president, of which he was the secretary. Students in thousands joined the movement at the call of this committee. The Andaman prisoners' movement was, in fact, responsible for the revival of the students' movement in Bengal in the thirties.

It was at this time that he also organised the workers of the Bata shoe factory near Calcutta who were living in conditions resembling the later-day slave labour camps. Under his leadership, the Bata workers waged a heroic struggle during which, in a police firing, two workers were killed. But ultimately the workers were victorious. It was at this strike, at Saumyendranath's call, that students in thousands picketed the Bata shops in Calcutta. This was the first occasion when the students came out in active support of a workers' strike. Saumyendranath's role in organising the peasants in the backward Sunderbans is not to be forgotten. Thousands of peasants, in the Zamindari of the Englishman, Hamilton, in the thirties were living in semi-serf conditions. It was Saumyendranath who organised them and succeeding in defeating this petty tyrant. Then came the Second World War. The story of Saumyendranath's activities during the war and the 1942 movement will be told in the next volume which will cover the war period from 1939 to 1946.

Calcutta, July 15, 1975.

Sudarshan Chattopadhyaya

Saumyendranath Tagore attended the Sixth World Congress of the Communist International in Moscow in 1928. At this Congress, Bukharin presented the programme of the Communist International. In this programme, a special section was on the nature of anti-imperialist struggle in the colonial countries. A special colonial thesis was presented by Kuusinen to the Congress. Kuusinen dealt with the role of the colonial bourgeoisie in the national struggle. Tagore, who spoke both before the preparatory committee and at the open session, opposed Kuusinen and pointed out that the colonial bourgeoisie had no revolutionary role to play in the national struggle in India or for that matter in any colonial country. On the contrary, the colonial bourgeoisie were likely to play an increasingly counter-revolutionary role in national struggles. The Kuusinen thesis was finally modified on Tagore's criticism.

THE NATURE OF THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION IN COLONIAL COUNTRIES

(Speeches delivered at the Sixth Congress of the Communist International, 1928)

On behalf of the Indian delegation, I welcome the programme which has been submitted to the Congress. The Fifth Congress of the Communist International had accepted a draft. Four years have since passed, and the proletarian revolution in China and in the colonies has given us sufficient material for drawing up a programme.

One of the most important features of the draft programme is the stress laid upon the colonial aspect of the proletarian revolution. But it is precisely this aspect of the world revolution as formulated in the programme that confronts us with certain difficulties.

Take, for example, that section in the first chapter of the draft programme where we find the statement : "That the colonial movement of the proletariat should march under the leadership of the revolutionary proletarian movement in the imperialist home countries." This means that the proletarian movement in India should march under the leadership of the British Communist Party, or, that the Javanese Communist movement should march under the leadership of the Dutch Communist Party. Nobody will deny that in the organic structure of British imperialism, India and England are closely connected with each other and,

for the same reason, the Communist parties in India and Britain are also organically linked up with each other for carrying out the proletarian revolution in these two countries ; but this on no account means the subordination of the colonial party to the leadership of the imperialist home country. I am sure that the author of the Draft Programme does not mean to imply this, at all. But the formulation forces one to this conclusion. We must correct this. Of course, the movements in the colonial countries should not be deprived of the experience of the world proletarian movement and the guidance of the Communist International. The only leadership acceptable is the leadership of the Communist International. I think the formulation is not quite clear, and this section should be formulated differently.

Then, take the fourth chapter of the draft programme. There it is said that in colonial and semi-colonial countries, industry is still in the embryonic stage, and sometimes, in a fairly well-developed stage, but is inadequate for independent socialist construction. I consider this formulation also not to be a very valid one. To lump together different countries at very different levels of industrial development is methodologically wrong and illogical. For example, India and Morocco ; it is impossible to make a valid comparison between the relative industrial developments of India and countries like Morocco. If we say that industry in these countries is at an embryonic stage, then so far as India is concerned, this is not true. If we say that India's development is inadequate for socialist construction, it is a fact. But I think in this formulation two different points or aspects have been mixed together, and must be separated and independently formulated.

Further, it is said that in these countries there exist feudal, medieval relationships, both in regard to the economic base as well as the political superstructure. So far as India is concerned, this is not accurate. The recent development of industries, the penetration of the villages by capitalism, the predominance of commodity relationships in villages are established facts. This formulation may be applicable to Morocco, but it is certainly not correct so far as India is concerned.

Later on, it has been stated that colonies and semi-colonies are of importance, in this transitional period, for the reason that they represent the world rural districts, in relation to the industrial countries, which are the world towns. This formulation too is not a very happy one. If we say that colonies and semi-colonies are world villages it means that there has been no capita-

list development in them. This is not even remotely true for India. Another implication is that if there is any capitalist development, it should be hindered and suppressed, and that the colonies and semi-colonies should be kept to supply raw materials to the industrial West. I am sure that this is not the intention of the Communist International, but the inexact and inaccurate formulation gives rise to very different implications. I think that here also the formulation requires a better and more clearer statement.

The Sixth chapter of the Draft Programme declares regarding the Communist parties in the colonial and semi-colonial countries : "Temporary agreements with the national bourgeoisie may be made only insofar as they will not hamper the revolutionary organisation of the workers and peasants and will genuinely fight against imperialism."

I consider this formulation to be fundamentally wrong. After our experience in India, in 1922, when the bourgeoisie betrayed the great mass movement, which shook India from one end to the other, it is high time that we now re-formulate this point more clearly to indicate that the bourgeoisie cannot genuinely fight imperialism. The demonstrations, which the Indian bourgeoisie have organised all over the country against the Simon Commission, have given rise to an illusion in the minds of some of the comrades here that the bourgeoisie are still capable of playing a revolutionary role. But if we look for a revolutionary programme, for the concrete steps the bourgeoisie in India are taking for the fulfilment of such a revolutionary programme, we find that they do not exist.

Their fight will lead to a compromise on the basis of a better division of the spoils gathered by exploiting the Indian masses. Surely, there are contradictions between the imperialist bourgeoisie and the native bourgeoisie as there always will be contradictions between two exploiters for the monopoly of the same spoils. Of course, the Indian Communist Party and the proletarian movement should take advantage of these differences and utilise them for furthering of the revolution. We must not, however, forget that this quarrel among the national and the imperialist bourgeoisie is in the nature of a family quarrel between two brothers over property, and that the forces of the rising proletariat in India will certainly be met by a common front of the native and the imperialist bourgeoisie—if not today, then tomorrow. The Indian bourgeoisie are fighting on the same old

constitutional issues that are entirely for their own benefit. This is clearly demonstrated in their programmes and tactics in every phase of their struggle against the imperialist bourgeoisie. Even a partial alliance with the bourgeoisie means abandoning the slogan of agrarian revolution, resulting in virtually abandoning the revolutionary struggle in colonial countries, especially in a predominantly agricultural country like India. I think that this formulation is not a correct one. I would like to emphasize the point that the bourgeoisie in India have gone over to the side of reaction, even if not as yet to the side of open counter-revolution.

On behalf of the Indian delegation, I will present our resolution to the Bureau at the appropriate time.

II

One of the most fundamental differences between the opportunistic attitude of the Amsterdam International to the colonial policy and the revolutionary attitude of the Third International has been very well defined by Comrade Lenin at the Second Congress of the Communist International in his theses on the colonial countries. Since then, the Communist International has adopted a definite revolutionary attitude towards the colonies.

Between the Second and the Sixth Congress, fundamental changes and developments have taken place in the colonial countries. On behalf of the Indian delegation, I welcome the theses on the revolutionary movement in the colonies and semi-colonies, especially because of the very great stress that has been laid on the Indian question. But there are some contradictions in the theses which I wish to point out here.

On page 6 of the theses, we find the statement : "The real industrialisation of the colonial countries, especially building up of efficient machine industries which might be needed for the independent development of the productive forces of the country, are not fostered by imperialist monopoly, but are retarded. This is the basic function of colonial subjugation. The colonial country is forced to sacrifice its interests of its independent development and to serve as the economic market for capitalism in order to strengthen the economic and political power of the bourgeoisie of the imperialist country in order to perpetuate

monopoly in the colony and to increase the expansion power of the respective imperialists as against the rest of the world.”

I think that this statement does not give a true picture of the dynamic growth of capitalism, and of industrialisation in India. Till the world war,¹ the policy of British imperialism was the classical form of imperialistic exploitation. It consisted in keeping India as a source of raw materials and as a market for the industrial products of British industries. There was a policy of deliberately keeping India industrially undeveloped. High tariffs, high duties and embargoes on machinery were imposed by the British imperialists in order to prevent India's industrialisation. During these years, British capital was exclusively used for railways, for irrigation work and for the development of harbours. In other words, British capital was used for the sole purpose of the expansion of the market. British imperialism does not adopt the same methods today to exploit India. Fundamental changes in objective conditions have brought about changes in the policy of British imperialists.

The causes of these changes are : first; the conditions during and after the war. During the war, it became necessary that war materials should be manufactured in India to meet the requirements of the troops in Mesopotamia and other eastern theatres of war. Britain could not effectively supply these unless industries, especially war industries, were developed in India. This resulted in the setting up of the Industrial Commission, which marked a major turning point in the policy of British imperialism.

Secondly, Japan and America posed a serious economic challenge to the British monopoly over the Indian market. Britain realised its inability to cope with this situation without changing its policy in India. This led to the virtual abandonment of the traditional policy of free trade and the recognition of differential protectionism in India which we find, for instance, in the Bombay textile industries. This shows clearly that stabilisation of British industries, during this period of decay, made industrialisation of India an absolute necessity.

The industrialisation of India created an additional market for engineering and metallurgical industries. Cheap Indian labour could be more effectively utilised in order to stabilize British industry.

Thirdly, the Taxation Commission was set up. Its sole aim was to distribute the burden of taxation in order to expand the

¹ World War of 1914-1918

internal market. The scheme for the modernisation of agriculture was drawn up to raise the purchasing power of the peasantry.

Finally, India could not be converted into a military base of British imperialism in the East unless the national bourgeoisie were won over, and the national bourgeoisie could not be won over unless some concessions were given to them.

What is the political expression of this policy ? It is this : that in order to industrialise India, it is necessary to extend the internal market, to make certain agrarian reforms which is impossible for British imperialism to achieve, owing to the very complicated land tenure system.

Thus, industrialisation tends to pauperise the peasantry, which creates the possibility of an agrarian revolution. It also gives rise to the development of the proletariat, which brings with it the possibility of a socialist revolution. Moreover, it brings about a change in the attitude of the national bourgeoisie. All these are the political consequences of the change in Britain's economic policy towards India.

Unless we see this process dialectically, and in its proper perspective, we will arrive at wrong conclusions regarding the role of the native bourgeoisie and we shall draw the same wrong conclusions, which the author of the theses has drawn.

So long as imperialism obstructed capitalist development in India, the Indian bourgeoisie were the driving force of social change. But the changes in British policy had already led to a corresponding change in the attitude of the Indian bourgeoisie towards imperialism. We find that to the corresponding degree to which the hindrances to capitalist development have been removed by British imperialism the bourgeoisie are moving towards co-operation with it, one group after another capitulating to imperialism. Never in their history, the Indian bourgeoisie have adopted a revolutionary attitude towards British imperialism. They never crossed the boundaries of acceptable constitutional agitation, and at the critical moment, they betrayed the movement. One who is conversant with the Indian national movement knows that the Indian bourgeoisie have close ties with feudalism ; therefore, they cannot rouse the masses ; they cannot bring about agrarian reforms without undermining their own position. They, therefore, cannot be expected to rouse and lead the masses to complete the agrarian revolution in India.

Now let us see how this role of the bourgeoisie has been for-

mulated in the theses. We see on page 17, paragraph 19 : "As an independant class rule, a future of 'free' and independent capitalist development, a hegemony over an independant people—this will never be given voluntarily to the national bourgeoisie by imperialism. But this is precisely the class aim of the bourgeoisie, their future as an independant class, as a ruling representative of an independant nation. In this point, the conflict of interests between the national bourgeoisie of the colonial country and the imperialists is objectively of a principle character ; it is unbridgable ; it demands capitulation from one side or the other."

Too much stress on the nature and intensity of the conflict between the national bourgeoisie of the colonial country and the imperialist bourgeoisie has led to certain incorrect conclusions. It is stated on page 21 paragraph 23 : "In the first preparatory period of the revolutionary movement of these countries, when the organisation of the proletariat and the influence of the Communist Party is still weak, but that of the bourgeois parties on the other hand is much stronger, when the latter occupy the leading position in the national movement because in the interests of the demands of the national bourgeoisie for power they still temporarily demonstrate their opposition (no matter how vacillating and reformist) against the ruling imperialist-feudal power bloc, and when the masses of the population follow along behind them, in this stage (as at present e.g. in India and Egypt), it would be an ultra-left mistake to start the Communist Party's agitation by simply identifying the national-reformists (Swarajists, Wafdists and others) with the ruling counter-revolutionary bloc of imperialists and feudal lords.

"It is not true that the Swarajists, Wafdists and others have already exposed themselves in the eyes of the toiling masses as allies of imperialism, as counter-revolutionary traitors to the national movement."

A few lines later : "The Swarajists, Wafdists, etc., have not yet betrayed the national liberation struggle in the decisive manner in which, for example, the Kuomintang did in China." The conclusions that are drawn from this formulation are that the Communist Party in India should keep quiet and not criticise the vacillation of the reformist bourgeoisie because they have yet to play a revolutionary role. It is also stated that "they have not betrayed the national liberation movement in a decisive

manner." This is far from being true. The Bardoli decision was a definite betrayal of the Indian masses by the nationalists in 1922 when great mass upheavals took place, and there was the greatest possibility of an agrarian revolution breaking out in India. The bourgeoisie decisively betrayed the movement under the leadership of Gandhi out of pure and simple class interest. It was the menace of the agrarian revolution which forced the national bourgeoisie to betray the movement. Perhaps, may not be in the same manner as the treacherous counter-revolutionary Chinese bourgeoisie who have shed the blood of millions of workers and peasants, but the Indian bourgeoisie did deceive the masses in 1922.

At the end of the paragraph, we find : "The Indian Communists' agitation in this stage should not concentrate the sharpest fight against the bourgeoisie but should turn it against the present immediate chief foe, the ruling imperialist-feudal bloc."

I consider this statement does not give a realistic appreciation of the situation in India and of the growing counter-revolutionary attitude of the bourgeoisie towards the national revolutionary movement. This formulation may lead to a tactical blunder.

Now, I come to another question which is in the last paragraph of the theses on page 37, paragraph 32. Here, in describing the activities of the Workers' and Peasants' Parties and in drawing the conclusions from their experience, it is said : "The special Workers' and Peasants' Parties, no matter how revolutionary they may be, can easily be transformed into ordinary petty-bourgeois parties. Therefore, the organising of such parties is inadvisable just as the Communist Party cannot build itself upon a foundation of an amalgamation of two classes, so it is just as wrong to organise other parties on this foundation, which is typical of petty-bourgeois members."

It seems to me that some of the comrades are scared of a nightmare, which is the result of their own irrational fantasy, that the Workers' and Peasants' Party is a substitute for the Communist Party. Nobody has ever put forward the idea that the Worker's and Peasants' Party would become a substitute for the Communist Party.

The petty bourgeois elements in a backward country who have been proletarianised are sometimes more proletarian than the proletariat themselves. The petty bourgeois intelligentsia, the urban petty bourgeoisie, have a role to play in the revolu-

tionary movement in the colonies. What should be the organisational expression of an anti-imperialist front of the petty bourgeois elements ? Can we afford to swamp the Communist Party with such petty bourgeois elements ? We cannot. On the other hand, the Communist Party of India should utilise the revolutionary energies of the petty bourgeoisie. I think it is clear that this anti-imperialist front can only take the organisational form of a Workers' and Peasants' Party composed of the urban intelligentsia and the petty bourgeois elements, under the leadership of the proletariat.

These Workers' and Peasants' Parties which started in India in 1925 have been carrying on a definite line of action. This party organised 30,000 workers in Bombay in demonstrations against the Simon Commission under such revolutionary slogans as "Down with Imperialism," "Complete Independence of India". Strike movements today are being led by the Workers' and Peasants' Party. The strike in Lilloah was led by the Workers' and Peasants' Party under the control of the Communist Party of India. We have been able to take over some trade unions. Now we are told to liquidate all these Workers' and Peasants' Parties. This is pure and simple professional dogmatism against which Lenin warned us so many times.

But if we look at the situation in India itself, which are the channels through which the Communists are making their influence felt among the masses ? I think it is quite clear that, under the leadership of the Communist Party of India, the Workers' and Peasants' Parties are valuable channels for the propagation of Communist ideas in India. There was no leftist tendency in the Indian national movement before the Workers' and Peasants' Parties appeared in the field. Today all the leftist elements in the country are veering round these organisations, and a certain crystallisation of leftist forces have been taking place through these parties.

And, therefore, I think that this formulation is wrong, both tactically and in principle.

In the same clause, it is said that this by no means excludes the organisation of the fighting bloc of the workers and peasant masses, which is necessary for the conquest of power in the bourgeois democratic revolution at the time of the uprising, in the form of elected Soviets and other loose organisational forms. Loose organisational forms are admitted, and such organisations can be formed on the basis of an alliance between the peasants

and workers. But when a concrete party comes in the field as a leftist party which gives a leftist orientation to the nationalist revolutionary movement in India, it is to be liquidated. I do not understand the logic of this argument, and I consider it to be a wrong and unrealistic attitude towards the Workers' and Peasants' Party.

(From the SPECIAL NUMBER of INTERNATIONAL PRESS CORRESPONDENCE, Vol. B. No. 76, 30th October, 1928---Sixth World Congress of the Communist International (Full Report) : Thirty-Sixth Session, Moscow, 18th August, 1928 (Morning), continuation of the Discussion on the Question of the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies, pp. 1390-1391).

During the meteoric rise of the Nazis to power, Saumyendranath was in Germany and was closely associated with the German Communist Party. He had the bitter experience of witnessing the tragedy of the utter collapse of the largest Communist Party outside Soviet Russia without putting up even a semblance of resistance to the Nazi onslaught. He himself was arrested by the Gestapo. On his release, he went to Paris, where he addressed a number of mass meetings and wrote numerous articles on Hitlerism from his personal experience in Germany. These articles were collected together in his book, "Hitlerism--or the Aryan Rule in Germany" In this article, he unmasks the treacherous role played by Social Democracy in helping Hitler to crush the proletariat.

WHO PAVED THE WAY FOR FASCISM IN GERMANY ?

Fascism has come to Germany. People may wonder how a country like Germany--which had Socialist trade-union organisations for the last sixty years, which had the most class-conscious working class of the world and which had for the last 13 years a Socialist government--could fall such an easy prey to Fascism. The question is pertinent, and, therefore, must be answered.

The German Special Democratic Party, which since the end of the war had the Government in its control for the last 13 years, had consistently prepared the way for Fascism in Germany, till Fascism kicked its helper out of power and usurped dictatorial power in the state.

It may seem a bit strange to people who are not acquainted with political developments in Germany, and they may wonder how a socialist party could help Fascism, its mortal enemy, to come to power. It may even seem to be a contradiction to them, but it is exactly in this apparent contradiction that we have to seek for the reason of Fascism's victory in Germany.

The Imperialist War of 1914 tore off the veil of socialism from the face of the German Social Democratic Party, and its real face, the hideous nationalistic face, was exposed before the gaze of the world. The German Social Democrats, who had loudly proclaimed the international solidarity of the working class, who had condemned the imperialist war and who had declared in no case would they allow the German workers to be dragged into the murderous imperialist war, changed their appearance more quickly and more thoroughly than a chameleon.

International solidarity of the working class was replaced by the bourgeois theory of solidarity of all classes. The condemnation of the imperialist war gave way to enthusiastic support of the war on the ground of the "Fatherland" was in danger. Refusal to allow the German workers to be used as cannon fodder in the imperialist war was substituted by an active campaign of recruitment of the German workers by the German Socialists. In one word, the German Socialists proved themselves to be thoroughly chauvinistic, capitalistic and whole-hearted supporters of German militarism.

The just at the close of the imperialist war, a new era was born in Germany by the November Revolution. Workers' and Soldiers' Soviets were formed in Berlin and many other cities. The proletarian revolution raised its head under the leadership of the young Communist Party, and the chances of its victory were bright owing to the enfeebled state of the German bourgeoisie after the war.

But then, how could the German Socialist leaders, Ebert, Noske, Scheidmann and others who had so loyally helped the bourgeoisie to carry on the imperialist war, allow the proletarian revolution to crush them. Ebert declared that he hated revolution more than he hated plague or poison, and he and other Social-Democratic leaders proved themselves true to this noble assertion.

The entire force of the Social Democratic Party was used to help the German bourgeoisie to crush the proletarian revolution. The Social Democratic leader, Noske, who prided himself on the title "Bloodhound of Revolution", a title which he assumed himself, took charge a battalion which, with unspeakable brutalities, suppressed the revolution. It was Socialist Noske's hired men who, at the order of their chief, arrested and murdered Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. The vanguard of the German proletariat paid with its blood for the defeat of the revolution.

Even since the Social Democratic Party came to power, and Ebert became the first President of the German Republic, the German working class had been pushed out of all the vantage points which it had gained by continuous struggle in the past.

German Social-Democracy after the war, engaged itself solely in the task of repairing the tottering citadel of capitalism in Germany. Stabilisation of capitalism at any cost—that was the cherished dream of German Social Democracy since the war. As late as 1931, at the annual congress of the Social Democratic

Party in Leipzig, one of the leaders of the party, Charnow declared : "Shall we be the grave-diggers of capitalism or its doctors ?" The Social Democratic Party decided once again to be the doctor. The Socialist leaders declared that they must first cure capitalism and then slowly change it "peacefully" into Socialism.

So, capitalism was being stabilized by the German Socialists all these 13 years that they were in power. And backed by the Socialists in their plan of stabilising capitalism, the German capitalists went on reducing the wages of the German workers during these years of Socialists rule in Germany. At the same time, the working hours were increased in many industries from eight to eleven. The "Socialist" State forced the German working class to accept arbitration from the hands of arbitration courts, established by the Socialists to help the stabilisation of capitalism. Thus, the German working class, thanks to the Socialists, lost even the right to strike.

Less than a year ago, the workers of Berlin underground buses and tramways, went on strike under the leadership of the Communist Party as a protest against the lowering of wages by the Berlin Transport Company. A revolutionary situation was created, as a sympathetic strike by workers of other factories was expected. The Social Democratic Party, as in hundreds of cases before, appeared in the role of a strike-breaker. With its active support, the transport company broke the resistance of the strikers. Some thousands of revolutionary workers were thrown out of their jobs, due to the treachery of the Socialists.

On the other hand, the German Socialists, true to their "democratic" principles, allowed the ex-Kaiser and his family a stately pension and, moreover, they did not confiscate the vast lands which the Kaiser family owned in Germany. Thus, the ex-Kaiser and his sons, continue to fleece millions out of German people's purses. Not only they, but all the imperialistic generals were left to enjoy their "well-earned" property and were handsomely rewarded with huge pensions by the Socialist State. That is how the "noble principal of democracy" was practised by the Socialists in Germany.

Thus helped and loyally supported by the Socialists, the German bourgeoisie consolidated their position in the state and started to rob the German working class of all the rights it had gained by years of bitter and bloody struggles.

Unemployment increased due to capitalistic rationalisation. The unemployment dole was reduced to a miserable level of

eight marks a week for an adult worker. With eight marks he was supposed to pay the rent of his room and eat for a week. The standard of living of the German worker was forcibly lowered by the Socialists in power, with the sole purpose of helping the German capitalists to stabilise capitalism.

After Ebert's death, the Social Democrats actively supported Hindenburgh as a candidate for presidency, knowing full well that the old imperialist general was a monarchist, an open supporter of Stall Helm (Steel Helmet) organisation of counter-revolutionary officers and a blood-thirsty militarist who had declared during the imperialist war that war for him was like going to a watering place for a cure. This man was chosen by the Social Democrats as the president of Republican Germany! As late as the presidential election campaign of 1931, the Prussian Minister of Interior, the Socialist leader, Severing, declared at an election meeting at Limburg: "Of course, Hindenburgh is neither a socialist nor a leader of the working class, but he is something which Hitler is not; Hindenburgh is a man." That made it easy for the Social Democrats to support Hindenburgh. Thus, the "man" Hindenburgh was helped to power repeatedly by the Socialists.

When the militarist camarilla, which was behind Hindenburgh, demanded in the Reichstag a sanction for funds for building war-ships, the Social Democrats supported the militarists wholeheartedly. One solid block of counter-revolution, from the German Nationalists to Social Democrats, was formed against the German working class.

From the very first day of its existence, the Communist Party of Germany pointed out clearly the counter-revolutionary role of the Socialists. The Communists pointed out how since the war the Socialists had turned supporters of capitalism, and, therefore, were enemies of the proletarian revolution.

The Communists pointed out to the German workers, the counter-revolutionary role of the Social Democrats during the November Revolution. It was the Social Democrats who actively suppressed the working class revolution. The Communists also pointed out that the socialist "democracy" was a camouflage to cover up the robbery of workers' rights, and that the Social Democrats, by helping in the stabilisation of capital, however temporary that stabilisation may be, were actually paving the way for Fascism.

At first, the most class-conscious elements of the German working class, grouped around the Communists. Then, in a few

years time, as the treacherous role of the German Socialists became more and more clear to the German working class, vast numbers of them left the rank of the Social Democratic Party and joined the Communist Party. This process of the decomposition of the German Social Democratic Party had been going on in the last few years.

The German Socialists were fully awake to the danger that threatened them from the side of the Communists. So, from the beginning, the Socialist government started the most brutal methods of oppression against the Communists. Thousands of Communists were arrested, hundreds of them were shot at the least excuse, and Communist papers were suppressed innumerable times by order of the Socialist, Severing, the very Prussian Minister, who had gone into ecstasy over the "man" Hindenburg.

Not only this, the Socialist government's tactics in the last few years were to allow the Nazi Party all democratic possibilities of growth, and to allow it to practise Fascist terroristic methods against the working class, especially against the Communists. This bare-faced, hundred-percent counter-revolutionary tactic was adopted by the Socialists in order to crush the ever-growing discontent of the working class against the Socialist Party, and also to crush the growing power of the Communist Party.

This tactic was followed consistently during the last few years. The Socialist Government of Prussia stopped the May Day demonstration in Berlin, and shot the workers who demonstrated in defiance of the prohibition. At the same time, Fascist demonstrations of the Nazi Party were permitted. Nazis carried on pogroms against the Jews ; of course, on a smaller scale than they are practising today. All these years, the Nazis have carried on most brutal terror expeditions against the workers in the working class quarters in Braun Schweig, Frankfurt, Hamburg, and in many other cities. Socialist students were inhumanly assaulted within the university premises by the Fascists. All these were allowed in the name of "democracy" but, in reality, it was to give a free hand to the Nazis to crush the Communist movement. Therefore, with this idea in view, the Socialist government not only did not crush the counter-revolutionary organisation of the Nazis years ago, when it would have been easy to do so, but did actually help their growth, and aided them to come to power. This is the logical growth of the principle of stabilisation of capitalism which the German Social Democrats have consistently followed since the end of the war.

Today, the Socialists in the Reichstag are joining in the ovation of Hitler, by standing up reverently to do honour to this bloody murderer of thousands of German workers. Hitler has declared : "Now Germany is united, at last."

The Socialists in other capitalist countries are busily preparing the way for Fascism as their German compatriots have done in Germany. In India, the reformists like Joshi, Chamanlal, Rao and others, with the backing of Indian capitalists and British imperialists, are following the same line as the one chalked out by the Socialist lackeys of Europe and America.

From "Hitlerism" : The Aryan Rule in Germany—a collection of articles written in Paris in 1933.

On his release from the Gestapo prison in Munich, Tagore went to Paris, where he was active in the anti-Fascist movement. In September, 1933, a huge anti-Fascist rally was held in Paris, where well-known French leaders, Torres and de Moro-Gaifferi accused Goering, Goebbels and other Nazi leaders of having set fire to the Reichstag as a pretext for suppressing the Communists. Tagore also spoke at the meeting. The speech is reproduced here.

REICHSTAG FIRE

Comrades, we have met here today at a definitive time of human history. Never before in the history of humanity has the human race been divided into such two sharply divided, opposing groups as in our time. Invincible forces of progress are at work and, at the same time, the most brutal and dark forces of reaction ever known in human history are howling on all sides like angry beasts. Reaction is rampant, and its howls are heard all over the world. But this reaction has no possibility of maintaining itself except by terror and provocation. Economic forces of the world are against reaction. Therefore, it must solely depend on terror and provocation for its existence. But nowhere has the pure and simple terroristic and provocative character of reaction been so clear as in Hitlerite Germany. Hitler's Fascist dictatorship continues its existence by terror and terror alone. The burning of the Reichstag was organised by the morphinist Goering and that degenerate beast, Goebbels, only with the purpose of organising provocation. Goering's "discovery" of the aeroplanes scattering Communist literature over Berlin was also nothing else but a crude plot of provocation hatched by this criminal.

I was arrested on the grotesque and false charge of having planned to kill Hitler. It was very well known to the German police who knew all my activities in Berlin that my political creed was absolutely against individual terrorism. But the reason of my arrest was the same as it was in the case of the Reichstag fire or in the case of the aeroplane raid over Berlin. Its aim was provocation. The Nazi papers, when bringing out the news of my arrest, betrayed the provocative character quite clearly. They described me as an individual of Herculean built and said that many suspicious materials had been found in the car in which I was travelling, when in reality nothing was found, as absolutely

nothing was there. These long series of provocations manufactured by the Nazis have one purpose in view. Hitlerism has already worsened the condition of the German people and the condition of the German masses is sure to get worse and worse under Fascist rule. The more the Fascist regime fails in giving bread to the millions of hungry workers, the more it fails in solving the unemployment problem, the more will it take recourse to provocation. It will try to cover up its complete lack of economic programme and its complete failure in solving the economic crisis with continually hatched plans of provocation.

In Germany, anti-semitism of the Nazis has two purposes to fulfill. One is to divert the class struggle of the working class into blind alleys of racial struggle; the second is to cover up the failure of the Nazi regime by making the Jews responsible for the economic misery of the German masses. This anti-semitic racial cannibalism of the Nazis must be condemned and denounced by every civilised individual in the world.

The Nazi criminal leaders shout about the "greuel" propaganda in foreign countries, but the victims of Nazi terror with whom I have lived in prison, have shown me the marks of brutal beatings on their bodies and have narrated to me shocking tales of brutalities of the Nazis. What I have seen and what I have heard exceed all the accounts of the brutalities that we come to know through newspapers.

Comrades, let me warn you all not to have any illusion about the imperialist governments. If you think that these governments would really do anything to put an end to the brutal Nazi regime in Germany, you are wholly mistaken. They will do nothing. Already the bourgeois press all over the world have become indifferent to Nazi terror in Germany. Do not expect anything from them. The time for long speeches is over. The time for action has come, the time for the revolutionary action. Remember, comrades, that the chain that binds our comrades in Germany, binds, with its other end, us in all the countries of the world, and the prison-cells in which they sit in Germany exist invisibly round us also. Let us all remember this and carry on the struggle till we have smashed reaction not only in Germany but also all over the world.

From "Hitlerism : The Aryan Rule in Germany"—a collection of articles written in Paris in 1933.

While Tagore was in Paris, the civil disobedience movement in India was called off by the Congress leaders. Consequently the question of Gandhism and of Gandhiji's role in the Indian national struggle became matters of considerable interest in revolutionary and leftist circles in Europe. Tagore wrote extensively on the problems of Gandhism and the movement in India. He met Romain Rolland and discussed with him various aspects of Gandhism. The article reproduced here was first published in Paris. At that time, Jawaharlal Nehru wrote a reply defending Gandhism.

GANDHISM AND THE LABOUR— PEASANT PROBLEM

Ahmedabad is one of the bigger textile centres of India. It is next in importance to Bombay which has the largest number of textile mills. Whenever there is unrest among the workers, the millowners of Ahmedabad are in the habit of requisitioning Mahatma Gandhi to use his influence to settle the disputes. With the consent and support of Gandhiji, some of his followers had taken upon themselves the task of organising the workers into unions. The poor workers, unconscious of their class interests, have readily fallen prey to this clever move. In the event of their declaring a strike against the oppression of their employer, the Gandhists go to the millowners and arrange with them some compromise or other.

These "happy family" conditions, existing in Ahmedabad, are often cited by Mahatma Gandhi as his ideal of what the relation between the employer and the employee should be. Yet the majority of the workers there are living under much worse conditions than those prevailing among the employees of many European firms in India. Mahatma Gandhi's union, the Mazdoor Mahajan, never allows the unrest of the workers to assume such a dimension which can seriously threaten the millowners' exploitation. In this way, the worker's interests are sacrificed and the millowners are protected from any real danger—a typical case of a yellow union. Gandhiji, who is the real power behind this union, has refused to affiliate this trade union to the All-India Trade Union Congress which is controlled by reformists of the Joshi type. Gandhiji's opposition to the All-India Trade Union Congress is not on the score of its being a reformist organisation sacrificing the interest of the working-class to the capitalists, but because it is too "extreme" for him.

On the October 6, 1920—an important day in the history of this union—namely, the second anniversary of the workers' struggle against the millowner, Gandhiji told the workers : "I do not propose to examine the duty of the capitalist. If the labourer alone were to understand his rights and responsibilities and confine himself to the purest means, both must gain. But two things are needful ; both the demands and the means adopted to enforce them must be just and clear. It is an unlawful demand which seeks merely to take advantage of the capitalists' position. But it is an altogether lawful demand when the labourer asks for enough wages to enable him to maintain himself and to educate his children decently. To seek justice without resorting to violence and by an appeal to the good sense of the capitalist by arbitration, is lawful means." (*Wages and Values—Young India*) Gandhiji wants the labourer to understand his rights and responsibilities and to "confine himself to the purest means", in order to bring about the happy result in which "both must gain" ; that is to say, the labourer will gain and also, the capitalist will gain, which boiled down into plain language means that the labourer by understanding his "rights and responsibilities" should not demand more than "reasonable" increment of his wages, an increment which will not appreciably reduce the robbery of surplus value by the capitalist, and that he should not back up his demand by any means other than the "purest"—the worker must limit himself to petitions and appeals to the capitalist, those being the "purest means" that Gandhiji has in mind, and never go beyond the stage of appeal and petitions in the fight. Gandhiji is completely right in every point except one : if the labourer understands his rights and responsibilities and confines to the purest means as Gandhiji wants him to do, everything will be perfect but both cannot gain.

The capitalist and the worker cannot both gain at the same time ; and in the case of the capitalist class the gain is the unpaid labour of the working-class, which is robbery. So if the worker really gains the full value of his work, the capitalist cannot gain. We are, therefore, forced to the conclusion that the phrase "both must gain" means that the capitalist must gain. Gandhiji's real intentions become clearer as he goes on. He warns the workers by saying that "it is an unlawful demand which seeks merely to take advantage of the capitalist's position". Which class takes advantages of the other ? Does the worker take advantage of the capitalist's position or the capitalist of the

workers' position ? Does it require much intelligence to see who is the real victim ? Who has been deprived of all the means of production ? Who has only his hands to maintain himself ? Who is forced to slave for the capitalist and to allow the capitalist to squeeze surplus labour out of him, without paying for it ? Who, if he protests and strikes, is thrown out into the streets ? Who is shot down by the police and the military of the capitalist state when he rightfully demands the full share of his labour ? Who is really the victim of the capitalists ? It is the worker every time. The law, the police, the military of the capitalist state are all there to protect the capitalist. How can a worker in all his helplessness take advantage of one in such an impregnable position ? Gandhiji, who has the capitalists' interest dear to his heart, is quite right when he warns the workers against making "unlawful demands". Every demand of the workers which seriously threatens the reduction of the capitalist's profit is considered unlawful by the capitalist society. According to Gandhiji, "it is an altogether lawful demand when the labourer asks for enough to maintain himself and to educate his children decently". That is the limit up to which Gandhiji is ready to extend the domain of lawful demand. "Enough wages to maintain himself and to educate his children decently," that is all the worker can demand, and no more. Then again, the workers must not put pressure on the capitalist but should "appeal to the good sense of the capitalist" and in case that is of no avail then use the lawful means of arbitration. In other words, the workers must depend on the charitable disposition of the capitalists, who after fully satisfying their own class interests may kindly drop a few crumbs from the master's table to satisfy the underdogs. If the appeal to the good sense of the capitalists has no effect, the most extreme step that the workers can take is arbitration. They must be always within the respectable limit of law, the law which has been created by the capitalists to safeguard their robbery. The workers who are being robbed by the capitalists must not transcend the boundaries of the law, specially made to safeguard this robbery. That is the sum and substance of Gandhiji's contribution to the subject of arbitration between Labour and Capital.

The prophet of the bourgeoisie declares further : "It is a matter for satisfaction that both parties have accepted the principle of arbitration. I hope that principle will be fully developed and that strikes will for ever become an impossibility. I know that strikes are an inherent right of the working men for the

purpose of securing justice but they must be considered a crime immediately the capitalists accept the principle of arbitration. Wages are improving and there is every possibility of a continuous improvement" (*Wages and Values—Young India*).

It must be a matter of satisfaction to Gandhiji, the friend of the capitalists, and to the capitalists themselves that they could force the principle of arbitration on the working class, but for the workers this much-lauded principle of arbitration means nothing more than compulsory acceptance of the dictates of the capitalists which aim at smothering the discontent of the working-class, and the protection of the capitalist class as a whole.

Arbitration is now forced on the working-class all over the world. The German bourgeois republic, which has already been transformed into a Fascist state with the benevolent help of German Social Democracy, has also made the system of arbitration compulsory for the working class of Germany. The workers are compelled by law to come to the conference table to settle the matter with the capitalists, who have themselves made the system of arbitration binding on the workers, and who are backed by the whole force of their own capitalist state. Arbitration is, therefore, a mighty weapon in the hands of the capitalist class of every country and is being wielded against the workers all the world over. No wonder, that the acceptance of the principle of arbitration is a "matter for satisfaction" to Gandhiji. He hopes that "strikes will for ever become an impossibility". So long as the capitalist state is able to force its decision on the working class through the medium of arbitration, strikes will be nipped in the bud ; but even in spite of all oppressive measures used against the workers by the capitalist state, strikes will not become an impossibility. On the contrary, strikes will grow in number and in revolutionary intensity despite Gandhiji's attempts to rule them out. The strike is the expression of the growing class-consciousness of the workers, a class-consciousness which will not be satisfied with a small reduction of the working day and with the "increasing wages" about which Gandhiji talks so complacently. Nothing but the disappearance of wages as an economic category will satisfy the working class and that can only be attained when they work their own machines in their own state—when the capitalist society, which has failed miserably in the task of feeding and clothing the multitudes, is destroyed and a new system of Communist distribution is set up in its place.

Strikes prepare the soil for this seed of revolution to mature in the class-consciousness of the working class so that it may in time bear fruit. This does not mean that every strike leads to immediate revolution, but every strike prepared and organised properly, surely helps the growth of the class-consciousness of the working class which ultimately leads to revolution. Gandhiji's attempts to limit the necessity of strikes to raising wages and the reduction of working hours are the well-known policy by which the capitalists and their agents have in every country tried to sidetrack the labour movement. Of course, strikes will be used also for raising wages and wresting all possible advantages from the capitalists till the working class succeeds finally in taking the reins of the power into its hands.

Gandhiji says : "Wages are improving and there is every possibility of a continuous improvement." This is not true. On the contrary, there is no possibility of continuous improvement in wages under capitalism. Each increase of the worker's wages means so much less of surplus value to the capitalists, unless the increase is compensated by an increased intensity of labour. But intensity of labour cannot be increased indefinitely and, therefore, there is no possibility of an continuous improvement of wages. On the contrary, we see before our eyes how wages are decreasing in every part of the world. Just now, in Bengal, the jute workers have been forced to accept a 25 per cent reduction in their wages. Germany's Emergency Decrees, the stunts of Macdonalds' "labour" and national governments, the juggling of the financiers with the English pound, all tend towards an overwhelming reduction, not only in wages but in the standard of living of the working class. The ever-recurring and ever-deepening crises, inherent in the system of production for profits will lead not to Gandhiji's deceptive hope of "continuous improvement," but to an increasing worsening of the workers' condition all over the world.

"The millowners tell me," says Gandhiji, "that the mill-hands are lazy they do not give full time to their work and they are inattentive. I, for one, cannot expect attention and application from those who are called upon to work twelve hours per day. But I could certainly hope that, when the hours are reduced to ten, the labourers will put in better and almost the same amount of work as in twelve hours. Reduction in hours of labour has brought about happy results in England. When mill-hands learn to identify themselves with the interests of the millowners, they

will rise and with them will rise the industries of our country. I would, therefore, urge the millowners to reduce the hours of labour to ten and urge the mill-hands to give as much work in ten, as they have been doing in twelve." (*Ibid*)

In the interests of the capitalists, Gandhiji preaches class-collaboration. According to Gandhiji, "the mill-hands have to learn to identify themselves with the interest of the millowners" and in so doing "they will rise and with them will rise the industries of our country." How can the mill-hands identify themselves with the interest of the millowners, which is to exploit the workers ? Will the mill-hands agree to being exploited by the millowners and not fight against them ? Yet, this is the only way that mill-hands can identify themselves with the interest of the millowners. The interest of the mill-hands is fundamentally opposed to the millowners. Why does Gandhiji not preach to his friends, the capitalists—the millowners (on our part we are convinced that preaching would not help in the least unless backed by force, and unless ultimately force is used) to identify themselves with the interest of the mill-hands by ceasing to exploit them ? If the millowners did follow Gandhiji's advice it would mean their destruction as a class and we know that they would never consent to this unless the working class revolution forces them. Gandhiji's preaching to the mill-hands, who are robbed and exploited by the millowners, to identify themselves with the interest of their employers, to allow themselves to be exploited more and more, is the worst treachery to the interests of the workers imaginable. According to Gandhiji, if the workers follow this advice then "they will rise and with them will rise the industries of the country". This is a gross travesty of truth. The industries of the country will rise in the sense that the capitalist will be able to squeeze more surplus-value out of the workers if they follow Gandhiji's advice. So the great friend of humanity, Gandhiji wishes to develop the industry of his country at the cost of intensified exploitation of the workers.

Gandhiji spends so much of his breath and rage in giving vent to tirades against machinery which, he thinks, is responsible for the misery of the workers. Would it not have been better for him to attack a social system which is the real criminal ! But Gandhiji, the friend of the millowners, never dreams of inconveniencing the capitalists whose interest he so jealously serves by preaching class-collaboration to the workers. None can accuse Gandhiji of lack of sympathy for the workers ! For their benefit,

he urges the millowners to reduce the hours of labour from twelve to ten, but in the same breath he urges the mill-hands "to give as much work in ten, as they have been doing in twelve". In other words, the Mahatma urges the workers to increase the intensity of their labour so that the amount of surplus-value which the capitalists squeeze out of them is not diminished. Gandhiji is shrewd enough to see that "strikes are the order of the day. They are a symptom of the existing unrest. The labour world of India, as elsewhere, is at the mercy of those who set up as advisers and guides.....The political situation, too, is beginning to affect the labourers of India. And there are not wanting leaders who consider that strikes may be engineered for political purposes. In my opinion, it will be a most serious mistake to make use of labour strikes for such a purpose. I do not deny that such strikes can serve political ends. But they do not fall in with the plan of non-violent non-cooperation. It does not require much effort of the intellect to perceive that it is a most dangerous thing to make political use of labour until labourers understand the political condition of the country and are prepared to work for the common good." (*Strikes—Young India*).

As we have already seen Mahatma Gandhi wants the labourers to be careful that their demands are "lawful demands" and are enforced by "lawful means". In other words, the workers must leave the decision of which demands and which means are lawful to the capitalist state. The margin of lawful demand and lawful means shrinks just as the interests of the capitalists and their state dictate. Today, in Nazi Germany to demonstrate against hunger and starvation is considered unlawful.

Gandhiji does not stop warning the workers about "lawful demands and lawful means", he deliberately emphasises that strikes should not be used for political ends. In other words, he wants to limit the sphere of strikes to the daily demands of the workers, to vulgar "economism" which enemies of the working-class have advocated all over the world as the aim of the working-class movement. It is quite clear from Gandhiji's own words "strikes do not fall within the plan of non-violent non-cooperation" that he rules strikes out of the programme of non-cooperation because he knows that it is not in line with the interest of the capitalist class, whose interest he is careful to safeguard. The workers must be prepared to work for the "common good" which is a circumlocution meaning the class-interest of the capitalists. Until that is achieved, until the workers have learned

to "identify themselves with the interest of the millowners", Gandhiji finds that "it is a most dangerous thing to make political use of labour."

Sir William Vincent, the Home Member of the Indian government during the non-cooperation, in a speech in April, 1920, before the Legislative Assembly on the political situation in India violently attacked the movement. Commenting on this, Gandhiji wrote among other things : "It is a dangerous half-truth to say that we have left no source of discontent unused. We could not help using sources of legitimate discontent. But non-cooperationists have rigidly refrained from using any and every discontent, if only because we would weaken our cause if we did. The illustration of what I mean will be best seen from the repetition of the very next sentence which Sir William has spoken in support of the contention. 'Wherever they find discord between the employer and the employee, there some agent or emissary of the non-cooperation party proceeds at once to foster discontent and promote ill-feeling'. This is not only untrue, but it is an incitement to the two to oppose non-cooperation. The avowed policy of non-cooperation has been not to make political use of disputes between Labour and Capital. They have endeavoured to hold the balance evenly between the two. We would be fools if we want only in set Labour against Capital. It would be just the way to play into the hand of a government which would greatly strengthen its hold on the country by setting the capitalists against the labourers and vice versa. In Jharia, for instance, it was a non-cooperator who prevented an extending strike. The later will not hesitate to advance the cause of strikes where they have a just grievance. They have ever refused to lend their assistance to unjust strikers", (*Divide and Rule, Young India*)

This passage requires a thorough examination as nothing exposes the true character of Gandhism as this. Mahatma Gandhi denies the charge levelled against the non-cooperators by Sir William that they "have left no source of discontent unused" and he is right. Only these sources of discontent have been used which served the interests of the capitalists and the landlords. These are the "legitimate discontent" in the words of Mahatma Gandhi. He is quite right when he says, "but non-cooperationists have rigidly refrained from using any and every discontent, if only because we would weaken our cause if we did."

Mahatma Gandhi and his friends have rigidly refrained (when not acting as strike-breakers as we shall see later) from organising

the discontent of the workers against the capitalists and the discontent of the peasants against the landlords. They have systematically sabotaged and suppressed each and every manifestation of class struggle in the masses, only because it would endanger the interest of the Indian capitalists and the landlords. Sir William Vincent accuses Gandhiji of fostering discontent between the employer and the employee. Gandhiji rightly refutes such an "ignoble charge" against his followers. "The avowed policy of non-cooperation has been", says Mahatma Gandhi, "not to make political use of disputes between Labour and Capital. They have endeavoured to hold the balance evenly between the two. We would be fools if we want only to set Labour against Capital." He knows very well that if he makes political use of disputes between Labour and Capital against British imperialism, it will in time react against the Indian capitalists who give so much help to the Gandhian movement. Hence, the reason for his unwillingness to make political use of disputes between Labour and Capital. He tries to justify his policy on the ground that it would mean playing into the hands of the government which would play one against the other and thus strengthen its hold on the country. British imperialism in India rules India not by setting Labour against Capital, it rules India in the interest of the British capitalists, the Indian capitalists and the landlords. It rules India with the help of the Indian capitalists, the Native Princes and the landlords. Its rule is synonymous with an unparalleled oppression of the masses of India. British imperialism cannot play Labour against Capital, as that would mean cutting the ground from under its own feet. Mahatma Gandhi's argument does not hold water. It is a clever move to confuse the real issue, but unfortunately for Gandhiji it deceives none. Mahatma Gandhi then shows himself in the role of strike-breakers that his followers have been playing. "In Jharia, for instance, it was a non-cooperator who prevented an extending strike", he says with pride. Certainly, the non-cooperators have ever advanced the cause of the strikers when they had "just" demands but they have ever refused to lend their assistance to unjust strikers. The role of the strike-breaker which Gandhiji has so often played, and still plays in Ahmedabad in the interest of the capitalists, and, which Gandhists play all over India, could not have been more severely condemned than in Gandhiji's own words.

In the early part of 1921, a peasant uprising was brewing in the United Provinces. In Oudh, the peasants rebelled against the

inhuman exploitation to which they were subjected by the talukdars. They refused to pay rents and taxes. They thrashed the landlord's agents when they came to collect rents and drove them away. In some places, they burnt the houses of the landlords. Having found themselves in a situation which grew more critical daily and threatened to wipe them out, the landlords appealed to Gandhiji to come to their aid. True to his creed, he rushed to Oudh and issued instructions to the peasants of the United Provinces, to be distributed through the agency of the Kisan Sabha, whose president was none other than the late Pandit Motilal Nehru, the most reactionary of all the reactionary leaders of the Indian National Congress, who had managed to install himself in that position with the idea of putting a check on any activities of the peasants which might prove detrimental to the interests of landlords. Motilal distributed these instructions in thousands throughout the affected areas. The first five points of the instruction were :

“Attainment of Swaraj or redress of grievances is impossible unless the following rules are strictly observed : 1. We may not hurt anybody. We may not use our sticks against anybody. 2. We may not loot shops. 3. We may not withhold taxes from the government or rent from the landlord. 4. Should there be any grievances against the Zamindars, they should be reported to Pundit Motilal Nehru and his advice followed. 5. It should be borne in mind that we want to turn the Zamindars into our friends.” (*Instructions to the Peasants of the United Provinces—Young India*)

There are many other points, but they are quite irrelevant to our subject, and so I have not mentioned them here. The points mentioned above have special reference to the peasant unrest in the United Provinces.

The peasants were thrashing the landlord's agents—a thrashing which was long overdue. The first point has for its aim to protect the landlords and their agents from the very just thrashing which the peasants had meted out to them. The starving peasants, hungry as they were, began to loot the grain stores of the landlords and the village bourgeoisie. The second point of the instruction forbids that most justifiable action in the interest of the landlords. The peasants refused to pay rent to the landlords. The third point meant to put pressure on them to pay the rent and taxes. The fourth point advised the peasants to report their grievances to Pundit Motilal Nehru, who was the greatest enemy

the peasants ever had. And the fifth point asked the peasants to bear in mind that "we want to turn the Zamindars into our friends". As a matter of fact, it was unnecessary for Gandhiji or Pandit Motilal Nahru to turn the landlords into their friends as both of them together with all other Congress leaders were the faithful allies of the landlords. What the instruction really meant was that the peasants should consider the landlords as their friends. These instructions clearly demonstrate Gandhiji's real attitude to the peasants.

Gandhiji visited Qudh, issued these instructions to the peasants, used his great influence to force the peasants to pay rent to the landlords, and ultimately managed to crush the entire peasant uprising. The peasants, who looked upon him as an incarnation of Rama, obeyed his instructions and dejectedly returned home. Now the landlords felt themselves strong enough to revenge themselves on the peasants. The houses of the peasants were burnt down, their lands forcibly confiscated, thousands of them were prosecuted most inhumanly—all due to the intervention of the "friend of the poor".

In an article entitled, "Zamindars and the Ryots", Gandhiji wrote in *Young India* of May 19, 1921 : "While the United Provinces Government is crossing the bounds of propriety and intimidating people, there is little doubt that the Kisans too are not making wise use of their newly found power. In several Zamindaries, (the estates of the landlords) they are said to have overstepped the mark, taken the law into their own hands and to have become impatient of anybody who would not do as they wish. They are abusing social boycott and are turning it into an instrument of violence. They are reported to have stopped the supply of water, barber, and other paid services to their Zamindars in some instances and even suspended payment of the rent due to them. The Kisan movement (that is the peasant movement) has received an impetus from non-cooperation but it is anterior and independent of it. Whilst we will not hesitate to advise the Kisans when the movement comes to suspend payment of taxes to the government, it is not contemplated that at any stage of non-cooperation we would seek to deprive the Zemindars of their rent. The Kisan movement must be confined to the improvement of the status of the Kisans and the betterment of the relations between the Zamindars and them. The Kisans must be advised scrupulously to abide by the terms of their agreement with the Zamindars: whether such is written or inferred from custom. Where a

custom or even a written contract is bad, they may not try to uproot it by violence or without previous reference to the Zamindars. In every case, there should be a friendly discussion with the Zamindars and an attempt made to arrive at a settlement."

In these few lines, Gandhiji has admirably laid bare his role as the greatest enemy of the Indian peasants. In referring to the peasant uprising in Oudh, he severely criticises the peasants for having effectively conducted a social boycott against their class-enemy, the landlords. Gandhiji is appalled that the peasants "even suspended rent due to them (Zamindars)". He shows more openly the reactionary, anti-revolutionary character of the non-cooperation movement when he says that the suspension of the payment of taxes to the government may be advised when the right time comes, but "it is not contemplated that at any stage of non-cooperation we would seek to deprive the Zamindars of their rent." In other words, the peasantry must be used to get rid of the imperialist bourgeois rule of India so that in future the landlords have not to share the surplus-value squeezed out of the peasantry with the imperialist bourgeoisie, but can retain the whole of the spoil. Gandhiji declares with an astounding callousness that the peasants must abide by the terms of their agreement with the Zamindars, "whether such is written or inferred from custom", even if the contract or the custom is bad. These lines require no comment.

"It is true that the Kisan movement has received an impetus from non-cooperation but it is anterior to, and independent of it." The peasant movement started in different parts of India quite independently of the non-cooperation movement. The brutal exploitation of the landlords was too much even for the proverbial patience of the Indian peasantry. The non-cooperation movement in the beginning undoubtedly gave an impetus to the peasant movement. The peasants wrongly thought that Gandhiji was their man as he always declared himself to be, and so they thought that the non-cooperation movement aimed at the betterment of their lot. The peasants have bitterly paid the price of their faith in Gandhiji. Their movement was essentially a class struggle of the peasantry against the landlords. All that Gandhiji did was to divert this discontent into other channels until he finally created a class-collaboration movement which has proved very beneficial to the landowning section of the community.

The entire English newspaper world, even its most conservative members, gasped and held its breath when Gandhiji, in a

speech at the Round Table Conference, made his confession of unbounded faith in the landlords. He declared himself in favour of adult suffrage but thought it would be advisable to levy a small registration fee to keep the voting lists from being too large. This, it must be remembered, in a country where millions have not the money to buy the barest necessities of life. He pictured an ideal state whose legislators would consist of princes "who are as God made them, noble men." (Round Table Speech, September 17, 1931), and landlords for whom "it would be a matter of pride that their ryots—these millions of villagers would prefer their landlords as their candidates and representatives rather than some one from among themselves. (*Ibid*) These members of the propertied classes would without doubt, use the Federal Legislature as a means for benefitting the working class ! We can see the touching picture: princes and landlords vying with one another, racking their brains for new ideas for the purpose of making the worker's existence a heaven on earth. All carnal ideas of profit would be excluded. The landlords, according to the Round Table Conference speech, would be the "trustees of the people". On such a chimerical foundation rests Mahatma Gandhi's reputation as a "friend of the poor", as a champion of India's freedom ! At the same conference, he made clear in his speech that he had travelled all the way from India to London to make a "gentle, humble complaint against His Majesty's advisers" for not giving the members a lead by putting forward concrete proposals and drafting a constitution for the conference to consider.

On this occasion, Gandhism sailed under its true colours. This kneeling before the majesty of the imperialist oppressors, this pandering to the princes, millowners and landlords, is the very essence of Gandhism.

This article on Gandhiji's Satyagraha movement in South Africa, Tagore lays bare the basic compromise-seeking nature of Gandhism, and points out how the movement was designed to serve the interests of the trading community at the cost of the so-called Indian "coolies"—the indented labourers. This article was also first published in a Paris journal in 1933.

SATYAGRAHA OR THE SERVICE OF CAPITALISM

From 1893 to 1914, Mahatma Gandhi was in South Africa, and it is there that he rose to fame. It is there that he worked out his philosophy of life which goes under the name of "Gandhism".

"Satyagraha in South Africa" exhaustively deals with the history of the passive resistance movement there, and also with other activities of Mahatma Gandhi during his 21 years' stay. This book and his autobiography may, therefore, be used as references for a survey of Mahatma Gandhi's career in South Africa.

Within a fortnight of his arrival in Durban in May, 1893, he had many bitter experiences. He found it impossible to secure accommodation in hotels. He was beaten and pushed out of a train by a police constable. Of his first year's stay in South Africa, there is nothing more to narrate than the series of insults and humiliations to which he was subjected. His first thought was to leave South Africa immediately and to return to India. But after much consideration, he came to the conclusion that such a step would be cowardly, and that he must accomplish the work he had taken in hand. With this resolve, he proceeded to Pretoria. On the way he was once more subjected to rough handling.

In Pretoria, Mahatma Gandhi was mainly engaged in looking after the interests of the firm he was representing. In 1894, on the expiry of his contract, he was preparing to leave for India. A farewell party was given in his honour by the firm he had served. At this party, someone put a copy of the "Natal Mercury" in his hand. In it, he found that the Natal government was about to introduce a Bill to disfranchise the Indian residents there. Mahatma Gandhi read out the article to all those who were present, and called upon them to oppose the Bill. They urged Mahatma Gandhi to stay back for a month or so longer. This he consented to do, and drew up a petition which was sent to the Legislative

Assembly. A committee was formed, meetings were held, funds collected, and a memorial signed by 400 persons was forwarded to the Assembly. All this, however, remained unheeded, and the iniquitous Bill was passed.

Again Mahatma Gandhi wanted to leave for India. But the Indians, finding his presence necessary, persuaded him to stay on. As a result of his efforts, a permanent organisation, the Natal Indian Congress, was formed in 1894. In 1896, he returned to India for six months. He went about the country, making rousing speeches to enlighten the Indian public on the condition of their countrymen in South Africa. At the end of six months, he received a cable from the Indians in Natal asking him to return at once, and so he betook himself immediately to South Africa. The European residents, informed by Reuter of Mahatma Gandhi's activities in India, awaited his arrival and lynched him.

In 1899, the Boer War broke out. The Indian community in South Africa was divided in their opinion as to what attitude the Indians in South Africa should take. Some argued: "The British oppress us equally with the Boers. If we are subjected to hardships in the Transvaal, we are not very much better off in Natal or Cape Colony. The difference, if any, is only of degree. Again we are more or less a community of slaves; knowing as we do that a small nation like the Boers is fighting for its very existence, why should we be instrumental in their destruction? Finally, from a practical point of view no one will take it upon himself to predict a defeat of the Boers. And if they win, they will never fail to wreck vengeance upon us."

Against them, Mahatma Gandhi, the apostle of non-violence, advanced the following arguments: "Our existence in South Africa is only in our capacity as British subjects ... we have been proud of our British citizenship or have given our rulers and the world to believe that we are so proud ... It would be unbecoming to our dignity as a nation to look on with folded hands at a time when ruin started the British in the face as well as ourselves, simply because they ill-treat us here... It is true that we are helots in the Empire, but, so far, we have tried to better our condition, continuing the while to remain in the Empire. That has been the policy of all our leaders in India and ours, too. And if we desire to win our freedom and achieve our welfare as members of the British Empire, here is a golden opportunity for us to do so by

¹ Satyagraha in South Africa, Chap IX, pages 113-114 in 1928 edition, published by S. Ganesan, India.

helping the British in the war by all the means at our disposal. It must largely be conceded that justice is on the side of the Boers. But every single subject of a state must not hope to enforce his private opinion in all cases ... Our ordinary duty as subjects, therefore, is not to enter into the merits of the war, but when war has actually broken out, to render such assistance as we possibly can." Here, we see that the Mahatma prompted either by his love for the British Empire and pride in being a British subject or by his opportunism prepared to fight on the side of the British though he admitted that justice was on the side of the Boers.

The Indians in South Africa, most of whom were petty merchants and clerks hailing from Gujarat, convinced by his arguments or bludgeoned by his personality, agreed to render loyal support to the government, excepting, of course, the coolies, those "dumb paupers", who had no say in the matter. Mahatma Gandhi wrote letter after letter to the government offering his loyal services and those of the other Indians. These offers were refused several times, but eventually sanction was given to the formation of an Indian Ambulance Corps. "All this was a revelation to the English Press ... An English man wrote in a leading newspaper a poem eulogistic of the Indians with the following line as refrain : 'We are sons of the Empire after all,'"² writes Mahatma Gandhi, with pride. For helping the Empire in its hour of need, war medals were conferred on 37 leaders of the Indians among whom Mahatam Gandhi was the most prominent.

By 1900, the British defeated the Boers. General Kronje surrendered, and only guerilla warfare continued. Mahatma Gandhi thought that his work was over. He had helped the British in South Africa and now that the war had practically come to an end, he could very well return to India. His friends agreed to let him go only on the condition that he would return to South Africa if his presence should become necessary. This was settled, and towards the close of 1901 he returned home. Hardly had he been in India one year when he received a cable from his colleagues in South Africa urging him to return immediately.

After having helped the British government against the Boers, what conditions did Mahatma Gandhi find on his return? At the conclusion of the war, the British had occupied those territories which had previously belonged to the Boers, but were where the expected concessions—the true rewards of loyalty?

¹ Ibid. Chap. IX, pages 114-116.

² Ibid. Chap. IX, page 119.

They did not exist. The old laws which the Boers had directed against the Indians were also enforced under British rule, especially the Law No. 3 of 1885, forbidding Indians to buy land. Two deputations waited upon Mr Chamberlain who happened to be in Natal, but both the efforts were fruitless.

The government introduced a rigorous system of registration, directed solely against the future immigration of Indians. This was the state of affairs when the Zulu Rebellion broke out in Natal. And Mahatma Gandhi? He stated: "Now as in the Boer War, many European residents of Natal joined the army as volunteers. As I, too, was considered a resident of Natal, I thought I must do my bit in the war"¹.

The government naturally accepted the offer of Mahatma Gandhi's services. But for him the wounded Zulus would have fared terribly! In "Satyagraha in South Africa" Mahatma Gandhi writes cleverly giving the information that he took part in the war only for the purpose of taking care of the wounded Zulus. In reality, he was inspired by the same motive as that which actuated him at the time of the Boer War. Mahatma Gandhi, always optimistic, wanted, as he still wants, to convince his imperialist masters of his loyalty and, thus, to gain a few concessions from them for his people. And what was the reward of this service to the cause of imperialism? Mahatma Gandhi and his friends added to their collection of medals and an Ordinance was introduced to consummate the ruin of the Indian traders in Transvaal. He writes: "I know that indentured Indians in Natal are subject to a drastic system of passes, but these poor fellows can hardly be classed as free men. However, even the laws to which they are subject are mild in comparison to the Ordinance outlined above, and the penalties they impose are a mere ileabite when compared with the penalties laid down in the Ordinance. A trader, with assets running into lakhs, could be deported and thus faced with utter ruin in virtue of the Ordinance."² Here, in the clearest terms, Mahatma Gandhi states the reason of his opposing the Ordinance. The indentured Indians, the coolies, were hardly the people to bother about, "they could hardly be classed as free men", so why bother about them! Mahatma Gandhi was perturbed because the traders "with assets running into lakhs could be deported and, thus, faced with utter ruin in virtue of the Ordinance." The much-advertised Satyagraha

¹ Ibid. Chap. II, page 153.

² Ibid. Chap. III, Page 158.

movement which Mahatma Gandhi started in South Africa was his answer to the Ordinance. The Satyagraha movement was started and carried on solely with the purpose of safeguarding the interests of the traders. The indentured labourers were, of course, drawn into the struggle. Without their help sufficient pressure could not have been brought to bear on the mineowners and the mineowners' government. So those "poor fellows who could hardly be classed as free men" generously gave their help to prevent the ruination of the traders.

On September 11, 1906, a meeting was held which was presided over by Mr Abdul Gani, the partner and manager of the Johannesburg branch of the well-known firm of Maman Kasam Kamruddhin. At this meeting, a resolution was passed to oppose the Ordinance. The local government was approached with memorials, deputations waited upon the minister, and a deputation led by Mahatma Gandhi was sent to England. Mahatma Gandhi met all those officials and non-officials, whom he considered important for his mission, and then after six weeks' stay in England, returned to South Africa. But all these memorials and petitions achieved nothing. Lord Elgin, who refused to give the Ordinance the force of law on the ground that racial discrimination was a departure from the basic principles of the British Empire, assured Sir Richard Solomon, the Transvaal representative in England, that after the lapse of a few months, when the Transvaal would have its own responsible government and cease to be a Crown Colony, the Ordinance could be introduced in that legislature in which case the Royal Assent would not be refused. This friendly understanding seemed to satisfy everyone except the Indian victims. In due course, a responsible government was established in Transvaal and the Asiatic Registration Act, based on the original Ordinance, was passed on March 21, 1907. The Act was declared law from July 1, 1907, and Indians were required to register before July 31. The usual course of petitions followed with no results and, at last, the Passive Resistance Association was formed. Many Indians joined the Association, and the Indian community contributed generously to the funds of the organisation.

The offices for registration were opened in July, but, due to picketing by the volunteers of the Passive Resistance Association, not more than 500 Indians (out of a population of 10,000) registered themselves. The Asiatic Department of the government, finding that despite persuasion only 20 percent of the Indians

were prepared to obey the new law, began large-scale arrests. These law-breakers, among whom was Mahatma Gandhi, were sentenced to two months' simple imprisonment. In the course of a few weeks, they were joined by 150 of their fellow passive resisters. Meanwhile, one Mr. Cartwright, editor of the Johannesburg daily, "The Transvaal Leader", came to see Mahatma Gandhi in prison to submit to him terms of a proposed settlement which were already approved by Gen. Smuts. By the terms of this settlement, Indians were required to register voluntarily. The government undertook to repeal the Act if the majority of the Indians would undergo voluntary registration. Mahatma Gandhi, having clothed the agreement in different language without altering the conditions, accepted it, and was set free along with the other prisoners. Immediately after his release, he went straight to Johannesburg and pleaded with the other Indians to accept the government's terms. There were a few who opposed it saying that the Act should first be repealed and then the Indians would register themselves voluntarily. Mahatma Gandhi, however, managed to win the majority of the community to his side, and to get them to agree to the settlement. He was the first to register himself by giving his finger-prints on the paper. Here, again, is a conclusive proof of Mahatma Gandhi's unbound faith in the British imperialists.

Again disappointment! It had not been Gen. Smuts' intention to repeal the Act. The Act was maintained. The voluntary registration was accepted as valid, and any new Indian immigrants to the country would still be subjected to the Registration Act. His next step was to address a letter to Gen. Smuts, but the "great" General was silent. At last, smarting under this treatment, the passive resisters forwarded an ultimatum to the government intimating it that if the Act was not forthwith repealed, those Indians who had voluntarily registered themselves would burn their certificates and suffer the consequences. As a gesture of defiance more than 2,000 certificates were burnt. The government, after a time, took recourse to arresting the Indians. Mahatma Gandhi was again among the prisoners. The struggle became more intense. Imprisonment as a weapon did not appear to be effective enough. So, the government tried deportation. This entailed tremendous hardships on the Indians deported, as they were forced to leave their land and business in South Africa. In the midst of these happenings, Mahatma Gandhi was released and undertook another of his fruitless deputations to England.

Mahatma Gandhi's political "guru", Gokhale, the well-known moderate leader, visited South Africa in 1912. He had, like his disciple, infinite faith in the British imperialists. In an interview, Gen. Smuts promised Gokhale that the Act would be repealed and that the obnoxious £3 poll tax would also be abolished. He returned to India satisfied with his achievements. The promises of the imperialists masters were, alas, as hollow as ever. Neither was the Act repealed nor was the poll tax abolished. On the contrary, through a strange decision of the Cape Town Supreme Court, all marriages celebrated according to rites other than Christian were placed outside the pale of legal marriage. This reduced a married Indian woman to the position of a concubine and deprived her children of all rights to their father's property. The women then became active in the struggle in defence of their homes. They began their campaign by entering Transvaal without permits, but the government left them alone. They were not deported. Realising their hitherto unused power, they proceeded to Newcastle, the great coal-mining centre in Natal, and urged the Indian labourers to help them by going on strike. As a result of their propaganda, a strike broke out. The mine-owners' government could ill afford to look at these developments with indifference. It became uneasy, arrested the women and sentenced them to short terms of imprisonment. In the meantime, the strikers began to flock into the city. The mine-owners also began to harass the workers in various ways. All the labourers lived in company quarters. Suddenly their supply of electricity and water was cut off, and they were evicted. Mahatma Gandhi advised the worker not to wait to be thrown out but to leave their quarters immediately. Following this advise, some 5,000 labourers, men and women, left their homes and lived under the open sky. Then Mahatma Gandhi decided to march into Transvaal at the head of these 5,000 labourers, and get them arrested for having illegally left Natal without the necessary permits.

Up to this point, Mahatma Gandhi had not thought even of making the £3 poll tax a plank of his political platform. The struggle so far, had been only the voice of the Indian merchants protesting against the Act. Mahatma Gandhi writes: "The struggle also was limited to a repeal of the Act in question ... In the early stages the Indians were every now and then asking for other grievances beside the Black Act to be covered by struggle. I patiently explained to them that such extension would be a violation of the truth, which could not be so much as

thought of in a movement professing to abide by truth and truth alone".¹ But Mahatma Gandhi's truth proved to be nothing if not elastic. In time he realised that to serve the cause of the Indian merchants in South Africa, it was necessary; nay, it was imperative, to put a real, a firmer pressure on the British government by drawing the indentured Indian workers into the movement. Without them, all efforts would prove futile. So Mahatma Gandhi tried another experiment and brought forth from his laboratory a freshly-distilled "truth" which allowed the £3 poll tax to be made a plank of the movement. The Union government had promised Gokhale that it would be repealed and then had gone back on its word. As a result of his new discovery, Mahatma Gandhi declared: "The breach of promise made to such a representative of India as Gokhale could not be taken lying down."² Satisfying himself and his followers with such a sentimental reason for broadening his truth to cover the labourers, Mahatma Gandhi started to attract the workers to the movement.

To continue, Transvaal was 36 miles from Newcastle and Mahatma Gandhi decided to march this distance on foot with these 5,000 people. The march caused untold suffering to the workers. Mahatma Gandhi once more tried to make a compromise with Gen. Smuts but was insulted. He was several times arrested and released during the course of the march and eventually he was sentenced to two years' imprisonment on two different charges. The workers were then transported by special trains to Natal and were straight away sent to prison. Such a procedure, however, was detrimental to the working of the mines. So the government turned the mine compounds into jails where the workers were compelled to stay caged in by wire netting. In this way, the workers were forced back to their work. Many of them refused to work, but a little persuasion by the European staff armed with whips soon remedied this defect.

But the strike was not limited to Natal alone. Thousands of workers from different parts of the country had downed tools. This was not what Mahatma Gandhi wished. He writes : "When I went to jail, I had warned my co-workers against allowing any more labourers to go on strike." But in spite of this the strike became general. The government adopted barbarous methods of

¹ Ibid Chap. XXXVIII Page 412.

² Ibid Chap. XXXVIII Page 415.

repression against it. The workers were forced to work in the mines and were fired upon whenever they refused to work. But in face of all this oppression the workers continued their struggle.

At this juncture a strike broke out among the European employees of the Union Railways. The government was surrounded by difficulties on all sides. The enormous losses inflicted on the mineowners by the strike, and troubles among their own railwaymen forced the government to adopt different tactics. Gen. Smuts appointed a commission to report on the entire Indian question. Mahatma Gandhi was released from prison after he had served his term for six weeks only. It was suggested to him to start his march into Transvaal again. Here is what the Mahatma answered: "But I declared that the Indians could not thus assist the railway strikers, as they were not out to harass the government, their struggle being entirely different and differently conceived. Even if we undertook the march, we would begin it at some other time when the railway trouble had ended. This decision of ours created a deep impression, and was cabled to England by Reuter... Lord Ampthill cabled his congratulations from England. One of the secretaries of Gen. Smuts jocularly said: 'I do not like your people. But what am I to do? You help us in our days of need. How can we lay hands upon you?'"¹

The secretary of Gen. Smuts has put the Mahatma Gandhi policy in a nutshell. Mahatma Gandhi had served the British imperialists again and again. He served them in the Boer War; he served them in the Zulu rebellion and later on in the Great War he served them once more. Was there any reason why the Mahatma should support the railway employees on strike particularly when "the European workmen not only demanded higher wages, but aimed at seizing the reigns of government into their hands?"² Thus once more Reuter, Lord Ampthill and the European capitalists nodded approval to the Mahatma's laudable action.

But still the railway strike did help the Indian movement. Faced with this grave, rapidly spreading danger, the Union government thought it better not to let the Indian workers' strike grow in the same direction, and it agreed to the proposals of the appointed commission. The Act was repealed and the £3 poll tax abolished in accordance with the terms of the Indian

¹ Ibid. Chap. XIVII, page 491 .

² Ibid. Chap. XIVIII, "The Provisional Settlement."

Relief Bill passed by the Union Parliament. Mahatma Gandhi immediately stopped the struggle.

But the question is, did it really bring about an amelioration in the condition of the thousands of indentured Indian workers in South Africa? Did it fundamentally change the condition of the Indians in South Africa? It did not. On the contrary, as time went on, the conditions of the Indians in South Africa became worse. The passive resistance movement brought only some insignificant changes in the conditions of Indians in South Africa. Did it achieve anything worthy of making people get so enthusiastic over it as the Gandhists often do? Mahatma Gandhi has given the answer himself. He says: "When one considers the painful contrast between the happy ending of the Satyagraha struggle and the present condition of Indians in South Africa, one feels for a moment as if all this suffering had gone for nothing or is inclined to question the efficacy of Satyagraha as a solvent of the problem of mankind."¹ And the Mahatma has said the truth!

Ibid. Conclusion, page 509.

When Romain Rolland's book on Gandhiji was published, Saumyendranath was in Paris. He had been writing articles in many periodicals on the reactionary social content of Gandhism. He thus took the opportunity of his stay in Paris to write to Rolland about Gandhiji and his ideology. A correspondence ensued. And to have personal discussions with Rolland, Saumyendranath met him a few weeks before his departure from Europe. This article gives a verbatim report of Saumyendranath's talk with Romain Rolland, and appeared as a booklet in French in Paris in 1933. Incidentally, Rolland sent a special message to the revolutionary youths of India through Saumyendranath.

A CONVERSATION WITH ROMAIN ROLLAND ON GANDHISM

PROLOGUE

The bourgeoisie have recognised Mahatma Gandhi as their prophet and, all over the world, fanatical imperialists, big landed proprietors, capitalists and bankers have nothing but reverence for him, and are unanimous in declaring him to be their prophet. On a superficial examination, this may seem surprising and contradictory. Is it possible that imperialists, capitalists and land-owners, who are all champions of a system based on brute force, should be able to feel enthusiasm for a man who is said to be the propagator of the doctrine of "spiritual force" ? But, however contradictory this may seem, it is not so in reality. In fact, it is exactly as it should be. The bourgeoisie, in the process of their dissolution, fight against the forces which tend to destroy them with bullets and guns on the one hand and with a pacifist ideology on the other. It is Gandhi who has furnished the ruling classes of the capitalist world with the weapon of a pacifist ideology. Pacifism as an ideology was resurrected by the bourgeoisie during the world war. Now in this very special period, when revolution is knocking at the doors of the capitalists, this ideology has certainly proved itself most useful to bewilder the simple-minded. Gandhi is the greatest reactionary force in the modern world. He is more dangerous than others of his ilk, for he clothes reaction in the guise of a fundamental truth. I mean by that, the great principle of non-violence.

In opposition to the bourgeoisie, the revolutionaries declare that Gandhi is a social reactionary—the champion of capitalism

and of the ruling classes. As such, inspite of all his professions of non-violence, he is an upholder of violence in human society.

The popularity which Mahatma Gandhi enjoys among the American and English bourgeoisie is largely owing to the book written by Romain Rolland on the Indian leader. Published at a moment when the memory of the Great War was still very fresh in the minds of the people, this book took hold of the troubled imaginations of some among the liberal bourgeois intellectuals. Finding no way out of the chaos, they were leaning more and more on a sterile subjectivism.

Taken as a whole, Romain Rolland's book is more romantic than critical, and has contributed more than anything else to the popularity of Gandhi's ideas among the bourgeoisie of Europe and America. As such, it has become a powerful instrument of reaction in the hands of the ruling classes. Romain Rolland has upheld Gandhi in his justification of the barbarous system of castes. He has made himself the defender of Gandhi's perfectly ridiculous theory of the spinning wheel. He has glorified his nationalist crusade against Western civilization without understanding that in so doing he was supporting a crusade to strengthen the power of Brahminism, sectarianism and other forms of social reaction. The aim of this crusade was to isolate India from a salutary spiritual contact with the West. In other words, Gandhi has striven to destroy all the work of the great Indian thinkers both of the last century and of this. These thinkers clearly understood that in order to emerge from her spiritual torpor, India must be in contact with the West. Gandhi with his superficial knowledge of the Western civilization has not grasped its deeper meaning. With his nationalistic turn of mind, he thought that European civilisation, its superficial side, though more or less suitable for the materialistic West, was in no way fitted for a spiritual India. He lacked that vision of the universality of human culture, which from time immemorial has been a special characteristic of India, and which is the only message she has given the world throughout the ages. In thus supporting Gandhi, Romain Rolland has unwittingly done injustice to modern India. He has seen and judged the problems of Indian life under a more or less romantic light. He has exaggerated the value of things of little worth and, sometimes, he has given value to things that not only possess none, but deserve to be unreservedly condemned.

On November 25, 1933, I met Romain Rolland at Villeneuve, and had the following interview with him.

S. Tagore : After reading your letter, I felt that I must see you and talk with you. Of course, one can say a good deal in a letter, but it is so much easier to get things clear in a conversation. Moreover, Andre Gide and my other European friends have advised me to see you, especially with regard to my activities in connection with the cause of India. I think it absolutely necessary that we should unmask the reign of terror unleashed in India by British imperialism, which is manifesting itself at the moment with unexampled savagery.

Romain Rolland : This terror reigns most intensely in the North-West, does it not ?

S. Tagore : Quite so. But its intensity is beyond imagination in Bengal also. Soldiers are posted in the villages, who continually terrorize the inhabitants. There is no longer a civil authority. Everything there is under military control. But besides this the task of exposing the reign of terror unleashed by the British imperialists, we must fight against Gandhism which supports the imperialists, and we must unmask its reactionary and pro-capitalist tendencies.

Romain Rolland : I entirely disagree with you in this estimate of Gandhi. I have had long talks with him, and I am convinced that if, through humanitarianism he seeks to mitigate the conflict between Capital and Labour, he is always ready to place himself on the side of Labour when that is oppressed. Moreover, I have had the occasion to make over to him here a "questionnaire" which was sent him by the revolutionary syndicalists of Paris. Here is the text of his reply, which has been typed. He has read and approved of it.

"Question : Let us admit, with you, that for a people like yours under a foreign domination, the necessity for first freeing themselves from the invader, forces them into a provisory union of classes, and to the formation of one single national 'bloc'. But events move more quickly. With you, as elsewhere, capital is concentrated in the hands of a small number. The struggle against the British oppressors will be followed inevitably by the struggle against the Indian oppressors. Will you then continue to ask the workers to further the interests of their employers ?

"Gandhi—I make no distinction between the European and the indigenous capitalist. My works treat of the struggle between the workers in factories, and the owner of those factories

—apart from the national struggle. It is true that I do not consider antagonism between Capital and Labour to be inevitable. Though it might be difficult, I think it would be possible to establish a harmony between them. But if it were proved, that such harmony were impossible in one factory or another, I should not hesitate to increase the power of Labour (that is to say, of the organised workers) to such an extent that the destruction of Capital would result, or its complete transference into the hands of Labour. In this case, as in every other, Satyagraha would force Capital to the wall, so that it would destroy itself on the day when its destruction would be judged to be inevitable. And even if capitalism should come into the national struggle, I should not consider its interests if they were proved to be in opposition to those of the community. But I do not wish to raise a quarrel with Capital, at this juncture, unless it becomes absolutely necessary to do so. It would make the difficult problem of the moment (the national struggle) still more difficult."

Miss Rolland : Gandhi said the same thing at the Round Table Conference.

S. Tagore : It is true that here and there, though very rarely, Gandhi has been forced by circumstances to speak in this manner, but I can give you hundreds of quotations taken from his speeches and writings that prove that he has been entirely won over by the capitalists. At the Round Table Conference, he went so far as to say that it was unnecessary for the peasants to send representatives to the assemblies, as they were represented by the landlords. Apart from his speeches and his writings, Gandhi, from the very first day of his political life, has shown by his actions that he is on the side of the capitalists and against the interests of the masses.

Romain Rolland : Gandhi judges capitalists all over the world, by some Indian capitalist friends who may appear to him lovers of humanity and ready for an understanding with the workers. And as the words I have just quoted show, he still cherishes the dream that a harmony can be established between Capital and Labour without recourse to a destructive class war. But if the facts show him the impossibility of such a hope, he will certainly place himself on the side of the exploited workers. I am sorry that you do not try to discuss matters with him instead of opposing him.

S. Tagore : I must confess that I have not the slightest influence over Gandhi, and I do not think that any one in the

world could convince him of anything. He is so obstinate in his irrationality that nothing can be done about it. It is, moreover, an underestimation of his intelligence to think that he is ignorant of the ill will of the capitalists and the distressful condition of the Indian masses. I do not think that there are any persons in India --and if there are, their number is very limited—who are as well acquainted as Gandhi with the wretched state of the masses under the yoke of the Indian capitalists and landlords. But he is so deep rooted in capitalism that he cannot extricate himself. Not that he desires anything for himself, it is a question of safeguarding the interests of his class—the bourgeoisie.

Romain Rolland : I do not believe that at all. I think that Gandhi would like first to form a national bloc, so to free India from the British oppression, and I think this would be a wise policy. Once having obtained freedom one would pass on to solve social problems --those of the classes. I agree with Gandhi that one should endeavour in the first place to unite all the Indian forces in a bloc against British imperialism.

S. Tagore : This idea of a "national bloc" is an illusion—and, indeed, a very dangerous one. We have already had the experience of this bloc in China which is semi-colonial. The result there was that the nationalist organisation, the Kuomintang, made use of the workers' associations and those of the peasants against the foreign imperialists, so long as these bodies presented no danger to the interest of the bourgeoisie. When, however, the masses demanded social justice a most cruel reign of terror was imposed on them. This national bloc cost the lives of thousands of our best comrades in China. If we act in the same manner in India, a country which is one hundred percent colonial, history will repeat itself. If you wish to speak of a colonial revolution, you must never lose sight of two important facts :

1. Such a revolution will coincide with the revolt of the proletariat all over the world ; that is to say with the destruction of capitalism.

2. That a Soviet State has been in existence for sixteen years. Those two facts entirely change the nature of revolution in the colonies. The Indian bourgeoisie are not so stupid as not to see that a revolution in India, while destroying the British domination, will also destroy their domination. They will rather share the profits with the British imperialists than have no profits at all. The best proof of what I say is to be found in the appeal that

thirty of the most prominent landholders in Bengal sent to the Viceroy in 1930, offering him their services in order to crush the movement for India's independence. It is equally striking that the Indian National Congress of which Gandhi is the leader has never taken any action against these men. Two different classes, two different attitudes toward British imperialism - that is the sole reality. The national bloc is a myth.

Romain Rolland : It seems to me that in this struggle there is only one point on which Gandhi will never give way -that of non-violence. He says, 'If you wish to employ other tactics, do so. But I shall withdraw, I will never agree to help in them'. As far as I am concerned, I do not like the word non-violence. One should say rather "non-acceptance". Violence is everywhere in life. We must fight it with all the violence of the soul opposed to it. Gandhi's so called non-violence is a fixed effort, a heroism of non-acceptance, the grandeur and necessity of which are more than ever needed at the present time when brutality roams free. Brute force has found an apologist in Spengler, who in his latest work, mocks at all we consider humane in life and exalts cruelty. Gandhi is the last defender of the humane. If that hope is destroyed, the fiercest of combats must follow.

S. Tagore : I do not accept the 'non-violence' of Gandhi. I am surprised that the intellectuals in Europe have not perceived how empty it is of content. Gandhi justifies every social violence-- the existence of classes, of castes etc. How can any one who justifies such terrible things be called "non-violent" ? Gandhi has shown himself entirely incapable of tracing violence to its source. If he had agreed that capitalism in itself was violence, one would have seen that he had really grasped the problem. When Rabindranath Tagore was in Europe in 1930, I discussed with him the question of non-violence. He told me that he would write an article about it. But up to now he has not done so. His idea of non-violence is as incomplete as that of Gandhi, for they believe in the necessity of class divisions. They are not with the masses. Tagore sees the problem from the intellectual's point of view--Gandhi does not see it at all.

Romain Rolland :—What Tagore discerns through his intelligence, Gandhi's instinct that can penetrate the minds of the masses, reveals to him.

S. Tagore : In spite of all his attempts at simplicity, Gandhi has no sincere love for the masses of India. It was no effort for Lenin to be simple. He was with the masses not only in Russia

but all the world over. But Gandhi has made use of the Indian proletariat to serve the interest of the Indian capitalists.

Romain Rolland : I have already told you that I entirely disagree with you. I admire Lenin, but in my eyes Gandhi is a kindly servant of his people and of all the peoples. To go back to the question of non-violence, I have even known Indian nationalist leaders (whose temperaments were clearly inclined to violence) justify Gandhi. Lala Lajpat Rai who gave his life for India told me that this non-acceptance was really the most powerful weapon in the fight for freedom. For it is practically impossible for India, deprived of arms and ammunition, to oppose the British domination by violent means. There would be a terrible massacre if the English, making violence offered by India their excuse, were to employ every violent method at their command. Whatever suffering India may endure under their present rule, violence exercised by Indians would be the signal (perhaps, awaited by imperialists) for a repression causing infinitely greater suffering. And I may add that the non-violent, non-acceptance of a whole people, apart from its economic efficacy against England, offers the only chance of acting on the feelings of the rulers and of disposing them in favour of the autonomy that India claims.

S. Tagore : Non-violence can be looked at from two different points of view, the tactical, and that of its intrinsic worth. From the first point of view it is certain that we are not powerful enough at the moment to undertake an armed struggle against British rule. That can come later. Thus the use of non-violence can only depend on the political situation at this time. I have a deep respect for those who have given their lives for what they held to be the cause of India—who have let themselves murdered by the police and the soldiers without resorting to violence. But I must say that inspite of their sincerity, nearly all this idealism has been in vain, because it was not based on reason. And I believe that non-violence is entirely incapable of changing the hearts of the imperialists. British imperialism has no heart ; it is a system, some thing mechanical. We cannot change it, we must destroy it. If any change has taken place, it has been for the worse. It has only shown itself more frenzied in the exercise of terror.

Romain Rolland : It is asking too much to expect a change in the sentiments of the rulers, and in the opinion in their country, in the short space of time that has elapsed between the two satyagraha movements in India. But the hope of such a possibility

remains, based moreover in the interests of Great Britain who would be facing a whole race on strike. I do not know all the details of the political situation in your country. It changes from month to month, so I cannot speak of it with certainty, but I can judge of these grave problems by what is happening in Europe. Here all the available forces of both violence and non-violence are not too many—they are not even enough—to fight imperialism and Fascism successfully. Barbusse and myself at the International Congress of Amsterdam in August, 1932, called up all these allied forces, and tried to mobilize them. In the struggle against Fascism, I attach the highest importance to the conscientious objectors and to the non-violent non-acceptors who say to the Fascist governments, 'We shall not obey your order, whatever you may do'. We are aware that in most European countries the Fascists have more force at their disposal than the proletariat. Do not then divide our armies. Non-violence is a part of the war against Fascism, and carried hope for the proletariat in Europe.

S. Tagore : I think that the proletariat was wrong in not showing enough energy at the propitious moment.

Romain Rolland : You must take into account the exhaustion caused by the terrible war of 1914-18. All the European peoples were bled white, physically and morally. The fact that they did not use force has nothing to do with idealism—true or false. They stopped the fight through sheer weariness.

S. Tagore : It was certainly not due to idealistic principles, or fear of greater violence that the workers did not use force at the right moment. It was due rather to a lack of idealism among the Socialist leaders. This lack was the cause of our failure, and because of it, Fascism has succeeded in Europe. I make a difference between the force used by the collective to recover what belongs to it, and the force employed by the individual to rob the collective of its just dues. In the first case, the force used is spiritual, in the other it is violence.

Miss Rolland : What do you think of the problem of untouchability, and of Gandhi's great efforts to remove it.

S. Tagore : It is futile to accept the system of castes, and fight against untouchability. Gandhi considers the four castes as everlasting natural law.

Miss Rolland : The untouchables, however, are in a far worse position than any other section of the people.

S. Tagore : That is so. But others are not much better off. An orthodox Brahmin would stop eating and throw away his food,

if I went into the room where he takes his meals. Besides that, inspite of all the efforts made, up to now very few temples have been opened to the untouchables. There are hundreds and thousands which remain closed to them as before. We cannot solve this problem until a successful revolution has given us the power. We have learnt from Russia how difficult it is to destroy superstition in the hearts of the people even after a revolution. The task is long and painful. And it can only be successfully achieved after the revolution, never before it.

Miss Rolland : And you say that much time must pass before a revolution breaks out in India ?

S. Tagore : Yes. The launching of a revolution depends upon so many economic and political factors, not only in India but the whole world over. I think there must be a long preparation. But the first step should be taken, and as soon as possible.

I met Romain Rolland again on November 26, 1933, when I went to bid goodbye to him and had the following conversation :

S. Tagore : I have come to say goodbye. Before leaving, I want to explain to you that our struggle is not concerned with person—it is a conflict between two different conceptions of the world. Gandhism and Communism are mutually exclusive. We very much wish to have you in active co-operation with us.

Romain Rolland : I do not consider that Gandhism and Communism are necessarily mutually exclusive at the moment. On the contrary, I consider that they could and should unite. The time will come without a doubt when Gandhi will have to make his position clear in the fight between Labour and Capital. Then it will be time to decide.

S. Tagore : That time has long passed for us. Those among us who at one time whole-heartedly supported Gandhi, have discovered that (even leaving out the new world, the new relationship between human beings of which we dream, to which we aspire and for which we ~~work~~) it is impossible to gain national independence by his methods.

Romain Rolland : Gandhi believes in the spiritual power of tradition. But he is not rooted in the past. He is a man on the march, and he is absolutely sincere.

S. Tagore : That is something every one can say. Even Mussolini can say that he is looking for truth.

Romain Rolland : (with great emphasis) No, no. You cannot mention those two names in the same breath. All Mussolini's being is concentrated in his ego. His ambition and his pride

dominate his every action. Even Hitler who is far less intelligent than Mussolini is more sincere in this respect.

S. Tagore : Perhaps, you do not know that at the present moment the Indian nationalist newspapers, especially the ones in Calcutta, continually flatter Hitler. They go so far as to call him the saviour of Germany.

Romain Rolland : I know in any case that Mussolini seems to enjoy great prestige among young Indians especially in Bengal. I have more than once opposed this enthusiasm.

S. Tagore : Indian nationalism will turn perforce to Fascism one day, if it is not crushed at the proper time by a successful revolution. I must assure you again that our struggle is one between two different conceptions of the world. Therefore, personal loyalty to whomsoever it may be is no longer a duty.

Romain Rolland : I have told you before that to me Gandhism and Communism are not necessarily antagonistic conceptions of a world. They should be allied against Fascism—the common enemy. I will write you an address to the youth of India against Fascism, which I beg you to pass on to the young people of your country. But as for Gandhi, I remain faithful to him, for I admire and respect him more than any man of our time. But if he does not later place himself definitely on the side of Labour in its conflict against Capital—as I believe he will do—it will be the hour for me to disassociate myself from him. For whatever may happen, I am and ever shall be on the side of Labour.

S. Tagore : As I have already said this hour has already come for us, and we have decided as to what line of conduct to follow. I am sure events will help you to make up your mind. The point of view I have put before you is that of thousands of young Indians. Discontent with Gandhism is very keen and widespread all over India today.

The hour for my departure was drawing near. We said goodbye.

EPILOGUE

Romain Rolland's reason for justifying Gandhi's favourable attitude towards capitalism is far from convincing. He says that Gandhi judges the capitalist all over the world by some Indian capitalist friends who seem to him to be humane in their ideas and to be ready to come to an understanding with the workers. I do not think that he has grasped the true reason for this pro-capitalist bias. He does not realise that it is a question of class

and that Gandhi has reduced the whole question to one of "friendly personal relations with a few capitalists".

As to the pro-capitalist and anti-proletarian character of Gandhism nothing supports our contention more than the very words of Gandhi, quoted by Romain Rolland. "I do not consider that it is inevitable that there should be antagonism between Capital and Labour. Although it may be difficult, I think it is possible to establish a harmony between them".

This theory of a possible harmony between Capital and Labour, which is in reality only a subordination of the latter to the former, is the fundamental ideology of Fascism.

Romain Rolland has created a Gandhism according to his own idea—a Gandhism that has no real existence. It is the romanticism of a great dreamer, a sincere friend of all the oppressed throughout the world. Thus, his attitude towards Gandhism is a tragedy for the Indian people. But in spite of all, the following words of Romain Rolland fill us with hope, "If Gandhism does not later place itself definitely on the side of Labour in the conflict against Capital—as I believe it will do—it will be the hour for me to disassociate myself from him. For whatever may happen I am and ever shall be on the side of Labour."

The Malabar Moplah revolt in 1921 has been mainly interpreted as wide-spread communal riots. Saumyendranath attempted in his brochure "Peasant Revolt in Malabar", to lay bare the real causes of the uprising and underscored the fact that the basic character of the movement was agrarian—a revolt of the peasants against the landlords. In the foreword, he wrote : "After the revolt had been suppressed, the government published a report on the uprising...but withheld its own publication from the public. Apart from this report, no other authentic account of the peasant uprising has yet been published...Future historians will, I am sure, do the fullest justice to this heroic struggle of the peasantry against feudalism supported by imperialism." After the publication of the brochure in 1937, it was banned by the then Bengal government.

PEASANTS REVOLT IN MALABAR—1921

Malabar, the ancient land of Kerala, is situated on the western sea-coast of Southern India. It covers an area of 5,792 square miles and is one of the most fertile and beautiful regions of India.

In 1922, according to the census report, the population of Malabar was little over three millions, and the Ernad district, which played such an important role in the agrarian uprising, had a population of 400 thousands, of which 1,63,328 were Hindus and 2,36,672 were Muslims.

The Muslims of Malabar are called Moplahs. They are mostly poor peasants, and the Moplahs of the Ernad district are no exception. Only those Moplahs who are engaged in the timber trade on the coast of the Chaliar river—their number is small compared to the entire Moplah population—could be said to be slightly better off than the rest. In the hilly tracts of Nilambur and Vāndoor, there are a few well-to-do Moplahs who cultivate lands taken on lease from the government. But very few amongst the Moplahs are landlords.

The chief occupation of the Moplahs is agriculture. The Moplah peasants are very hard-working. They reclaimed the forest-lands, which lay uncultivated for ages, but only to be ejected by the landlords. The Moplah peasants are either leaseholders or are mere wage-labourers who earn their living, cultivating others' land. Quite a large number of Moplahs work in the bamboo forests in the eastern mountain-regions, and since a decade or two, quite a large number of them have been working in the rubber plantations.

In Malabar, the landlords are almost all Hindus, mostly Brahmins. Only in the north Malabar there are a few Moplah landlords. Oppressed and exploited as the Moplah peasants are, they harbour since ages a bitter hatred against their oppressors, the landlords.

Previous to the great peasant revolt of 1921, there were about 50 Moplah peasant uprisings in Malabar. In 17 years, between 1836, to 1853, there were no less than 22 peasant uprisings. Only in a few cases, the apparent causes of these riots were religious. At times, some trouble regarding the site of a mosque or religious conversion led to bloodshed, but in most cases, as we shall see from this account, the causes of the uprisings were purely agrarian.

Centuries ago, the Arab traders from Arabia came to India, and some of them had settled down in the southern coast of Malabar. The Moplahs are the descendants of these Arab traders and the Hindu Nair women. It was Para Nambi, the commander-in-chief of the Raja of Calicut, who allowed the Moplahs for the first time to settle down in the Ernad district and to erect mosques. Malappuram was the headquarters of Para Nambi. In the early years of the 19th century, as a result of a dispute between Para Nambi and the Moplahs, Para Nambi wanted to demolish the mosques. Fierce fight broke out between the troops of Nambi and the Moplahs, as a result of which 47 Moplahs were killed.

The uprising of 1841 was against Terumpalli Namboodri, a landlord who took away by force the leasehold plots of land of the Moplah peasants. The leader of the uprising was Kunjolan, himself a Moplah peasant. The landlord was killed and his house burnt down. The military force hastened to the rescue of the landlord and shot down scores of peasants.

In the uprising of 1843, the Moplah peasants killed one Kaprat Krishna Pannikkar who was the headman of a village, Thurangadi. In the same year, during another uprising, the Moplah peasants murdered one Karukamanna Moose, a Brahmin landlord. In 1851, a peasant uprising reared its head in Kottayam taluka of North Malabar.

A group of Moplah peasants besieged the house of Kalathil Kesavan Thangal, a landlord, and massacred his entire family. In 1880, a band of Moplah peasants attacked Appadurai Pattar and Krishna Pisharodi, both landlords. The peasants were shot dead by the armed guards of the landlords.

In those days, Lord Buckingham was the Governor of Madras. He received an anonymous letter in which the miserable conditions of the Moplah peasants were described in detail. The letter pointed out the many grievances of the Moplah peasants and the cruel exploitation to which the Moplah peasants were subjected by the landed aristocracy. The writer or writers of that letter requested the Governor to pass orders suspending all litigations filed against the Moplah peasants by the landlords. The Governor was also warned that if he did not take these steps, a serious uprising of the Moplah peasants was inevitable. Lord Buckingham took immediate steps. A committee of enquiry was formed with the District Judge and the Collector of Malabar to enquire into the grievances of the peasantry. In their report, both the officials admitted that the tenancy problem was at the root of the trouble. Another committee was set up to make a detailed enquiry into the existing tenancy system, the practice of ejecting the tenants and the vicious system of arbitrary demand for payment by the landlords for the improvements of plots which the tenants had improved by hard labour. An official, Mr. Logan, reported in detail to the government regarding the tenancy system and its abuses. As a result of this report, the Malabar Tenancy Act (Malabar Kuzhikkoor Act) was passed in 1887.

In 1898, in yet another uprising a landlord was killed by the Moplah peasants. It was in February, 1919, that the last peasant uprising prior to the great Moplah rebellion, took place. The uprising took place in a village called Mankatta Pallipuram in the estate of a Brahmin landlord. Chekaji, a Moplah peasant, having failed to pay the rents due to the landlord, was sued by the landlord who in due course secured a decree against him. Not being satisfied with this, the landlord went to the length of putting a stop to the marriage of Chekaji's son, which was settled. Chekaji with a group of Moplah peasants attacked the landlord and his men, and killed them. They in their turn, were shot and killed by the soldiers.

What does this brief account of the most important Moplah uprisings prove? It proves beyond doubt that the oppression of the peasants by the landlords, the unjust tenancy laws, the numerous extortions of illegal dues which the landlords forcibly collected from the peasants, were the causes of these uprisings. Later on, religious fanaticism got mixed up with the main economic factors and the communal people on both sides, being

encouraged by the third party, distorted and misrepresented these agrarian uprisings as communal ones. But as we have already noticed, even the enquiry committees set up by the government were forced to admit that the tenancy system and the tyranny of the landlords, were the real causes of these peasant uprisings.

The great peasant revolt of 1921 came as the culmination of these numerous sporadic peasant uprisings throughout Malabar for half a century. A tenancy movement was started in Calicut and the surrounding districts in October, 1920. The main grievances of the peasantry, which gave rise to this tenancy movement, were the ever-increasing rent and the ejection of the peasants from their holdings by the landlords. This movement was started quite independently of the Congress movement. One of its leaders, Narayan Menon, joined the Congress only after he had severed all connections with the tenancy movement. The tenancy movement created a great stir in South Malabar. Thousands of peasants voiced in hundreds of meetings their demand for a more equitable tenancy system than the existing one, and the total suppression of the unjust extortions by the landlords. The peasants advocated the boycott of the landlords, and also of those persons who sided with the landlords. In numerous meetings, the peasants took the vow that if a landlord ejected a peasant from his land, none would take that plot on lease. Moreover, they would boycott the peasant who did so. They would not also pay rents to the landlords. In some places, the peasants boycotted the landlords socially.

The political situation of South Malabar became surcharged with smouldering flames of peasant unrest. The great peasants masses were stirred to their deepest depths. With each passing day, their demands became more and more insistent and the intensity of the revolutionary fervour of the peasantry became more and more evident. A peasants' conference held at Manjeri in 1920, resolutions were passed supporting the demands of the peasantry. Peasants unions were organised at several places in Malabar. A Tenant Relief Association was organised in the feudal estate of the Raja of Calicut. When a peasant was thrown out of the estate, and a general strike took place. None went to work in the fields of the landlords. None went to reap and gather their harvest. Naturally, British imperialism could not allow the landlord class, its partner in exploitation of the Indian peasantry and one of its chief ally against revolution in India,

to suffer and be in grave danger, and not extend assistance. British imperialism had to help the landlords for the sake of its own selfish interests. Mr. Thomas, the then Collector of Malabar, promulgated Sec. 144 with the idea of throttling the newly formed peasant unions. This high-handedness on the part of the government, instead of frightening the peasants, had just the reverse effect on them. It made them more resolute in their fight against the landlords. In the meantime, orders restricting the freedom of speeches and of holding meetings were passed by the government against U. Gopala Menon, V. Kunhamed Haji, and other leaders of the tenancy movement.

In Malabar, the Khilafat movement also came into existence at this time, when the tenancy agitation was at its height. The first Khilafat meeting was held at Manjeri in 1920. In order to win over the Moplah peasantry which formed more than three-fourths of the Muslim population of Malabar, the Khilafat movement was forced to lend its support to the tenancy movement. The leaders of both the movements worked hand in hand, and a series of meetings were organised in Ernad and Valluvanad districts, and at Calicut, Tirurangadi, Kondolti, Manjeri, Malapuram and other places.

On February 5, 1921, the District Magistrate of South Malabar, promulgated Sec. 144 prohibiting the peasant organisations from holding meetings. The text of the order of the District Magistrate is worth quoting. It runs thus: "The District Magistrate has received information that it has been decided to hold a series of Khilafat meetings in the Ernad district and that by holding such meetings there is an immediate danger that the feelings of the ignorant Moplahs will be inflamed *against not only the government but also against the Hindu jenmies (jenmies mean landlords) of the district.*" (my emphasis—S.T.)

The District Magistrate who was there to safeguard the interest of the landlords, promulgated Sec 144 in Ernad, and in a number of other districts of Malabar where the peasant unions were formed. Tenancy meetings were forcibly dispersed by the police. At Tirur, the policemen man-handled the peasants who assembled at a meeting in a dastardly manner. At Kalpakancheri, nearly 20,000 people were present at a meeting where the police did all that lay in their power to provoke the people to violence. In a meeting held at Ponani the police beat the people severely. Here the peasant masses retaliated and the police took to their heels. The police violence did not intimidate the peasantry

to submission. On the contrary, the peasants realising quickly the futility and ineffectiveness of passive resistance as tactics of struggle, began to prepare themselves for an armed uprising.

On August 18, 1921, orders were passed for the arrest of M.P. Narayana Menon, Mammad Moosa, K. Abdullah Hazi of Pookkottur, and four others who were connected with the tenancy and the Khilafat movements. Thomas, the District Magistrate of Malabar, himself proceeded to Tirungadi with Police Superintendent Hitchcock, Deputy Police Superintendent Amu, and a batch of one hundred soldiers and special police. On the night of August 19, the District Magistrate reached Tirungadi with his party. A second batch of police and military force came from Malapuram and joined Thomas. On the morning of August 20, 1921, Thomas besieged and raided the mosque of Tirungadi, with the hope of arresting the men against whom warrants of arrest had been issued. Ali Mussaliar, the peasant leader, was not found. The news of the raid spread like wild fire in the countryside, and about 30,000 Moplah peasants armed with all types of weapons, came to defend their leaders. Primitive, fierce fighting ensued. The police opened fire, killing nine men and wounding many more. They arrested 41 persons. A second batch of peasants attacked the police. The police, being hard-pressed, took refuge in the court building. Austin, the Collector; Rowley, the Assistant Superintendent of Police, one military officer and two constables were killed by the peasants. Amongst those whom the police arrested, was Kunikhader, the secretary of the Malabar Khilafat Committee, who was afterwards hanged.

On August, 21, Tottenham, the Superintendent of Police of North Malabar, came to Parapangadi, a small village some two to three miles from Tirunangadi. He found that the railway lines between Parapangadi and Shurnur had been removed, the railway stations destroyed, telegraph wires cut and the bridges destroyed. Post offices, courts, registration offices were also burnt down. A handful of government servants were molested and killed and supporters of the government were warned. Rebellion spread from Tirurangadi to Tirur, Parapangadi, Manjeri, Malapuram, Nilambur, Angadipuram and Cherpulacheri. One of the first acts of the peasant rebels was to proceed to Nilambur on August 21, and plunder the house of the Raja of Nilambur, the wealthiest landlord of Ernad and the Walluvanad districts. The impoverished peasants took away corn and money. For a period of ten days,

the peasant rebels reigned supreme in that area. There was no trace of military or police during those days:

Though during the rebellion and after it, the interested parties backed up by the third party, spread no pains to represent this peasant rebellion as a communal uprising of the Muslims against the Hindus, none could dispute the fact that not a single Hindu was molested or plundered in those days just because he happened to be a Hindu. Some Hindus were killed by the rebels but they were not killed because of their being Hindus. They were killed either because they supported the landlords or the government. Only for this reason, the hirelings of the Raja of Nilambur who opposed the rebels and two supporters of the government, one a munsiff, and the other a retired police inspector, were killed by the Moplahs.

Narayana Menon, who was one of the leaders of the tenancy movement and only later joined the non-cooperation movement as a convert to Gandhism, frankly admitted that the Moplah rebels never attacked the Hindus or robbed them out of communal considerations. When stray cases of looting were brought to the notice of the rebel leaders, they severely punished the men responsible for looting the Hindu houses. Sometimes the punishment amounted to cutting off the hands of such offenders and the what had been looted was immediately returned to the owners.

The Moplah peasant rebels were not anti-Hindu by any means. They were violently anti-landlord and anti-government. Only when the Hindus allied themselves with the police and started giving information to the police about the whereabouts of the rebels who were hiding that the Moplah peasant rebels began looting Hindu houses. Even then, the Hindus who were known to be anti-government were not molested at all. In quite a number of places, the poor Hindu peasants joined the Moplah rebels. Kunna Ahmad Hazi, a famous rebel peasant leader, sent a letter to the "Hindu", the well-known daily of Madras, in which he accused the government for organising attacks on Hindu houses and temples and declared that the Moplah peasants had nothing to do with these attacks on the Hindus.

The landlords in a body supported the government against the peasants. Pumullimana, the richest landlord of Malabar, Pazi Yottumana, Kudallurmana, Chevurmana, Urupulasherimana, and the Raja of Nilambur—all these big landlords of Malabar sided entirely with the government against the peasant-

rebels. So did the rich Moplahs. Not only did they not join in the uprising, but they actively opposed it and helped the government whole-heartedly.

“Yogakshemam,” the organ of the Malabar Brahmins, wrote in its leader of January 5, 1922; “Only the rich and the landlords are suffering in the hands of the rebels, not the poor peasants.”

One of the very first things that the rebels did at Manjeri, one of the centres of the rebellion, was to loot the bank, take all the ornaments that the poor people had mortgaged, and return the ornaments to them.

Martial law was declared in Malabar on August 21, 1921. On August 26, seventy-five British soldiers and 30 reserved police were engaged in a fight against 10,000 peasants at a place called Pukotur. Five hundred peasants were killed. On the government side, eight persons were killed and nine were seriously wounded. Guerilla fight continued between the forces of the government and those of the rebels at various places. On October 15, 1921, there was a severe fighting between the peasants and the government forces at Vettikatturi, near Nilambur. Kunha Ahmed Haji, the famous peasant leader, led the fight. Fourteen rebels were killed. From Burma, the government brought the Chinkan Chin regiment which reached Malapuram on October 15. The next day, the Gurkha regiment arrived at Tirur. On November 4, 1921, Ali Mussaliar, one of the rebel leaders, and 30 others were tried and sentenced. Thirteen of them were sentenced to death, 15 were sent to Andamans, only three were released on the ground of their being very young. On November 13, fifty-six peasants were killed in a fight. On the next day, 104 were killed, and 14 taken prisoners. Twenty-five rifles were seized and two soldiers were killed in a fight at Pondicat, a tiny village situated some ten miles from Nilambur. At Tamarasheri, 28 troops of the Gurkha regiment were attacked by 2,000 peasants. Fifty-eight rebels rushed into the camps of the soldiers and were killed. About 250 peasants were killed during this fight and one was taken prisoner.

Towards the end of November, the rebellion was crushed. The resistance of the peasants to the tyranny of the landlords and the government broke down before the immensely superior armed forces of the government. On November 28, 1921, about 127 Moplah prisoners were removed from Tirur to Bellari by train. The closed van in which these peasant rebels were thrust in, measured 18 feet in length and 9 feet in width. When the train

arrived at Bellari, it was found that 56 of the prisoners had died because of suffocation and heat.

The martial law summary court which was established on October 3, 1921, tried about 2,830 peasant-rebels, of whom 807 were committed to the sessions. In the jail of Coimbatore alone, 200 rebels were hanged.

The atrocities perpetrated by the soldiers on the unarmed and defenceless men and women left behind in the Moplah villages were appealing. Women were insulted and outraged. Houses were looted and burnt. Men were mercilessly belaboured. The rebels generally retired into the deep forest in the face of the approaching army. Mostly women were left behind in the villages and they were outraged and even murdered by the soldiers. In one particular case an old woman was assaulted and shot. Concentration camps were established where the Moplah women were held as hostages. It must be said in fairness that the charges of brutality were mainly against the Chinkan Chin forces brought from Burma, but not against the British regiment. To strike terror in the hearts of the peasant masses, peasant rebels were hanged on the wayside trees and left dangling there in order to create an "impression" on the populace. Brutal terror was let loose on the peasantry by the military and the police.

The Arya Samajists who, under the protection of the government, went to different centres of the rebellion, took photographs of the few Hindus who were killed by the Moplahs and triumphantly displayed the "horror of Moplah atrocities" to the Hindus. Very significantly, they did nothing to collect materials about atrocities committed by the soldiers, about hundreds of Moplah peasants shot and hanged, and of Moplah women outraged and molested by the soldiers. The Arya Samajists till this day, exhibit these photographs of those Hindus who, by the way, acted as spies and informers to the government which led to the arrest of hundreds of Moplah peasants. Communalism hiding under a humanitarian cloak is always mean and cowardly.

As the peasants' rebellion broke out at a period, when the entire country was in a political ferment due to Gandhiji's non-cooperation movement, one can very pertinently enquire as to what was his attitude towards the peasant uprising.

One Mr. Yakub Hassan wrote a letter to Gandhiji in which he dwelt at length on the misery of the Moplah peasants and the indescribable terror to which they have been subjected by the martial law regime. He writes: "Most of them (i.e. Moplahs)

were cultivating lands under the petty landlords who are almost all Hindus. The oppression of the jenmies (landlords) is a matter of notoriety and long-standing grievances of the Moplahs have never been redressed."

Further, dwelling on the subject of the forcible conversion of the Hindus to Islam, Mr. Hassan observes: "The Hindus have had their vengeance through the military who burnt the Moplah houses and their mosques wholesale. Thousands of Moplahs have been killed, shot, hanged or imprisoned for life and thousands are now languishing in jail. Unfortunate circumstances, the causes of which I need not enter into on this occasion, forced him into the position of a rebel. He has done what any one, Hindu, Muslim, or Christian under the same circumstances and in the same emergency would have done in self-defence and self-interest."

As I have already pointed out, this peasants' rebellion furnishes us with a brilliant illustration of the fact as to how religion is introduced into issues, purely economic, by interested parties. Yakub Hassan has not been very analytical. If he were, he would not have said, "The Hindus have had their vengeance," he would have remarked that the landlords who, in this particular case were Hindus, have had their vengeance on the Moplah peasants for having revolted against the tyranny of the landlords. The "unfortunate circumstances, the causes of which," Yakub Hassan unfortunately did not dwell upon in his letter to Gandhiji are nothing but the most inhuman exploitation of these Moplah peasants carried on by the jenmies (landlords) of Malabar with the support of the government. Yakub Hassan has very rightly remarked that the Moplah peasant "has done what any one, Hindu, Muslim, or Christian, under the same circumstances and in the same emergency would have done in self-defence and self-interest."

Commenting on this letter, Gandhiji wrote an article, "The Starving Moplah," in his "Young India". As is the usual practice with him, in this article, he ignored the economic causes that led to the peasant rebellion and emphasised the religious causes. He writes: "I know that the Hindus feel sore over what the Moplahs in 1921, did to their Hindu neighbour in Malabar." Gandhiji took exception to Yakub Hassan's statement, "he has done what any one, Hindu, Muslim, or Christian would have done" and wrote, "No circumstances and no provocation however grave, could possibly justify forcible conversion."

In a second article, "The Meaning of the Moplah Rising," written on October 20, 1921, Gandhiji wrote: "The Moplah revolt is a test for Hindus and Musalmans. Can Hindu friendship survive the strain put upon it? Can Musalmans in the deepest recess of their hearts approve the conduct of the Moplahs? ...The Hindus must have the courage and the faith to feel that they can protect their religion in spite of such fanatical eruptions. A verbal disapproval by the Musalmans of Moplah madness is no test of Musalman friendship. The Musalmans must naturally feel the shame and humiliation of the Moplah conduct about forcible conversion and looting..."

This is how Gandhiji analysed the causes of the peasants' revolt and this is how he generally analyses political upheavals.

Is there any wonder then, that the Congress dominated and controlled by his followers would do everything in their power to crush the peasants' uprising? Keshav Menon and Madhav Menon, two prominent Congress leaders of Malabar, did all that lay in their power to put a check to the uprising. Narayan Menon, who had been the leader of the tenancy movement, and later severed connections with it and joined the Congress, moved about in the rebel areas with a special passport issued by the government, in order to "pacify" the rebels. Thousands of Moplahs came to meet him and accorded him a most hearty welcome, thinking that he had come to assist them. When they found that he had come to ask the rebel leaders to stop fighting and to surrender themselves to the police, one of the leaders remarked, "We thought you have come to help us, now we realise you are against us." One of the rebel leaders whom Narayan Menon prevailed upon to surrender to the police, requested him to leave that area as soon as possible as his life might be endangered if the peasants came to know about the reason of his visit. Narayan Menon returned happily, fulfilling his mission and the rebel leaders who surrendered to the police following his advice, were executed by the government. But such is the irony of historical justice that as a reward for his faithful services to the government, Narayan Menon was sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment on the strength of the accusation by the same police inspector whose life he had saved from the hands of the rebels.

Gopala Menon, in those days a prominent Congress leader of Malabar, also went about the rebel areas with the same object of helping the government to establish law and order. Describing to me the profound impression that the thousands of peasant-

rebels had created on him, he said : "It was worth one's while to take the chance, but consistent with my Gandhian principle I could not do that." So, consistent with his Gandhian principles, Gopala Menon toured in the rebel areas discouraging the rebels in their fight and persuading them to surrender to the government. Other minor Congress leaders also carried on the same noble mission with great zeal.

At least here, non-violence was practiced by the followers of Gandhiji to perfection.

And Gandhiji had every reason to be glad, and he was more than right when in the article, "The Meaning of the Moplah Rising", he wrote, "I am sorry to believe, but it is my belief, that the men on the spot do not wish to give non-cooperators *the credit for peacefully ending the trouble.* (My emphasis—S.T.).

The class-content of Gandhism, hidden behind the thin veil of non-violence, manifested itself in all its ugliness. Terrified by the reality of mass-upheaval, horror-stricken by the method of swift justice that the peasants meted out to spies and informers who happened to be Hindus, alarmed out of their wits by the jacquerie started by the peasants in the estates of the landlords who in this case were also Hindus through mere chance, the Gandhist Congress leaders of Malabar used the dogma of non-violence as a plea to sabotage the uprising. Moreover, they spared no pains to prove that the uprising was communal in character. Class interest, masquerading in the guise of non-violence and communalism, came to the help of British imperialism in which it rightly recognised its main support.

The peasants of Malabar paid dearly for their attempt to end feudal tyranny supported by British imperialism. For a period of five months, the unarmed peasant masses of Malabar fought against the forces of the government, ultimately succumbing to the incomparably superior military power of British imperialism, supported loyally by the Gandhists and by the landlords.

In 1934, Saumyendranath returned to India from Europe after a stay of about seven years. While in Europe, he stayed in Soviet Russia, Germany, France, Italy and other European countries, where he was closely connected with the Communist movement. On his return to India, he resumed working with the Communist Party of India, of which he was a member of the Central Committee before he left India in 1927. But in his absence, changes had taken place in the Communist Party. It by then had become completely bureaucratised. Independent and critical thinking had been banished from the party in the name of party discipline. As a result, Tagore's criticism of ultra-sectarian policies of the party which had kept the party isolated from the national struggle during the civil disobedience movement and had divided the nascent trade union movement, were not liked by the party leaders. After prolonged discussion with various leaders, Tagore decided to leave the CPI and start a parallel party. The Communist League of India was launched. In the platform of the Communist League, Tagore developed the Leninist conception of the combined character of the democratic revolution in India, the role of the colonial bourgeoisie and the tasks before the Communists.

THE NATURE AND THE TASKS OF THE INDIAN REVOLUTION

Colonies and dependencies, of which India constitutes a classic example, are the deeper reserves of imperialism. It is out of the vast reservoir of colonial super profit that imperialists bribe a section of the proletariat at home, infect them with national chauvinism, and thus secure the social-economic basis of reformism in the labour movement. Now, if the imperialist system of exploitation is to be destroyed, the world front of anti-imperialist revolutionary forces must extend from the very centre and heart of the imperialist home countries to colonial lands. The final defeat of imperialism is then conditioned by the emancipation of the colonies from the octopus of imperialism. That is why in the anti-imperialist struggle, the movement for the liberation of the colonies is an important and decisive factor—a factor of revolution.

The national question, the problem of national emancipation, of independent national development is not a static question. It must not be viewed as an extra-historical phenomenon, an abstract, metaphysical concept, isolated and unrelated from the central task of the epoch—the overthrow of imperialism and the establishment of socialism. It is only a part, a significant detail, in the general process of historical social change. It has no

absolute or independent magnitude, but is determined by the whole course of social development.

In the epoch of the decline of imperialism and of proletarian socialist revolution, the content of the national liberation struggle of the colonies and dependancies has changed. The banner of bourgeois nationalism is discredited. The concept of the bourgeois emancipatory national movement is sterile. The fight for national freedom shall be won under the banner of proletarian internationalism, under the banner of socialist conception of self-determination. The national question has grown into the general question of liberating the nations, colonies and semi-colonies from the yoke of imperialism.

Historically, the Indian National Congress is the political organisation of the Indian national bourgeoisie, who created, fashioned, moulded and welded it for wringing some concessions from British imperialism. Objectively, it thus initiated the first phase of the anti-imperialist struggle. Gradually its social base widened. But this widening has not change the class character and the class role of the Congress. After reaching a definite stage of the struggle, the bourgeois leadership of the Congress, caught in the web of inherent social contradictions, tried to blunt the revolutionary edge of the anti-imperialist struggle. Nevertheless, its social class basis is wide enough to enfold vast masses of the middle class, peasantry and the working class. It is in this sense only that the Congress is a multi-class organisation. That is why in the anti-imperialist united front, the National Congress is a factor, but not the organisational realisation of the anti-imperialist people's front.

Because of their belated appearance, the Indian bourgeoisie have deserted the democratic revolution. The working class, therefore, must necessarily constitute the driving force of the Indian national revolution. And the proletariat and the peasantry cannot grow into a vital political force if they confine their struggle to economic sphere only. In fact, the rigid division between political and economic struggle is arbitrary and unrealistic. Economic struggles grow of into political struggles, and political struggles develop into a struggle for power of a particular social class against some other social class or classes. The working class and the peasantry through their economic organisations cannot indeed participate as independent classes in the political struggle for national independence. It is through the political party of the proletariat that the working class and

the peasantry welded into a distinct political force in the process of active political struggles will participate in and guide the national revolution. But the working class and the peasantry must first become an independent political force before they can provide the central dynamics of the anti-imperialist struggle. The very idea of alliance must necessarily involve and postulate the independent existence of the class organisations forming the alliance.

The working class is not simply collection of individual workers. The working class is a developing social force and can fulfil its role in the anti-imperialist struggle only acting as a class. Hence, individual enrolment of the workers in the National Congress does not enable the working class to infuse its militancy into the national struggle. Simple numerical addition of a few thousand workers to the National Congress will not enable the working class to act as a powerful social lever in raising the anti-imperialist struggle to a higher and more conscious revolutionary pitch.

We are not opposed to fractional work in reformist trade unions, but we must not forget to organise independently the vast mass of the unorganised workers. Neither are we opposed to co-operation with the Congress on specific issues but we are not prepared to perpetuate the influence of the Congress in the working class to transform it into a bourgeois reserve and thereby paralyse its independent class action.

The immediate tasks of the Communists thus are :

1. To speed up the independent communist organisation of the working class, peasantry and the middle class.

2. To organise and develop independent class organisation of the working class and the peasantry on the basis of class struggle, on the basis of unflinching opposition in landlordism, capitalism, imperialism, and to maintain their ideological and political independence.

3. To develop the anti-imperialist movement along the lines of active struggles for the immediate class demands of the toiling masses, along the lines of class struggle for raising the tempo, width, and intensity of the movement.

4. To organise a genuine left bloc within the Congress to deepen and sharpen the conflict between the counter-revolutionary leadership and the anti-imperialist rank and file, and to rally the rank and file around the genuine anti-imperialist platform, developing outside the Congress.

5. To detect every subtle bourgeois manouvre; for example, Jawaharlal's "Socialism", Roy's theory of multi-class leadership etc, and apply communist criticism against it.

6. To explain to the working class the implication of "tailism" and class-collaboration, that are inherent in the particular way in which the C.S.P. and CPI have launched their drive for individual enrolment, and to organise the pressure of the mass movement to effect recognition of the principle of collective affiliation by the National Congress.

7. To set up local united front action committees between the Congress and the organisations of the workers, peasants and students on the basis of the struggle for appropriate and concrete anti-imperialist issues.

(From the Platform of the Communist League—Red Front, 1934).

On his return to India, Saumyendranath plunged headlong into active politics, and became closely connected with the students' movement. He used to be invited by students' organisations in different parts of the country to address students' conferences. Here is the text of his speech he delivered at the Bombay Presidency Students' Conference held in Bombay of January 2, 1937.

TOWARDS AN ANTI-IMPERIALIST UNITED FRONT

I wish to convey to you my sincere thanks for the honour you have done me by asking me to preside over your conference and thereby conferring on me the privilege of co-operating with you in correctly analysing the problems with which our generation is faced and suggesting the correct line of approach to their solution.

The naked, concrete, historical fact that must be emphasised is that we are living in an epoch in which the entire world has been knit together into one ; an interdependent whole tied together by a thousand and one threads of social, political, economic and cultural ties and relations. Each individual country has lost its proud 'splendid isolation'—its independent magnitude. The problems of each country, with all their specific peculiarities, are only details in the general march of the historic process that is working itself out all over the world. That is why a correct survey of the problems of India and the determination of the line of march we are to follow in order to attempt their solution, must be prefaced by a critical analysis and a conscious grasp of the mighty historical social forces operating on the world scene. It is only from an international angle of vision, it is only in the perspective of the world scene, that the Indian problem can be viewed intelligently.

The disintegrating process of social decomposition of the capitalist social organisation which has been going on since the beginning of the twentieth century and whose menacing manifestation was the imperialist war of 1914-18, has now reached its most acute and final phase.

The most degenerate, putrid and reactionary elements of the decaying society, are frantically mobilising themselves with the desperation of a class, condemned to death by history, against the vital creative urge of the new social class forces that are hourly

gaining in volume and momentum. The terrific onslaught, the fierce attack, the violent reactionary offensive of the decaying imperialist reaction has assumed the menacing shape of Fascism, the most ruthless and open terroristic dictatorship of a class, whose historic mission is exhausted and whose further continuance acts as a cancer eating into the very vitals of the society. Fascism is the only way out for the hard-pressed bourgeois-capitalist order which is vainly seeking to solve the social problems along the primitive, medieval way of the inquisitorial persecution of the torture chamber, of the concentration camp. Fascism means a retrogression, a reversion and a reaction all along the line of social, political, economic and cultural relations.

The most violent, the most reactionary and the most despicable type of Fascism is German Fascism, the shock-detachment of the international reaction, the rallying ground of all the worst forces of obscurantism. It is the German Nazis who have kindled the medieval faggots to burn down the superb edifice of culture ; it is Hitler's Fascism which has lashed into fury the most barbarous and abominable type of national chauvinism ; it is the German Fascists who have resurrected and rejuvenated the mystic theory of race superiority, a mongrel mixture of stale romanticism and exploded, worn out scientific formula.

The international politics today is dominated by the epochal, titanic conflict between the Fascist imperialist reaction and revolutionary democratic forces of the people. The main props of the short-time precarious "stabilisation" of the post-war capitalism have collapsed. The Fascist militarist clique of the Japanese imperialism has launched the offensive as early as 1931 with the occupation of Manchuria. Since then, successive Japanese offensive has leapt from victory to victory, dismembering national integrity of China, and occupying North China. Japan has now entered into a feverish race for naval armaments. Japan trampled underfoot the Washington treaties—the main stabilising factor in the Pacific and the Far East. Fascist Italy violates the Briand-Kellogg Pact, the Geneva Gas Protocol, and outrages the international standard of justice and enslaves the Abyssinian people. Fascist Italy sows the seeds of a violent storm in the Near East and the Mediterranean. Nazi Germany rearms herself, enters into an Anglo-German Naval agreement, fortifies Heligoland, marches into the re-militarised Rhineland, insists on the principle of "localisation of war" with the freehand in the East. The Versailles and Locarno treaties are in ruins. These Fascist

aggressions of Japan, Italy and Germany are not unconnected, disjointed, stray events. They are the inseparable links in the chain of international Fascist-reaction with its world-front stretching from Berlin via Rome to Tokyo. Japan's aggression in the Far East and the Pacific, Italy's aggression in the Near East and the Mediterranean, Germany's "coup" in the Rhineland, her feverish attempts in encircling Czechoslovakia, undermining the peace alignment of the Balkans, creating a Central European Fascist bloc and isolating the Soviet Union—all these are operating against the international background of a complex of forces. The Fascist offensive is advancing because of the acute inter-imperialist rivalry, antagonism of the Anglo-French imperialism in the Pacific and the Far-East and, above all, of the profound contradiction between capitalism and the Soviet Union.

There are many in India who are overwhelmed with a sense of greatness of these exploits of Fascism. They go into an ecstatic rapture ; their passionate and luxuriant imagination soars into lyrical height in their praise of Mussolini and Hitler. But these muddled "thinkers" are unable to see that these ever-accelerating drive of Fascism to aggression and war cannot be separated from its internal policies, and that it means starvation, misery and death for the millions of toilers at home.

The unprecedented severity and duration of the economic crisis of capitalism affected sorely all the strata of the toiling population because the bourgeoisie, hard-hit by it, try to throw the burden of the crisis on the shoulders of exploited classes. The most elementary and vital democratic rights of the people, rights of economic security, of political freedom, rights which the toiling population won by years of bitter struggle, are being curtailed by the bourgeoisie. The hardpressed capitalism in order to defeat the rising tide of people's revolt against the violent reaction of the dying society, is going Fascist in England, France and other lands.

Advent of Fascism in Germany, Italy, Austria and the continued advance of Fascist offensive was, and is, possible, because of the disunity and disruption of the working class movement. It was further facilitated by the befooling of the middle class by the social demagogy of the Fascists. But the anti-Fascist campaign of post-1933 Europe has evolved a newer and more formidable weapon in the process of the concrete objective struggle against Fascism and war. All the toiling masses of the population are more and more coming together round the central

core of the working class fight and are building up the invincible phalanx of the United Front against Fascist reaction and imperialist war. The broad strata of the toiling population, fiercely attacked by Fascism are more and more heroically resisting these attack. France, the land of the Jacobin, the Sans-coullote, the Communard, the classic land of the people's fight for liberty and democracy, is the first country where the toiling masses have erected the social barricade against Fascism, against the advent of Colonel De La Rocque. And southward across the Pyreness, the Spanish People's Front assailed by the Fascist clique of rebel Franco, is fighting heroically against the world-forces of Fascist reaction. The central epochal fight of the century, the fight between the Fascist reaction and popular democratic forces of progress, is being fought out in Spain. If Spanish People's Front collapses before the Fascist gangs of Franco, Mussolini and Hitler, it will be the biggest single blow against the international people's fight against the Fascist reaction.

The United Front movement is neither an orgy of love-making, nor the gospel of divine brotherhood of all the social classes, prescribed by some theological quack. It is not harmony and the solidarity of all the classes of present society. Far from it. It is the invincible phalanx the fighting alliance of the toiling and exploited masses whose heaviest guns are turned against the Fascist offensive in the shape of wage cuts, reduction of social insurance, conscription laws and turning of the entire social economic mechanism into a military machine of aggression and conquest. It is the preparatory battle ground where the new creative social forces are maturing for the final overthrow of the rotten and ricketty social order, for its mutation into a greater and higher social synthesis. The United Front furnishes the spring-board from which the forces historically destined to create a new world, will take a jump from this social order to a new social order.

The immense column of oppressed humanity is in motion. It is on the march against age-long Bastille of class-exploitation and class-rule. Against the world-front of Fascist-imperialist reaction develops the anti-imperialist, anti-Fascist front of the toiling masses all over the world. And in this world-front of anti-imperialist struggle, India's role is decisive and vital.

India is being systematically exploited by British imperialism and its supporters, the Indjan capitalists and landlords. Her hundreds of millions of peasants have sunk into an abject state

of poverty. Land is daily slipping out of the hands of the peasants ; rural indebtedness has reached a colossal figure.

The Indian working class, who is made to sweat for ten to eleven hours a day, is paid the most miserable wages and lives in slums which beggar all descriptions. There is no arrangement for adequate compensation for disabled workers, though a Workers' Compensation Act adorns the Statute Book.

The middle class is in condition of eternal despair. Thousands of students after leaving the universities find themselves driven into the blind alleys of futility by the existing social system. Hunger stares hard at their faces.

Deprived of all the possibilities to earn their livelihood, ground down by poverty and hunger, robbed of the most sacred right of man—the right to freely express his opinion—living under an imperialist regime of 'lettre de cachet' which detains thousands of men and women in prison without trial, the people of India are living in a veritable prison-house where every vestige of vigorous life, independent thought and effective action is crushed with scrupulous care by British imperialism.

Against this exploitation and oppression, the anti-imperialist fight of the Indian people has not yet attained that sweep, breadth, intensity and militancy that is the major premise for any real people's fight for freedom. And some very mischievous illusions and misleading confusions have gathered round the central question of the nature of the fight for colonial independence, which hinder the development of the anti-imperialist movement to a higher level or consciousness.

A peculiar theory is being fathered by a considerable number of eminent Indian leaders. These leaders have erected a wall between the fight for independence and the fight for socialism. They have abstracted arbitrarily socialism from independence and independence from socialism. They have invented an incompatibility, a contradiction between the struggle for socialism and the struggle for independence. At first let us gain independence and then leisurely we can think of socialism. Indeed, any talk of socialism will disrupt the national front. Eternal damnation to those dare-devils who talk of socialism before independence.

This is the acme of confusion of the entire problem. The fundamental premise for the building up of a powerful anti-imperialist people's front is the correct objective analysis of the co-relation of class-forces, their respective class-role in the fight

against imperialism and the correct characterisation of the class-forces of the existing political organisations. And without the application of the critical analytical weapon of socialist analysis, we cannot determine what social class-forces and what political organisations are against imperialism and what are for it, with it and against the anti-imperialists. The fight for national independence in this specific historical period can grow and develop only on the basis of socialist analysis of the concrete specific objective complex of mutually interacting social forces. Therefore, to compartmentalise the fight for independence and the fight for socialism is misleading and mischievous.

The tragic mistake that is being committed by these leaders is the hopeless muddled confusion of nationalism and national revolution, the conception of national independence as an independent problem totally abstracted from the general process of social change, the fond delusion of the possibility of 100 per cent unity and solidarity of the social classes in the fight against imperialism. No illusion more harmful than this could be concocted by Satan himself. A retrospective review of the entire history will show that the problem of national independence, the national question, has always been linked and connected with the general problem of the social transformation. It has always stood in relation to the process of social change, as a part does to the whole. In every specific historic epoch, the specific rising revolutionary class has performed and fulfilled the general national task in the very process of its specific historic class-task. In the nineteenth century, in the era of ascending capitalism, the rising social class of the bourgeoisie solved the problem of national unification, of national liberation as a by-product, as a derivative, in the course of fulfilling its specific class role, the development of the bourgeois-capitalist order. Similarly, in the epoch of imperialism, of the revolutionary working class movement, the question of national liberation must be treated as a detail in the epochal class task of the working class—the overthrow of imperialism. The problem of national emancipation of the colonial people from the yoke of imperialism shall be solved in passing, as a derivative, in the process of the historic class-task of the working class, the overthrow of imperialist domination all over the world and the transformation of the society to a higher and greater synthesis.

Therefore, the sinister implications of the contention that any talk of socialism before independence will disrupt the national

solidarity, the national bloc, need be exposed. The content, the socio-politico-economic substance of the independence of the colonial people, is the overthrow of the triple system of exploitation, of imperialism, of native capitalism and feudalism. In view of the objective reality of the existence of close dependence of native capitalism and feudalism and foreign imperialist domination, the contention for national bloc, the solidarity of all the social classes against the imperialist domination and the fear that talk of socialism will disrupt the national front, means the preaching of class-harmony and class-collaboration. To believe in the possibility of an abstract unity of all classes in the anti-imperialist fight, is to shut one's eyes to the concrete objective of the colonial revolution that is working itself out in China and Egypt. To preach and propagate the theory of national bloc spiced and dished up with some sprinklings of the sauce of some of sort of 'socialism of the hereafter' is to betray the cause of national freedom.

The building up of a powerful anti-imperialist front of the people is the immediate task of the national movement of independence. And a genuine fight for independence from imperialist domination can develop along the line of class struggle, along the active struggle for the immediate economic and political demands of the toiling and exploited masses, including the working class, the peasantry and the broad strata of the intermediate classes. This genuine anti-imperialist front of the people will evolve in the process of active struggle outside and inside the National Congress, inspite of the pious hope of many who wish to see the entire anti-imperialist fight developing solely within the ideological and organisational field of the Congress. The anti-imperialist rank and file of the Congress will gravitate to this front in the process of the radicalisation of the Congress rank and file which will be hastened by deepening the chasm between the right-wing and leftist forces within the National Congress on the basis of the fight for genuine anti-imperialist issues. We must remember that the essence of the united front movement lies in the vitalising of the immense untapped reserve of the revolutionary militancy of the toiling and exploited masses. To this general process of broad national struggle, the students have their own significant quota to contribute.

Comrades, do not be misled by the mischievous notion that your movement can be non-political, that to plunge into aggressive politics on your part is a mistake. None can be non-political,

far less a movement. The profession of an individual or a movement being non-political, is a pose, is a dangerous lie. The "non-political" man or the "non-political" organisation under the pretext of being non-political supports the existing social order. Guard yourselves against those reactionaries who under the cover of the lying word "non-political" want to utilise your movement as the social or political support of the decadent bourgeoisie. In every period of history, at every harsh and terrible epoch of social change, the students played a prominent role. Just remember the proud role the students played in the era of mid-nineteenth century social upheavals. Just witness the heroic role the students are playing in Spain, France, China and Egypt. And judge for yourself whether it is political or non-political. But I must not flatter you into the delusion that your role is either independent or principal. Like every other movement of the middle strata, your role is a subsidiary one. But it is a very important auxiliary force. Even in the countries of the West and in some of the East where the working class movement is highly conscious, the student movement ranks as a significant factor amongst those forces which are acting as powerful social levers in lifting the social consciousness and social organisation to a higher level.

Coming to your concrete problems that you have to face from day to day, I must ask your indulgence if my treatment of them appears to you inadequate and incomplete ; for my knowledge of them is limited. It seems to me from the general survey I have been able to make that they are to a great extent similar to the problems facing the student community all over India. And it cannot be otherwise because the system that breeds them is the same. The cost of education in our country is out of all proportion to the low income of the ninety per cent of the parents. In fact considering the abject poverty of the large majority of the people of India, the price that they have to pay for the education of their children if they can afford it, is a monstrous burden upon their slender resources already strained by a most invidious and indefensible system of taxation. In contrast, look at all the progressive countries of the West and you will see that primary education is imparted free because it is considered the right of the individual and the duty of the state.

Even after this costly period of education is over, only the dismal prospects of unemployment and misery faces you, for most of the avenues of employment are already choked and the

British government in India is hardly interested in finding new ones for you.

Touching the problem of unemployment, I must not forget to mention the Sapru Report of which so much is being made of by interested people who hail it as a panacea for the alleviation of the unemployment of the educated classes.

That report surveying the entire problem suggests remedies which are totally inadequate and in my opinion completely worthless. The only solution that it offers to this intricate problem is to replace the uneducated persons now holding posts in various occupations, by the educated unemployed. This is only the shifting of the burden of unemployment from the shoulders of the educated to those of the uneducated. Moreover, it will result in lowering the standard of living of the educated who will have to accept the lower standard of wages so long paid to the uneducated. All that Sapru does is to make some alterations in the relative figure of unemployment given in the statistics by shifting the burden of unemployment from the shoulders of one section of the population to those of the other, but on the whole leaving the problem of unemployment unsolved as before.

Sapru's method of solving the unemployment problem can be favourably compared to that of a doctor who by transferring pain from one part of the body to the other imagines that he has found a cure for the pain.

The real solution of the unemployment problem is possible only in that society where production and distribution of necessities of life are organised according to a plan. That planned economy is only possible in a social order where the means of production are no longer the property of individuals but are owned by the society as a whole. Moreover, the education that is imparted to you is sterile and barren. For it creates no social consciousness in you. Nor does it teach you the ideals that make for social progress and cultural enrichment of humanity. In fact, day in, day out, it administers to you an opiate that leads to passive acquiescence to the existing order of society which is putrefying before your very eyes.

In India, the policy of British imperialism is to "racialise" and to regionalise the cultural development of the country. More and more stress is being given to the so-called special educational needs of a certain section of the population inhabiting a particular region instead of trying to eliminate those useless idiosyncrasies which are always to be found in people living in environment

which is narrow and superstitious. The Government of India wants to divide India into a Hindu India and a Muslim India and, moreover, wants to provincialise and regionalise India so far as education is concerned. We must carry on a ceaseless war against this cultural policy of British imperialism. We must insist on having the same text books for all the schools and colleges of India, after they have been scrutinised and selected solely from a scientific outlook by an All-India Text-Book Committee. At present, facts and figures are distorted in the text books used in schools and colleges to suit British imperialist interests. In the University of Calcutta a book entitled "England's Work in India" is prescribed for those students who take up history as their subject in Matriculation. One has only to glance through the pages of this book to realise the obvious purpose of the book. It makes a ridiculous effort to prove that before British rule, India was a barbarous country of feuds, murders and desolation. It is British rule which has conferred all the blessings of civilisation on us in the shape of railways, post and telegraph, etc. In this way, all the gift of science which we would have acquired much quicker and more economically were India free to decide her own destiny, have been made to appear as the gift of British rule in India. This is how history and economics are being taught in the schools and colleges in India. In the former, the predatory and high-handed deeds of British imperialist consolidation in India are represented as measures beneficial to the people of India. In economics, not even a hint is given to the fact that it is imperialist exploitation that is responsible for the deepening economic degradation of the peasants and the workers of this country. The stunted growth of our industries and the unemployment of our middle classes can all be traced to the same source, but neither your text books nor your learned professors will ever suggest to you such a thing. For truth is considered a blasphemy. Even in the sphere of economic theory no proper appraisal is given of the theories of Marx and Lenin which alone give the scientific interpretation of those economic and social forces that are driving the world to Fascist barbarism and war.

Finally, the system of examination that is applied to you does not make for a fair test of either the fund of your general knowledge or your talent or intellectual ability. It is a mechanical system which overburdens and oppresses you, profiting none but the university which annually fattens itself upon the high

fees that it extorts from you. No more eloquent testimony to the injustice and the stupidity of this system can be borne than by the terrible massacre of the students in the last two Matriculation examination of your university. It is a matter of deep regret that after public expression of horror and dismay at the last Matriculation results, the university should not have seen its way in improving the results and should have only met it in a spirit of vindictiveness and vengeance.

Comrades, it is the whole system of your education that is vicious. All its anti-national, anti-democratic and unscientific consequences flow from the system itself of which the universities of Bombay, Calcutta and of other provinces are the embodiment. Constituted as at present, your university with 40 nominated members and a number of ex-officio ones and principals of government colleges elected through a small constituency of principals is completely dominated by the government bloc and as such acts as the ideological rampart of British imperialism in India. Until and unless that constitution is radically overhauled there can be no hope of a progressive and a scientific education being imparted to the younger generation in accord with the needs of the people. Technological and vocational training so essential for the industrial development of the country will not be given in a satisfactory manner until the university is made an university of the people.

Before closing the subject of your university, I must dispel the illusion entertained in many quarters that under the new India Act wonders can be worked in the sphere of education. Let me assure them that is only a mirage. In fact, every advance in educational sphere will have to be met by additional taxation which would be an impossibility in view of the already unbearable burden of taxation. Moreover I.C.S. officials holding posts in the educational department cannot be deprived of their powers lest it be construed as a degradation of their posts for which they can appeal to the Secretary of State. Besides this, the Governor with his extraordinary powers may step in any moment and put an end to the progressive measures of any minister. Taking all these into consideration, you will realise that your immediate problems are a part and parcel of the bigger task of fighting British imperialism in India.

At this critical turning point in the history of the world and of India when an unprecedented social, political, and cultural reaction in the form of the Fascist obscurantism threatens to

submerge the human society under a deluge of bloody destruction, the students of India, in fraternal solidarity with the international student movement and as an auxiliary force of the central dynamic of social transformation, must plunge into the vortex of the fight for stemming and defeating the Fascist-imperialist reaction.

India feels most sharply the keen edge of the imperialist domination. The new India Act of 1930 marks a significant link of Fascistic transformation of the imperialist regime in India as is evidenced by the concentration of unlimited dictatorial powers in the hands of governors and the governor-general. The restriction of education, the discouragement of every progressive social ideal by the attempt to segregate hermetically the cultural life in India from the progressive currents of international thought-world, are but the beginnings of a Fascist crusade against progressive culture and international intellectual co-operation. The theory of national bloc with its implication of class harmony, the gospel of class collaboration, bedecked and embroidered with the antic spiritual stunt of changing the heart of the exploiters, the concrete practice of the Indian bourgeoisie siding with the imperialists, the growing offensive of the native bourgeoisie against the working class, the pseudo-radical, near-socialist phraseology gaining currency—all these ominous factors point unmistakably to the process of crystalising of Fascist trends in India.

Comrades, the fight that is ahead of us is bitter and decisive. Old, worn-out, fossilised social organisation is collapsing. But the collapse is never automatic. It is only action—decisive, heroic, informed and intelligent action—that can and must hasten and complete the process. And the tremendous responsibility you are to shoulder in this field, you cannot afford to forget and neglect. Your negligence, history will not forgive and your failure to grasp the momentous significance of the fight ahead will go down to posterity as a betrayal to the cause of human liberation.

Forward then, Comrades, to militant thoughts and to militant actions. Reformistic and pseudo-cultural lullabies are constantly sung to you by those who want to put you to sleep. Constant efforts are made to keep you away from the militant united front by interested parties who carry on an ceaseless campaign of misrepresentation, calumny and lies against the emerging social order. These are nothing but attempts to frighten you away from the anti-imperialist people's front and to transform you

into mercenary forces in the service of the decaying social order.

Comrades, beware of these people, they are the sworn enemies of humanity, of the great future that is approaching us. You must realise this once for all that the salvation of your class can be achieved only if you make a common cause with the workers and peasants of India against Fascism and imperialism, and fight for democracy, for freedom, for a new social order. The students of Europe and other sections of the intelligentsia have learnt and are still learning this at their bitter experience. We must take a serious note of their experience. There can be no real improvement of your lot economically, politically and culturally unless you fight shoulder to shoulder with the workers and peasants in freeing India from imperialist bondage.

Imperialism spares no pain to keep us spoon-fed with only those ideas that are to its liking. All literature which exposes imperialism, and which shows us the way out of the present social chaos are banned. We are supplied with only distorted and mutilated versions of news by the news agencies run and controlled by the imperialists.

This horrible state of affairs is mainly responsible for the pitiable ignorance of the youth of our country about the cross-currents in the stream of international thought. But the mental lethargy of our youth is also to a considerable degree responsible for this. This intellectual lethargy of the youths of India helps the imperialists and the reactionaries to strengthen their hold on the country and puts serious obstacles to the fulfilment of our task.

You must also study each and every problem with which we are faced in our country minutely and deeply. An abstract profession of love of the motherland without the necessary clear understanding of the country's problem is nothing but futile sentimentalism.

Your onward march can be successful only if you have a conscious grasp of the line of your march. No quarters can be given to the dark forces of reaction. No compromise is possible between the forces facing one another on the opposite sides of the barricade. Every attempt to rob the people of their freedom of speech, action and thought must be opposed with all the force at our command. You will have to mobilise and organise all your forces for taking in the definitive hour the supreme risk which alone will justify your manhood. The sands of world imperialism are fast running out. The promise of a new dawn,

of a new human world is there in the horizon of human history. Let us give our fullest allegiance to that dawn. Let us march forward with the conviction that comes from a conscious understanding of the laws of the changing social process. And comrades, inspite of all imperialist terrors directed against us, victory will surely be ours.

When Tagore was in Paris, Henri Barbusse, President of the League Against Fascism and War, had asked him to set up an Indian Section of the League to rouse public opinion in India against Fascism. On his return to India in 1934 Tagore was wholly pre-occupied with his discussions and controversies with the leaders of the various Communist groups, and in January, 1935, he was convicted for one year for his speech protesting against the arrest of Subhas Chandra Bose. On his release in 1936, he started the Indian branch with Rabindranath as President, and Prof K. T. Shah as Chairman. He was the Secretary. Among the members were Tushar Kanti Ghosh, S. A. Dange, Jayaprakash Narayan and others. This article is reproduced from a booklet, "Spain", published for the League in 1936.

FASCIST AGGRESSION IN SPAIN

The people of Spain had declared constitutionally, by votes, their will and desire to end feudal oppression and reaction in Spain. Universal suffrage led to the formation of the People's Front government in which the Socialist Party, the Left Republican Party, the Communist Party, the Left Catalanians and the Basque Nationalists are represented. The People's Front government of Spain is a legally constituted government; it is constituted on the same parliamentary basis as any other government.

Defeated by the universal suffrage which led to the formation of the People's Front government, the Fascists decided to smash the government of the people. The civil war has been started by the reactionary forces, startled and frightened by the victory of the People's Front.

On July, 19, 1936, generals of the Spanish Army rebelled. Officers of the garrisons of Madrid, Barcelona, Burgos, Saragossa, Oviedo and Spanish Morocco occupied the principal strategic points. Gen. Queipo de L'cano announced, at the beginning of the revolt, his intention of killing 3,00,000 Spaniards. Moroccan troops and Foreign Legionaries were brought to conquer Spain from the Spanish people.

The decision of the People's Front government is to take the land away from the big landlords and hand them over to the peasants. The Janta of Burgos, on the other hand, declared its desire to expropriate the small peasant-proprietors and to hand over their land to the big land-owners. In the land of feudalism, the People's Front Government represents the progressive force

of democracy.

The Fascist aggression in Spain is threatening international peace and democracy throughout the world. Never has there been more need for action than in connection with the ghastly atrocities committed by the Fascist gangs on the Spanish soil. The world must resound with the cry of indignant protest against the barbaric crime and the inhuman slaughter. African Moors and Foreign Legionaries, armed with war materials provided by the Fascist governments of Italy and Germany, have been let loose like hungry wolves to murder and plunder the heroic fighters of freedom in Spain. International laws have been shamelessly ignored by international Fascism. Civilisation has been trampled under foot. Thousands of women and children have been massacred, mutilated, burnt alive, made homeless and destitute. Schools and hospitals have not been spared; crowded places, museums and factories have been the chief targets of bombardments. Sanctuaries of art and culture have been systematically reduced to smoking ruins.

During a fortnight of horror, Hitler's and Mussolini's aeroplanes hurled 90,000 bombs, pouring death and destruction upon the Spanish capital. The Fascist atrocities, both against the civil population and against the republican fighters taken prisoners, are unprecedented.

In "Vu," the well-known journal of Paris, Madleine Jacob narrated in the issue of August 29, her conversation with Maria Pedra, who was arrested by the insurgents. In Maria Pedra's own words: "They tortured 27 comrades before shooting them finally. At Torres, one of our comrades was crucified before he was shot. A doctor who treated some of our wounded comrades was subjected to inhuman torture and then shot. The insurgents took the women and children and put them in front of the army to serve them as a protection and as tactics of advance. Naturally, the government forces could not open fire on the children and women and the rebels shot at the government forces under this cover with impunity."

Systematic attacks on hospitals have been the special feature of the Fascist rebels. One of the most brutal acts of the Fascist rebels has been the bombardment of the hospital for children at Guadarrama. There were 150 children suffering from tuberculosis. At Buitrago, the rebels bombarded the hospitals. At Mallorca, three hydroplanes attacked a hospital ship, "Comillez", in spite of the hospital ship's flying the Red Cross flag. At Grenada,

during the 25 days of Fascist terror, amongst the thousands who were murdered, was Frederico Gracia Lorca, considered as the greatest amongst the contemporary poets of Spain. About 1,200 men and women were killed by the Fascists when they occupied Baena, a town with a population of 22,000. Prominent members of the Socialist Party, Gregorio Lonto, Manuel Sevillano and Edward Cortes, were killed in the presence of their own families. Out of 375 members of the Socialist Party, 296 were murdered. Petro Abad, a small town, has a population of 7,000. When the rebels occupied the town, 55 persons including women and children were shot. When the Moroccan troops entered Villafranca, they outraged eight women including a girl of fourteen. Gen. Ganjuli and Col. Quintana, the two chief instigators of revolt, were condemned to death by the People's Front. As reprisals, the Fascists killed 600 persons, amongst whom were Rogelli Luque, the writer, Rint Maya, head of the Isla Institute, an organisation for fighting tuberculosis—the Romera, Josef Lozano, President of the Left Republicans; Jain, the Mayor of Cordone; and Gegerio Azana, the nephew of the President of the republic.

One of the most poignant and blood-stained act of the Fascist counter-revolution in Spain has been committed at Seville. Approximately 9,000 republicans were murdered and their corpses were exposed on the roadsides to strike terror in the hearts of the citizens. At Triana, the working class quarter of Seville, they murdered 5,000 men.

The working class quarters of Triana have been completely demolished by fire. At Carmona, the Fascists set fire to the houses of the workers and burnt to death twenty-five working class families including men, women and children. At Constantine, when the village fell into the hands of the rebels, they arrested Magdalena, who was a syndicalist. The rebels demanded that she should give Fascist salute to them. She answered by shouting "Long live Communism", and was shot dead.

At Venturillo, the Fascists searched for a peasant, who was noted for his anti-Fascist activities. Failing to find him at home, they killed his wife and children. At Merida, Flecha, leader of the Young Socialists was burnt alive. Josephina Ferron, wife of the ex-mayor of Villaneuva writes: "On July 19, my husband was arrested by the Fascists. He was beaten and maltreated every day. A few days later, my home was surrounded by the Fascists; they arrested me and marched me off to their headquarters. On

way, they slapped me on the face and demanded that I should shout Fascist slogans. On my refusal to do so, I was put in a cell where comrades were being shot dead. Rafael Redondo, the cashier of the rural syndicate, and his sons were killed in my very presence. The number of prisoners at Villanueva were 400, when the government troops entered the city, only 50 prisoners were found alive; the rest had been shot down by the rebels."

Among the numerous atrocities committed by the Fascist gangs in Spain, these are but a few illustrations.

The recent fall of Malaga opens a new stage in the process of foreign Fascist aggression in Spain. About 20,000 Italian troops, hundreds of German and Italian tanks and aeroplanes have combined to crush the gallant resistance of the republicans, fighting in defence of their hearths and homes. The city is given up to looting and massacre. Masses of fugitives estimated at 150,000 crowd the roadsides and have been bombed from the air. Thousands of prisoners have been butchered. Thousands are awaiting execution.

In the face of this inhuman butchery, the imperialist powers of the world have staged the hoax of the non-intervention. The non-intervention plea has been put forward only to prevent the Spanish government of the People's Front from getting any effective help in the shape of arms and ammunition from outside, while thousands of Italian troops, hundreds of German and Italian aeroplanes and tanks are pouring into Spain to convert the whole of Spain into a Fascist hell.

This hoax of "non-intervention" is, as Del Vayo, the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs, declared on September 25, 1936, in the sessions of the League of Nations, "the effective, positive and direct intervention in favour of the rebels".

Portugal is the base used by international Fascism for its attack on the Spanish republic. At Vigo, La Corogne and other aerial bases in Portugal, German and Italian aeroplanes have landed. The Italian aviator, Petriarca, confessed that he was authorised to use the Portuguese air base of Abrunheira Portalegre. In last August, German warships disembarked war-materials in the port of Lisbon. On September 29, 1936, war materials including large consignment of asphyxiating gas was landed at Lisbon and was sent to the Spanish frontier. On September 4, a Portuguese tank manned by Portuguese officers crossed the Portuguese frontier and proceeded towards Badajoz. On August 9, the Portuguese ship, "Santa Irene", disembarked

large quantities of war materials at Ceuta in Spanish Morocco.

The documents that have been seized by the Spanish government at the headquarters of the Nazi Party in Barcelona prove conclusively the hands of the Hitler's government in preparing the revolt against the People's Front Government of Spain. National Socialist secret agents of Hitler were sent to Spain to carry on illegal work under the guise of diplomatic and consular agents. One letter of the German Consul of Carthagene was seized in which the consul discussed the ways and means of smuggling contraband materials of propaganda in Spain. Immediately before the revolt, the rebels received large quantities of arms and ammunitions from Germany. On August 6, the battleship, "Montesarmiento", arrived in Lisbon with fourteen German aeroplanes and approximately 150 German pilots, mechanics and technicians. On September 7, a Portuguese train consisting of twenty-three wagons arrived at Seville containing fourteen aeroplanes sent from Hamburg. On September 20, more than twenty German aeroplanes arrived at Tetouan in Spanish Morocco. The "Junkers" Company of Germany has been, and is, the chief supplier of aeroplanes to the rebels.

The Fascist government of Mussolini have not lagged behind in its enthusiasm to help the rebels. On September 7, the Italian ship, "Nereide", unloaded at Palma 360 tons of war materials. A day previous to that, three Italian aeroplanes arrived at Palma. Between August 28 and 31, about twenty Italian aeroplanes accompanied by Italian pilots landed at Vigo, the port in control of the rebels.

This is by no means an exhaustive account of the intervention of Hitler, Mussolini and the Fascist Portuguese government in Spain. The carnage, murder and atrocities that the rebels assisted by international Fascism are carrying on in Spain, are indescribable.

Such is the fruit of passivity of European democracy in the face of the naked aggression. Unless every democratic and anti-Fascist force is now roused to action, the most terrible consequences are in store. The farce about non-intervention has gone on long enough. The peace-loving peoples of the world must insist that action be taken to make non-intervention a reality. The millions who stand for peace must compell the adoption of an effective plan for the control of the Spanish frontiers.

People all over the world have raised their voice in unision denouncing the horrible bombardment of the Spanish capital and the inhuman atrocities committed by the Fascists in Spain.

At a special meeting of the World Committee Against War and Fascism, held on November 16, the problems created by the bombardment of Madrid were discussed. Among those who attended this meeting which was presided over by Prof. Langevin were: Mm. A. Morizet, Socialist International; Jean Zyromsky, member of the Central Committee of the French Socialist Party; Gaston Monmousseau, Communist Deputy; Francis Jourdain, President of the French National Committee Against War and Fascism and of the League against Imperialism; Mme Madelaine Braun, Secretary of the International Committee of Co-ordination in aid of Republican Spain; the Secretary of the World Student Committee and of the World Youth movement and others. Abbe Don Leocadio Lobo, the Catholic priest whose sincere devotion to the people's cause is well-known, brought greetings from the Spanish republic and, in particular, from the catholic circles. His declaration is worth noting: "I cannot pronounce a curse upon those who insult the Spanish people, because my religion does not allow it, but I say to the Spanish catholics, to the officers who have directed their arms against the people, to the conservative classes who have erected a wall, opened a gulf, between themselves and the people: You are making a grave error! I suffer from the smart and the shame which is heaped up on the Spanish people who have brought from the mines and tempered in the water of our rivers, the steel which today is plunged into their breasts. Are they opposed to an absurd and brutal economic system? Then I am with them. Long live the Democratic Republic, long live the people of Spain."

The World Committee Against Fascism and War is mobilising public opinion all over the world. Recently, a delegation of the World Committee paid a visit to London. The delegation was headed by Prof. Paul Langevin, President of the World Committee. It held a meeting in London which was attended by about 50 members of the two Houses of Parliament. It had also informal talks with the leaders of the Labour Party including Major Attlee, the General Secretary of the TUC; Norman Angel, the Nobel Prize winner; notable Conservatives and Liberals and many other leading persons such as H.G. Wells, Wickham Steed, the former editor of the Times.

All the eminent persons in France, England, and in other countries have issued personal statements in response to the eloquent appeal by Romain Rolland against the merciless bombardment of Madrid. Here in India, Poet Rabindranath Tagore,

President of the League Against Fascism and War, Indian section of the world movement, has appealed to the conscience of the humanity against the Fascist aggression in Spain.

On one side are the vast majority of 27 million people of Spain, on the other side is the infinitesimal minority of the feudal lords, military officers and the capitalists determined to perpetuate their domination over these vast millions. This savage terror is the political means by which the Fascist rebels want to consolidate their position.

This civil war in Spain must not be considered as a struggle confined only between the two sections of the Spanish people. It represents the international struggle between the forces of two antagonistic worlds facing each other, the reactionary forces of the past, and the forces of the people for real democracy and real freedom. Let the workers, peasants and youth of India organise themselves in millions and stand solidly behind the gallant fighters of Spain. Let a cry of protest resound from meetings and demonstrations. Give speedy and effective aid to the heroic defenders of Republican Spain!

In the wake of the withdrawal of the civil disobedience movement, the younger elements in the Congress became disillusioned and tended to breakaway from the Congress. At this juncture when the Congress was threatened with the loss of its social base, the Congress Socialist Party emerged to restrict the process of radicalisation within the Congress. Tagore criticized the attitude of the CSP towards the Gandhian right-wing and stated that by deluding the masses, CSP would help the right-wing to refurbish its image and re-impose its control over the masses.

CONGRESS "SOCIALISM"

By the grace of Lord Willingdon, the Congress Working Committee met at Patna in May, 1934, where under Gandhi's leadership, the Congress genuflected before British imperialism. To court the favour of its imperialist overlords, the Congress postponed the civil disobedience movement indefinitely, and accepted the programme of "council-entry". And the imperialist overlords were not displeased with their lackeys. The Congress, under the benign connivance of imperialist laws, became once more a legal organisation. In its indecent haste for striking an alliance with the British imperialism, the Congress gave up even the "show" of fighting for national independence, which it had been conducting for these long years.

In May, 1934, the Congress abandoned the civil disobedience movement and that signified its political suicide as a political organisation. Thus the Patna betrayal realised the fulfilment of the cherished designs of Gandhi and others. But the orthodox Congress leadership has also understood the fact that the old ways and the old games of the Congress will no longer suffice. The political theory and technique with which Congress for last fifteen years had been deluding the people into thinking that their national emancipation would be brought about by the Congress has since 1930 been gradually losing ground, and has now shown its total bankruptcy. The rank and file of the Congress are convinced that the old ways will no longer yield results. India independence movement cannot be organised into a strong well-knit, and powerful phalanx unless newer and more powerful weapons are brought forth from our national arsenal. The orthodox leadership of the Congress is discredited, and the discontent against it is now widespread.

This most obvious fact has not escaped the notice of the Congress leaders. The Congress is torn with dissensions. Rival disruptive forces threaten to destroy its very existence. The Congress leaders know perfectly well that a pseudo-radical wing within the Congress must be hatched if the disruptive tendencies are to be checked and if the Congress is to be saved from discredit and discomfiture. The left-wing of the Congress will be entrusted with playing the role of official opposition. Happily, this ruse of the Congress is neither new nor original. The bourgeoisie, all over the world, hold within their framework three types of parties : the orthodox conservatives, the moderate liberals and the extremist left-wing. They even sometimes go to the length of creating a party that, to all outward appearance, plays the role of a rival political organisation : That is why the British Labour Party created the Independent Labour Party at an appropriate time. The creation of the conservative, liberal and more extremist left-wing parties, and even the formation of a "rival" political party—all these are motivated by one single aim : the masses must be held within the framework of bourgeois political influence. The exploited masses must not be allowed to build up a revolutionary movement that, in its social content, is anti-feudal, anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist. The masses must be kept confused with various political illusions. They must not be allowed to free themselves from bourgeois influence. In other words, they must not be allowed to form a revolutionary organisation of the exploited classes. That is why the bourgeoisie in their political distillery prepare these three types of political wine : conservatism, liberalism and left-wing radicalism. With a view to keeping the huge peasant and proletarian masses as a reserve for the bourgeoisie, after the manner of their Western masters, the Indian bourgeoisie have created the Congress "Socialist" Party.

The Congress of the millowners and the landlords is rapidly approaching dissolution. The masses with their growing class consciousness will move more and more against the Congress. An anti-capitalist revolutionary mass movement, which will spell ruin and destruction to the native landlords and millowners, is brewing in India. The political significance of this revolutionary development is well realised by the landlords and the capitalists. The bourgeoisie are making frantic efforts that mark a class doomed to death by history. To safeguard their future, with

this new left political party they are making the last attempt to side-tract the windwhirl of a revolutionary upsurge into harmless reformist channels. And as the consistent and logical expression of this policy, the left-wingers within the Congress assembled at Patna in May, 1934, and brought forth the "Congress Socialist Party".

These "Congress-Socialists" are political realists per excellence. According to these political stalwarts, the Communists are not realists, and their programme is unpractical and utopian. Now, let us examine and probe a little deeper their political realism and their peculiar Congress brand of socialism.

Mir Alam, a "Congress-Socialist," has written a truly wonderful article in the "Congress Socialist" the official organ of the party. In the article entitled, "Why Within the Congress?" he has attempted to give a semblance of logical exposition of the real meaning and essence of "Congress-Socialism". And we must confess, we are incapable of such a masterly analysis!

Mir Alam says: "The national struggle being a bourgeois democratic movement, it must rally under its banner classes other than the working class. Indeed, its forces are bound to be overwhelmingly petty-bourgeois. We should not forget that the social character of the peasantry is petty bourgeois. These classes, in order to perform their political task must have a political organisation. The very social composition of that organisation—the party of the national democratic struggle—forces us to the conclusion that it cannot be identical with the party of the proletariat."

Let us begin with the main contention of the article. "The national movement is bourgeois democratic in character and from this follows the necessary conclusion that in this movement not only the working class but also other classes must marshall their forces under the banner of the movement. The driving force of this movement must need be predominantly petty-bourgeois." Mir Alam further informs us the common place that the class content of the peasantry is petty-bourgeois in character. Then comes the master stroke of his genius. Mir Alam concludes that the political party which will lead the bourgeois democratic revolution cannot be the party of the working class. Our learned and scholarly Mir Alam, in his utter ignorance of ABC of Marxism and in his vain attempt in concocting Marxist phraseology, has, in fact, preached a most opportunist doctrine.

We are afraid the "Congress-Socialist" Mir Alam has no theoretical conception of the bourgeois democratic revolution. Moreover, Mir Alam and his comrades betray a woeful lack of knowledge as to the specific social classes that are to lead this movement in different historical conditions. At least, the article of Mir Alam does not give us the slightest indication of any such clear conception.

The bourgeois democratic revolution, whose classical example is the French Revolution of 1789, is a revolutionary movement which destroys the vestiges of feudalism and prepares the ground for the development of capitalism. The leadership of the French bourgeois democratic revolution of 1780 was wielded by the virile and young French bourgeoisie and the revolution drew its forces from the rural peasants and urban middle classes. The social mechanism of feudal France was thus destroyed to usher in capitalism. The anti-feudal bourgeois democratic movement which shatters feudalism and clears the ground for capitalist expansion is complete all over Europe. Had the economic development of India been as unfettered and unhampered as those of the European countries, then the natural development of the social productive forces of Indian society would have shattered the social frame-work of medieval, feudal India by introducing the system of machine production, and this mission would have been carried out by the Indian bourgeoisie for the furtherance of the capitalist mode of production. This would have happened if the economic progress of India had been unhindered. But the social evolution of India received an unnatural setback from the British merchants whose political domination hindered the natural flow of India's social and economic development. Feudal India has not faded into capitalist India in accordance with operation of the law of social evolution. India was unnaturally kept as an agrarian country by the vested interest of the British merchants. India cannot as yet be called an industrial country. The little industrial development of India represents the utmost efforts of the nascent Indian bourgeoisie. It is nothing but the little crumbs of economic concessions which the India bourgeoisie have somehow managed to secure in their contests with the imperialist British bourgeoisie. The industrial development of any country judged by the capacity of that country to produce all the necessary means of production. To be scientifically precise, India is not yet industrialised, though the capitalist mode of production is already introduced in her economic life. To bring about the

complete industrialisation of India and to accomplish the century-old, over-due social transformation as a result of industrialisation is the sole function of the bourgeois democratic revolution in India.

Now, this bourgeois democratic revolution has to be accomplished in India in the epoch of imperialism, in the era of capitalist decay and under the social and political conditions in which the tide of the proletarian revolution is visibly rising. What class can be the leader of the bourgeois democratic revolution in the age of imperialism and what is the character of that revolution? The "learned" essay of Mir Alam, the theoretician of "Congress Socialism", does not give us the slightest clue to these questions. That in the age of imperialism, in the age when capitalism is rapidly approaching its hour of dissolution and when the proletarian revolution is the order of the day, the bourgeoisie cannot be the leader of the bourgeois democratic revolution should be obvious to all save the politically blind. In the era of capitalist ascendancy, in the era when capitalism was still a virile and progressive force, the bourgeoisie could lead this movement which furthered their class-interest. But in the age of capitalist decadence and of the approaching proletarian revolution, the colonial bourgeoisie are keenly conscious of the fact that if they lead the movement, it would mean that the capitalist frame-work would be shattered. That would be inviting one's own doom. Because of this, the colonial bourgeoisie, far from leading the democratic movement, would be forced to rally forces against it. Realising this, Mir Alam says that the political party of the petty-bourgeoisie would lead the independence movement, the bourgeois democratic revolution.

Mir Alam has, perhaps, never troubled himself to grasp what the historical social role of the petty bourgeoisie was in the past, and what social and political role they play at present and are destined to play in the near future. The petty-bourgeoisie have no distinctive independent social philosophy of their own. At no phase of their historic development did the petty-bourgeoisie an independent and specific social philosophy peculiar to themselves. In their social class content, they lie between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. They oscillate between the bourgeoisie and the proletarian class ideologies. Never in history have the petty-bourgeoisie played the role of a leader in any social revolution.

In 1789, they constituted a great social class-force but the leadership was also then with the bourgeoisie which alone could

lead human society to a higher mode of economic production and greater social synthesis. The petty-bourgeoisie can never do this, nor did they ever do this. They join either the bourgeoisie or the proletariat, depending on the revolutionary forces in a given historical condition.

The only class that is capable of organising a higher economic system by rescuing it from the anarchy of the capitalist mode of production in this age of capitalist disintegration is the working class. The petty-bourgeoisie are incapable of the leadership of the bourgeois democratic revolution. The leadership and the driving force of the bourgeois democratic revolution in India must lie with the proletariat. The rapidly approaching bourgeois democratic revolution will be brought to completion by the proletariat under the leadership of its political party. In this era of the proletarian revolution, the bourgeois democratic revolutions in the colonies can only be led to victory under the leadership of the working class party. The problems of the incomplete bourgeois democratic revolution will be solved by the establishment of socialism by the working class.

The Russian Revolution of 1905 was bourgeois democratic in its social content, but the Russian working class was its driving force. This, the Mensheviks refused to admit. The working class, according to the Mensheviks, could not be the leader of the 1905 Revolution. The role of the proletariat was to follow the bourgeoisie in the campaign against Tsarism. Lenin and the Bolshevik Party, on the other hand, pointed out this fundamental fallacy of the Mensheviks. Lenin maintained that the working class by defeating the manoeuvre of the bourgeoisie to retain the peasantry as a reserve and by winning the peasantry to the class ideology of the proletariat, will gain the hegemony of the revolution and will establish the revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. In 1935, in the era of imperialist decadence, the Indian Mensheviks, the "Congress Socialists", will hand over the leadership of the bourgeois democratic revolution to the political party of the petty-bourgeoisie. And they have the audacity to call themselves socialists !

According to Mir Alam, the working class, until it form itself into an independent class, and attain ideological clarity, political experience and organisation, must till then play its role in the national independence movement remaining within the framework of the political party of the petty-bourgeoisie.

Another "Congress Socialist" leader, Jayaprakash Narayan, says that the "Congress Socialist" Party is not the party of any particular social class. It is not exclusively the party of the workers. It is, rather, the rallying ground, the focal point, of all the anti-imperialist forces. Mir Alam and Jayaprakash Narayan do not know that each and every political party is the party of a certain social class ! The party may consist of different class-elements but its economic and political programme furthers the interest only of one particular class. In the capitalist society, the fundamental class forces are the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. There are consequently only two political ideologies—one of the bourgeoisie and the other of the workers. The petty-bourgeoisie generally vacillate between the two. No single political party can satisfy the mutually conflicting and irreconcilable interests of all the classes of society. To hold that it can is meaningless. This is the lesson of Marxism on the nature of political parties. The Congress looks to the interest of all the classes of Indian society—this assertion is a deception. In the era of the proletarian revolution the political programme of a petty-bourgeois party must need be a reactionary one. Its programme is bound to be soaked through and through with the bourgeois ideology. Marx and Engels in the Communist Manifesto have bitterly castigated this petty-bourgeois socialism and branded it as thoroughly reactionary. This petty-bourgeois socialism is capitalism in disguise. To call upon the working class to follow the lead of the petty-bourgeoisie means the sacrifice of the proletarian class interest at the altar of the bourgeois interests.

The Congress is the political organisation of the Indian bourgeoisie. This is not a creation of the petty-bourgeoisie. The Congress was formed by the millowners of Bombay and landlords of Bengal. Therefore, the contention of Mir Alam that the Congress is the organisation that the petty-bourgeoisie has created is gross historical untruth. The fact that the rank and file members of the Congress hail from the middle strata does not make it a middle class political organisation. The leadership of the Congress is exclusively in the hands of the Indian capitalists and landlords whose interests the Congress represents, promotes, safeguards and furthers. The Fascists of Europe, the Fascist Party in Italy and Nazi Party in Germany, are composed of the middle strata. That does not make them the political parties of the middle classes. They remain the parties of the big landlords and Big Business.

The "Congress-Socialists" further maintain that they are within the Congress for the purpose of capturing it. Mir Alam says : "The task of the present moment is to prepare for the struggle, for the capture of the Congress by a radical left-wing under the influence of the working class."

This idea of capture, of dislodging the present leadership of the Congress and of controlling it, has been infused into the brains of muddle-headed petty-bourgeoisie by M N Roy who is now in hand and gloves with the Indian bourgeoisie.

Jayaprakash Narayan holds the same view. In a speech in the Bombay "Socialist" Conference, Jayaprakash expressed his conviction that the Congress could be influenced and could be converted into an anti-imperialist organisation.

To clarify the issue, let it be conceded that the "Congress Socialists" have fundamental ideological differences with the present wielders of power of the Congress. To expose the whole lie and deception, let the "Congress Socialist" Party be raised to the strata of an independent political party having fundamental political difference with the Congress. But never in the history of the world, never in the history of any political party has it been recorded that one political party has captured the party machinery of another political party. Can any one imagine, even in his wildest flight of fancy, the capture of the Conservative Party by the Labour Party or of any European Fascist Party by the Socialist Party ? Such miracles, history does not record. Only in times of revolution and in times when classes are violently colliding against each other and when the civil war has reached the most violent phase, does one political party destroy, disrupt and rout the rival political parties. But the miracle of one political party capturing another political party—such a phenomenon is only possible in political fairy tales, but not in real, concrete political life.

A certain "Congress Socialist" pointed out to me the instance of the Congress leadership passing from the hands of the moderate to that of the Congress extremists and asked, with the obvious pride of refuting my contention, whether that was not an instance of capture ? What a silly thing ! The transfer of Congress leadership from the hands of the moderates to those of the extremists does not constitute an instance of capture, as the social ideology of the moderate and of the extremist wings of the Indian bourgeoisie is essentially the same. Therefore, their opposition cannot be compared with the fundamental irreconcilable antagonism

between two political parties based on radically different social ideologies. Both the moderate and the extremist wing of the Indian bourgeoisie want to save and perpetuate the capitalist structure of Indian society ; both are united in their absolute allegiance of the Indian bourgeoisie and their class-interests. Only regarding the method and technique of serving the class-interests of the bourgeoisie they differ from each other. The differences of this nature is, therefore, simply intra-party differences. The "Congress Socialists", if they form simply a wing within the Congress, then they do not constitute a political party fundamentally different and independent from the bourgeois National Congress. The bourgeoisie then would not hesitate even to place them in power when the exigencies of political situation would demand it, as did the Conservatives when they put the thoroughly imperialistic British Labour Party in power. This policy of the bourgeoisie only serves their interests all the more effectively. Had the "Congress Socialist" Party been an independent political party based on an anti-Congress ideology, having a fundamentally different class-ideology, then it could never be a wing within the Congress. Really the "Congress Socialist" Party has no fundamental difference either of ideology or of interest to the bourgeois Congress. Had it been otherwise, it would have been long expelled from the Congress, nor would it have been blessed by Gandhiji and invited by him to assume the reins of power. Jayaprakash Narayan explained the relation between the Congress and the "Congress Socialists" at the Bombay Conference held on October 21 and 22, 1934. He said that the "Congress Socialist" organisation was an organisation within the Congress, and that this in itself determines the relation between the Congress and the "Congress Socialists". The "Congress Socialists" being simply a wing of the Congress the talk of any opposition to the mother-organisation was pointless.

Here in these words of Jayaprakash Narayan is revealed the real class-character of the "Congress Socialists". The "Congress Socialists" have not the slightest intention of opposing the capitalist ideology and programme of the bourgeois Congress. To think of such an antagonism is beyond their dream. Of course, Jayaprakash will call upon his "Socialist" comrades to oppose any specific policy of the Congress, if that policy threatens the interests of the masses. The purpose of this is obvious : some show of opposition to the official policy of the Congress must be kept up. Some talk of opposition to specific policies of the Con-

gress is imperative if the "Congress Socialist" bluff has to be prolonged, When the entire ideology and programme of the Congress from beginning to end is highly detrimental to the interest of the masses then to oppose a specific policy (and then again the "Congress Socialists" will most likely choose to oppose such a policy as will be least detrimental to the interest of the Indian bourgeoisie) is nothing but an attempt to mislead those radicals who are within the Congress and to retain them within the Congress. And we have it from Mir Alam himself that the "Congress Socialist" Party is just a radical left-wing of the Congress and nothing more.

Against our contention, one may advance the argument—Why can't the "Congress Socialists" join the Congress as a fraction ?

Our answer is : Not only that they can join ; they should join the Congress with the idea of carrying on fractional activity within it.

The purpose of fractional activity undertaken in general by the socialists is to expose the real class character of those organisations to the masses, and weaken them as much as possible from the within. The Bolsheviks had participated in the Tzarist Duma in order to expose the real character of the Duma to the masses of Tzarist Russia. But to join an organisation as a fractional wing is not the same thing as to have the entire party forming a part of that organisation. Only when a political party is not wholly within another organisation can it carry on fractional work by its members within that organisations. Fractional activity can have no other significance but this. The "Congress Socialist" Party could have sent some of its members into the Congress in order to create a split within the Congress, but when the entire "Congress Socialist" Party is within the Congress fold, then to try to justify its activities within the Congress as fractional activity will be nothing short of pure bluff.

And Mir Alam has clearly stated that it will be a great mistake to draw the most politically conscious section of the middle class out of the Congress. It does not, of course, take us more than a minute to guess as to where lies the danger that Mir Alam speaks about. Mir Alam is scared lest the most politically conscious elements of the petty-bourgeoisie join the working class movement and oppose the bourgeois policies of the Congress, and has thus advised the conscious section of the middle class to accept the reactionary policies of the bourgeois Congress and to

remain within its fold. The main work of the "Congress Socialist" Party is to try its utmost to keep politically, the most conscious section of the middle class within the fold of the Congress by the bluff of socialism.

The "Congress Socialist" Party is "His Majesty's Opposition" within the Congress. To keep up a mock opposition within the Congress is its main intention. At the Bombay conference, Jayaprakash Narayan said : "The principal argument of the leftists against us is this that we have erred greatly in creating our party within the Congress. According to them, socialism and Congress are antagonistic to each other. Not only they are not antagonistic to each other in the peculiar condition of India, socialism and Congress are interdependent. It is idle to talk about socialism without the destruction of imperialism. The National Congress is the only political organisation which is carrying on the major fight against imperialism. There is no reason to suppose that the Congress shall abandon its anti-imperialistic mission at this stage."

It seems that Jayaprakash considers his above utterances as axiomatic. If he did not do so, he surely would have then hesitated to make statements without advancing any reason for them. It would pay us to analyse his statement. Let us take his first assertion, "In the particular specific conditions of India, Congress and socialism are mutually dependent."

This is utterly false, and is really meant to delude the people. Like every other exploited colonial country, groaning in the grip of imperialism, India also bleeds and groans under the iron heel of British imperialist exploitation. Her condition is not something unique and singular. She represents no independent concept. India's independence necessarily means the annihilation of British imperialism. In this age of capitalist decay and disintegration, and of the proletarian revolution and socialism, no society can be or will be liberated from capitalist anarchy but by the proletarian revolution. This applies equally to the imperialist countries and to the colonies. The feudal-capitalist social structure of India must be shattered and the foundations of a socialist society laid, if India is to be rescued from social anarchy and chaos and if her exploited masses are to be liberated from imperialist exploitation.

If the "Congress Socialist" conception of Indian independence has this anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist character, they should readily understand that this national independence cannot be achieved by the landlords and the capitalists. On the contrary,

they will mobilise all their forces to defeat the anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist national colonial revolution. When the capitalist system still had a "future" the colonial bourgeoisie could have fought the imperialist bourgeoisie for a greater share in the exploitation of the colonial masses, and this scramble for booty they could have passed off as a "national" movement.

In this era of capitalist decay and of Communist revolution, the colonial bourgeoisie know perfectly well that any anti-imperialist revolutionary mobilisation of the masses will end not only in the destruction of imperialist power but also in the complete uprooting of bourgeois capitalist exploitation. That is why the Indian bourgeoisie, and their class-organisation—the Congress, have again and again sabotaged the anti-imperialist revolutionary movement of the Indian masses to secure their class interests. It is sheer madness, then, to expect the co-operation of the colonial bourgeoisie in the struggle for the national independence in the colonies against imperialist rule. The doctrine of class-collaboration, the theory of "national bloc", sponsored and preached by M. N. Roy and other "socialists", which maintains that the anti-imperialist struggle can and will enlist the active co-operation of all classes in the colonies, is a most dangerous lie concealing as it does the real character of the colonial anti-imperialist struggle which is bound to assume the character of class struggle. This theory only serves the interests of the bourgeoisie.

Therefore, the anti-imperialist struggle in India, as in every colonial country, must be organised, guided and led by a party based on the theory of class-war which alone is capable of freeing India from British domination. From all this, it is established beyond doubt that Congress and socialism are mutually antagonistic.

Jayaprakash Narayan's second dictum: "Socialism is impossible of attainment without the defeat of imperialism", is perfectly true. But the destruction of imperialism can only be accomplished by the parallel process of liquidation of the colonial bourgeoisie, the sworn enemy of Indian freedom, by the working class revolution, as without revolution freedom is unthinkable. Only then independence and socialism will be realisable, and in order to liquidate the Indian bourgeoisie, we must smash its political class organisation, the Congress.

Mir Alam wishes to create an independent political party of the middle class. The Russian Social Revolutionary Party was the

organisation of the middle class and it played a counter-revolutionary role in the Russian Revolution. The "Congress Socialist" Party is the party of the middle strata and petty-bourgeois "socialism" comes very handy to the bourgeoisie.

Mir Alam has also pointed out the petty-bourgeois character of the peasantry. Quite true, but under capitalism, the peasantry is not an undivided, homogenous class—it is cleft into different social strata in consequence of the struggle within the peasantry.

Like the bourgeoisie, the leader of the bourgeois democratic revolution in the era of feudalism, the proletariat in the era of imperialism requires an independent political party without which socialism is impossible.

In the article, "The Beginning of Revolution in Russia" Lenin writes: "The working class closely connected with the Social Democratic Party, will be ploughing an independent furrow and will always be remembering that its ultimate objective is the liberation of humanity from all exploitation."

From this let none make the fatal mistake by thinking that Lenin meant the political isolation of the independent working class party from all other parties in the time of revolution. In the same article he writes: "But the political independence of the working class Social Democratic Party will not for a moment make us forgetful of the necessity of combined united front in times of revolution. We, Social Democratic revolutionaries, shall work independently of the bourgeois democratic revolutionaries and will maintain the distinct and independent class role of the working class. But we shall join forces with them in the general revolutionary popular upheaval against Tsarism in opposition against the soldiers and in storming the accursed Bastille of the national enemy."

The political party of the working class in the colonies will under its hegemony mobilise the workers, the peasants and the urban middle class into an anti-imperialist mass-movement. The proletarian revolution is the only rallying ground for all the anti-imperialist forces in the colonies and the political party of the workers is the sole party capable of leading the anti-imperialist mass-upheaval in the colonies and of making socialism a social reality. Those who simply shout "socialism" but do not recognise the need of an independent political party of the workers really do not want socialism.

The point need not be laboured that socialist society cannot be established within twenty-four hours of the proletarian revolution.

The length of the intervening period between the proletarian revolution and the establishment of a socialist society will be conditioned by the general world situation and the specific historical condition of the country concerned. During this historical phase, the dictatorship of the proletariat will defeat the resistance of the bourgeois offensive and by destroying all the anti-socialist elements will gradually build the socialist society. Without the dictatorship of the proletariat even the beginning of a socialist society cannot be attempted. As Lenin says: "A Marxist is one who extends his recognition of the class struggle to the recognition of the dictatorship of proletariat". And let us put it thus: "A socialist is one who extends the boundary of his recognition of the class struggle to that of the dictatorship of the proletariat".

The "Congress-Socialist" Party's programme does not even mention the dictatorship of the proletariat. Instead of it, vague phrases like the socialist state, transference of the power to the producing classes etc, have been carefully, skillfully used. These will not incur the wrath either of the imperialists or of the native capitalists. Along with these vague phrases, runs the slogan of the constituent assembly.

This slogan was raised by the Social Revolutionaries of Russia after the February Revolution. The Bolsheviks recognised the propagandist value of this slogan and therefore, supported it. It has no intrinsic value apart from this. This the Bolsheviks knew well. Lenin in his "Constitutional Illusions" writes: "The Social Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks are blinded with constitutional illusions and with their gaze completely turned away from the issue of the class struggle, they examine this problem with the childish credulity of the petty-bourgeoisie. They say: 'The Constituent Assembly has been called and it will sit. That is sufficient.' The Bolsheviks maintain that the possibility of the calling of the assembly and its success vary in direct ratio with the power of the Soviet. According to the Bolsheviks, the centre of gravity lies in the class struggle. The sitting of the Constituent Assembly will be a possibility provided the Soviets are victorious."

From this it is clear that Lenin laid the greatest emphasis on the struggle for the Workers' and Peasants' Soviets. To agitate for a constituent assembly instead of for a democratic republic of the workers and peasants, till the bourgeois state undergoes the revolutionary transformation into the Workers' and Peasants'

Soviet, means nothing but serving the bourgeoisie. Our slogan is, "Democratic Republic of the Workers and Peasants". Our Mensheviks, the "Congress Socialists". like their Russian predecessors, are simply helping the cause of the Indian bourgeoisie by talking about the constituent assembly in abstraction.

"National Socialism" can well be the synonym for "Congress Socialism". And it is common knowledge that National Socialism is another name for Fascism. The European bourgeoisie have formed Fascist parties with middle class elements mainly in order to fight the proletarian revolution and the Indian bourgeoisie have formed the "Congress Socialist" Party with the same middle strata for the same purpose. The Indian labour movement has already been penetrated by the agents of the bourgeoisie. The reformist leaders of the All-India Trade Union Congress and the muddle-headed and opportunist petty-bourgeois devotees of M. N. Roy constitute a coterie of the opportunist henchmen of the Indian bourgeoisie. The logical outcome of their doctrine is "Congress Socialism" and in this brand of "Congress Socialism" lies dormant the seeds of Indian Fascism. Such is inevitable culmination of the petty-bourgeois "Congress Socialism" in the present-day historical conditions.

In this seminal book, written in 1938, Tagore develops the Leninist perspective of the revolution in a backward country like India. Opposing the Stalinist conception of a two-stage revolution—first, the democratic revolution under the leadership of the bourgeoisie, and then the Socialist revolution under proletarian leadership, he points out that such a concept is basically a Menshevik one. The bourgeoisie are incapable of leading the democratic revolution to its logical conclusion. In the epoch of declining imperialism, the proletariat must take upon itself the leadership of the democratic revolution. In fact, the democratic revolution can only be completed by putting the proletariat in power. Thus, the democratic revolution grows into socialist revolution, which in turn consolidates the gains of the democratic revolution.

BOURGEOIS DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION AND INDIA

At present, we are passing through a phase which can well bear comparison with that period in Russia which was known as the period of "Legal Marxism". Marxism shorn of its revolutionary content has become a fashion. Intellectuals, professors, students and litterateurs—all are decorating their talk with Marxist phraseological trimmings to prove how progressive they are. One comes across the names of Marx, Engels and Lenin in places where a few years back these were taboo.

This change signifies two things. First, in the last few years, revolutionary Marxism has made its influence increasingly felt in this country not only because of its ever-growing importance in international politics, but also because of its manifestation in India as evidenced by the growth of the militant working class movement. This has convinced the Indian bourgeoisie, however much it may seem repugnant to their sensitive cultured "soul", that revolutionary Marxism has come to stay, and that it would be better in their own interest to recognise this fact.

Secondly, it also reflects a new political manoeuvre against communism by the bourgeoisie. Admitting that revolutionary Marxism has established itself in India, the bourgeoisie have launched a new line of attack. In addition to their old method of direct assault, the Indian bourgeoisie, through show of sympathetic consideration of Marxism, try to vulgarise it and transform it into a respectable evolutionary theory, thus making Marxism suitable for "cultured" society by clipping its revolutionary wings.

This is exactly what happened in Russia when "Legal Marxism" flourished and this is exactly what is happening in India today when "Marxism" is being preached in order to combat Marxism.

One such Marxian concept, which has lately become the target of attack by the petty bourgeois exponents of Marxism, such as the "Congress-Socialists", the "Congress-Communists" of the C.P.I. brand and the Royists, is the Marxian theory of bourgeois democratic revolution.

We are told by the "Congress-Socialists", "Congress-Communists" and the Royists that the revolution in India, being a bourgeois democratic revolution in character, must be carried out under the leadership of a petty-bourgeois party (*a' la* M.N. Roy), and that as the revolution in India is bourgeois democratic in content the Indian bourgeoisie still have a revolutionary role to play in that revolution (*a' la* "Congress-Communists" of the C.P.I. and "Congress-Socialists"). It will be our task to examine critically these theoretical estimations of the bourgeois democratic revolution, and to determine to where these petty-bourgeois opportunist distortions of the Marxian conception of the bourgeois democratic revolution lead us. We have not taken upon ourselves this task because we have any intention of helping to extricate these fine gentlemen from the opportunist quagmire in which they have sunk. We have taken it up solely with the idea of opening the eyes of many a well-intentioned person who may unwittingly fall prey to the seductive tactics of these gentlemen who have already settled so comfortably in the foul-smelling marsh of political opportunism.

Since the time that human society was split up into antagonistic classes, revolution has been, and still remains till classless society is established, the only mechanism which brings about fundamental social and political transformations in human society. In the words of Marx: "Revolutions are the locomotives of history."

But the motives and the forces of revolutions vary in different historical epochs. The modes of production prevalent in different historical epochs and the co-relation of class-forces that logically follow from it, set specific historical tasks before each revolution.

Revolution is a class-concept. It is the irreconcilable class-antagonism at its climax. That class which in a particular historical period solves, for the time being, the contradiction between the forces of production and the existing social structure by the destruction of the old social order, by revolution, plays

in that epoch the historical role of the leader of the revolution, and puts its unmistakable stamp on the entire social structure.

Since human society was split up into classes, there have been two social orders—the feudal and the capitalist. The transition from the feudal to the capitalist social order, which took place in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries, was achieved through a series of revolutions which had for their main task the creation of the democratic base for the economic and social development of capitalism, and of which the leaders were the bourgeoisie of Europe. That is why, in Marxian terminology, this revolution has been called the bourgeois democratic revolution. Likewise, the revolution which will sound the death-knell of capitalism and usher in the socialist order and of which the proletariat is the historically destined leader is known as the socialist or proletarian revolution. The historical tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution were the destruction of the feudal social order and the establishment of the capitalist social system. A bourgeois democratic revolution presupposes the domination of a land-owning nobility closely allied to the monarchy, the growth of the city bourgeoisie and the proletariat as a result of the industrial revolution, and the most miserable and virtually serf-like condition of the peasantry. The class-forces in feudal society is over-whelmingly in favour of the destruction of the feudal social order ; the city bourgeoisie want the destruction of the feudal economy for their own class-interest and the peasantry wants it for the liberation of its class from savage exploitation and tyranny. The city proletariat needs it, as the destruction of feudalism creates the first democratic prerequisites for its growth as a social and political force. The bourgeoisie were the class which represented the capitalist mode of production unleashed by the industrial revolution, and as such their leadership in the bourgeois democratic revolution was historically determined. The peasantry as the class was the worst sufferers under feudalism and constituted the driving force of the revolution. The newly sprung city proletariat, weak in numbers and weaker still organisationally and politically as a class, could at best play a minor role of the sympathiser of the bourgeoisie and the peasantry in the democratic revolution. The city middle class oppressed by the guild system under feudalism desired the end of feudalism. Thus, in the feudal era, the bourgeoisie, the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie and the proletariat represented the class-forces of the bourgeois democratic revolution.

Thus, with the exception of the land-owning class to which the monarchy and the church belonged, all the other classes of feudal society had very definite class-interests in carrying out the bourgeois revolution. Capitalism can only develop rapidly under democracy; of course, under formal bourgeois democracy. Therefore, democracy caters to the need of the bourgeoisie. Democracy gives the peasantry the freedom from feudal tyranny and also opens out before it the possibilities of the fulfilment of its economic and social aspirations. Thus, democracy serves the class interest of the peasantry. Democracy further creates the socio-political basis on which the proletariat builds its class-organisation and gets the chance to broaden and deepen its class-consciousness, and finally democracy lends itself as the spring-board from which the proletariat takes the leap to socialism. So, in the period of bourgeois democratic revolution, the bourgeoisie, the peasantry and the proletariat express their united will on the question of democracy. And as these classes constitute in their aggregate the overwhelming majority of the nation, the bourgeois democratic revolution can be said to assume a "national" character. This constitutes one of the fundamental characteristics of the bourgeois revolution. The socialist revolution can never assume this "national" character. According to Lenin: "To forget this would be tantamount to forgetting the logical and historical difference between a democratic revolution and a socialist revolution. To forget this would mean forgetting the *national* (Lenin's emphasis) character of the democratic revolution; if it is national it means that there *must* (Lenin's emphasis) be 'unity of will' precisely insofar as this revolution satisfies the national needs and requirements." (Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Bourgeois Democratic Revolution).

Thus, according to Lenin, the "unity of will" of the various classes (with the exception of the feudal class) forming the feudal society on the question of democracy, lends a "national" character to the bourgeois democratic revolution.

The French Revolution of 1789, which is the classical example of a bourgeois democratic revolution, fully bears out the Leninist conception of the "unity of will" of the various classes in the bourgeois democratic revolution and the "national" character of the bourgeois revolution.

The same "national" character of the bourgeois revolution has been emphasized by Marx when writing in *Die Neue Rheinische Zeitung* in 1848. He said: "On August 4, 1789, three weeks after

the storming of the Bastille, the French people (mark the word "people"—S. T.) in a single day prevailed over all the feudal services." Here the word "people" has been used to emphasise the "national" character of and the "unity of will" in the bourgeois revolution.

Lenin has defined the "people" as "that multitudinous, petty bourgeois, urban and rural stratum, which is quite capable of acting in a revolutionary democratic manner and the proletariat" (Social Democracy and the Provisional Revolutionary Government).

So far we have dealt with the historical background and the significance of the bourgeois democratic revolution in the period of feudalism. We have seen that the task of this revolution is to create the democratic basis for the growth of capitalism which could not grow unless the peasantry was freed by the revolution from the shackles of feudalism, as "the foundation for the complete accomplishment of a democratic revolution is the creation of a free class of peasants" (Lenin).

Our analysis has shown that in the feudal epoch, the bourgeoisie were the leader and the peasantry was the "most natural allies" (Marx) in the bourgeois revolution. Moreover, our analysis has made clear to us the significance, the class-content and the co-relation of the class-forces of the bourgeois revolution.

Let us now consider the problem of bourgeois democratic revolution in the period of imperialism. The historical task of the bourgeois revolution remains the same under imperialism as it was in the period of feudalism, namely the destruction of the relics of feudal economy still existing in the capitalist economy, hampering its growth, by the overthrow of the autocratic feudal regime. But the co-relation of forces, the class-forces of the bourgeois revolution, is not the same as it was under feudalism. The economic and political character of imperialism is responsible for the new alignment of class-forces. In the feudal epoch, the bourgeois democratic revolution meant the beginning and growth of capitalism and the opening up of the possibility for the bourgeoisie to rule as a class for the first time. In this epoch, the bourgeoisie, the whole of the bourgeoisie, still had a revolutionary role to play, and, in fact, in the feudal period, the leadership of the revolution was in the hands of the bourgeoisie.

But in the imperialist epoch, the economic and social forces are entirely different. The imperialist epoch is not the epoch of the rise of capitalism. It is the epoch of capitalism's decline. It

is the epoch when capitalism, passing through the various phases of its development, has reached the last phase, its final stage. Under imperialism, the bourgeoisie are not the class to which the bourgeois revolution will give the possibility of ruling as a class for the first time. Even in those countries where the bourgeois revolution has not been completed due to historical reasons, the bourgeoisie are already a ruling class, though they may have to share power with the nobility. Therefore, the bourgeoisie in the imperialist epoch cannot be a revolutionary class, even in the bourgeois democratic sense, and, therefore, in no case can they lead the revolution. In this epoch, the bourgeois revolution cannot have the support of the whole of the bourgeoisie. According to Lenin, the democratic revolution "marks the very period in the progress of society in which the mass of society stands, as it were, between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie and constitutes an immense petty bourgeois peasant stratum. Precisely because the democratic revolution has not yet been completed, this immense stratum has far more interest in common with the proletariat in the task of establishing political forms than have the 'bourgeoisie' in the real and strict sense of the word." (Social Democracy and the Provisional Revolutionary Government).

Lenin wrote these lines in April, 1905; that is, at a period when imperialism had not entered the stage of perennial crisis which has engulfed it since 1914. It was still in a period of ascending capitalism. Even in that period, Lenin found that the "bourgeoisie in the real and strict sense of the word," could have no interest in the democratic revolution. It is obvious that Lenin had the big bourgeoisie in mind when he talked of "the bourgeoisie in the real and strict sense of the word". Indeed, leave alone the question of being the leader of the bourgeois revolution in the period of imperialism, the big bourgeoisie cannot even be a factor in the bourgeois revolution.

And why? Because in the imperialist epoch, the land is not exploited under strictly feudal forms of exploitation. The penetration of capitalism in the village has made the principal method of land exploitation predominantly capitalist. Land is alienable and is a commodity in the market exactly like any other commodity. It is mortgageable and debt-laden. Bank capital (finance capital) has poured into the land and transformed the character of land-economy. The bourgeoisie have got a stake in the land and the bourgeois revolution jeopardises their interests not a whit less than those of the land-owning nobility. The

bourgeois democratic revolution of 1789 in France, which destroyed the feudal tenure, was entirely in the interest of the bourgeoisie. But the belated bourgeois revolution in backward countries, under imperialism, could not be wholly in the interest of the bourgeoisie for the reasons already stated. Therefore, the bourgeoisie, in order to save their own skin, are always keen on compromise with autocracy. Autocracy is necessary for the preservation of their class-interest. The logic of imperialist development has turned the bourgeoisie, the leader of the bourgeois revolution in the feudal epoch, into a force against the democratic revolution in the imperialist epoch.

This is exactly what Lenin had in mind when, as early as 1905, he wrote: "Surely, we Marxists, must not allow ourselves to be deluded by words, such as 'revolution' or 'the great Russian revolution,' as many revolutionary democrats (of the type of Gapon) do. We must be perfectly clear in our own minds as to what real social forces are opposed to 'Tsarism' (which is a real force, perfectly intelligible to all) and are capable of gaining a 'decisive victory' over it. *Such a force cannot be the big bourgeoisie, the landlords, the manufacturers* (My emphasis, S. T.). We see that these do not even want a decisive victory. We know that owing to their class position they are incapable of undertaking a decisive struggle against Tsarism: they are too greatly handicapped by the shackles of private property, capital and land to venture a decisive struggle. Tsarism with its bureaucratic police and military forces is far too necessary for them in their struggle against the proletariat and the peasantry for them to strive for the destruction of Tsarism." (Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution).

Here we should do well to take note of the fact that the "unity of will" in the democratic revolution and the "national" character of the bourgeois revolution, considered by Lenin as characteristics of the bourgeois revolution, no longer constitute the characteristic features of the bourgeois revolution in the imperialist epoch. In the imperialist epoch, the bourgeoisie, the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie and the proletariat cannot display that "unity of will" in the question of democracy, the big bourgeoisie having already turned against democracy. For the same reason, the fight for democracy loses its "national" character in the imperialist era.

Therefore, when our Mensheviks, our Khovostists (tailists), that is to say our "Congress-Communists" of the spurious

“C.P.I.” talk of the Indian bourgeoisie still having a revolutionary role to play because our revolution is a bourgeois revolution, shall we be wrong in calling them hanger-on of the bourgeoisie just as the Russian Mensheviks were to the Osvobozhdeniyeists (the Russian liberal bourgeoisie)? Shall we be wrong in saying that they are “playing into the hands of bourgeois democracy” (Lenin), “confusing the national political slogans of the revolutionary proletariat with those of the...bourgeoisie”, (Lenin) that, in short, they are following a policy of khovostism (tailism) and are limping behind the bourgeoisie?

No, the bourgeoisie cannot play any revolutionary role in the bourgeois democratic revolution in the epoch of decaying capitalism. They have definitely gone over to the camp of reaction. Their support of democracy have always been inconsistent, and, in the imperialist age, they have travelled the path from their earlier inconsistent support to their present consistent opposition to democracy. They no longer constitute a force for the democratic revolution. The proletariat, the urban petty bourgeoisie and the peasantry constitute the main forces of this revolution. In the words of Lenin: “Only the *people*, (Lenin’s emphasis) can constitute a force capable of gaining ‘a decisive victory over Tsarism’; in other words, the proletariat and the peasantry, if we take the main, big forces and distribute the rural and urban petty bourgeoisie (also falling under the category of ‘people’) between both of the two forces”. (Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution).

But that is not all. The leadership of the bourgeois revolution in the epoch of imperialism is in the hands of the only consistently democratic class—the proletariat. The proletariat is the only class which supports and fights for democracy throughout its existence as a class. It is democratic both in the bourgeois democratic sense in the period of bourgeois revolution, and it is also democratic in the socialist sense in the period of the socialist revolution. It alone as a class has the necessity of fighting for the formal bourgeois democracy. It has also the necessity of transforming this formal bourgeois democracy into socialist democracy through the instrumentality of the socialist revolution. And finally it will make democracy itself, that is to say, the democratic state, superfluous.

The peasantry supports democracy only so far as it acts as a weapon against feudalism, and stops on the threshold of the formal bourgeois democracy of the bourgeois republic and can

go no further. In the past, it needed the formal bourgeois democracy to fight against feudalism. At the present time, it needs the same formal democracy to fight the proletariat and socialism. Its democracy goes that far and no further. The democracy of the peasantry can never break away from its bourgeois class-mooring. The peasantry as the intermediary class has never represented the new productive forces of society either under feudalism or under capitalism. In feudal society, it was the bourgeoisie which represented as a class the new capitalist forces of production. Just as in capitalist society, it is the proletariat which represents the new forces of production. The peasantry having never represented the growing forces of production, cannot assume the role of leadership of the democratic revolution. The role of that leadership in the imperialist epoch falls to the proletariat. The question as to which class shall be the leader of a belated bourgeois democratic revolution is one of the fundamental questions that faces us today.

Both M N Roy and the "Congress-Socialists" have maintained that the petty bourgeoisie shall assume the leadership of the bourgeois democratic revolution in India. This, as we have seen, is a conclusion wholly unwarranted by the history of revolutions and by the tenets of Marxism. This mongrel political "theory" of M. N. Roy and the "Congress-Socialists" reflects unerringly its petty bourgeois class-root.

Says Lenin: "The issue of the revolution depends on whether the working class will play the part of auxiliary to the bourgeoisie which is powerful in its onslaught against the autocracy, but impotent politically; (My emphasis —S. T.) or the part of the leader of the people's revolution." (Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution).

Here, of course, it is obvious that by "people's revolution" Lenin means the bourgeois democratic revolution. The bourgeoisie are "impotent politically" in the bourgeois revolution in the imperialist epoch. But the role of the bourgeoisie in the bourgeois revolution must not be judged only in its negative aspect; in its positive aspect, the bourgeoisie are counter-revolutionary and supporter of autocracy. Their support of the revolution is only in the nature of an onslaught against autocracy, nothing more; and in this also the bourgeoisie are not consistent. They attack autocracy only to strike a bargain with it, only to compromise with it.

This estimation of the role of the bourgeoisie in the democratic revolution in the imperialist era prompted Lenin to express the

opinion that “we, Marxists, know from our theories and from daily and hourly observations of our liberals, Zemstvo Councillors and followers of Osvobozhdeniye, that the bourgeoisie are inconsistent, selfish and cowardly in their support of the revolution. The bourgeoisie, in the mass, will inevitably turn towards counter-revolution, towards autocracy, against the revolution and against the people, immediately their narrow selfish interests are met, immediately they ‘deserts’ consistent democracy. (They are already deserting it).” (Two Tactics of Social-democracy in the Democratic Revolution).

But exactly here is the rub. Our “Congress-Communists”, like the Russian Mensheviks who allotted a revolutionary role to the Russian bourgeoisie in the democratic revolution, have very graciously allotted the same role to the Indian bourgeoisie in the coming bourgeois democratic revolution in India. Therefore, the Indian bourgeoisie must “not be frightened out of their wits by the political slogans of the proletariat”. The Indian bourgeoisie through the Congress, their class-organisation, must lead the revolution and the proletariat must remain content with just playing the role of a political pressure apparatus on the bourgeoisie and nothing more.

This extreme vulgarisation of Marxism is nothing new. Our “Congress-Communists” cannot lay claim to any originality. The Russian Mensheviks are their ideological and historical predecessors. Only with this difference that if at the beginning of this century, illusions regarding the role of the Russian bourgeoisie in a democratic revolution could be possible, though in our opinion, it was possible only because of the opportunism of the Russian Mensheviks, it is not possible for any one who has anything understanding of Marxism to nurse the same illusions in 1938, in the period of deep, insoluble crisis of imperialism, and in the era of the socialist revolution.

In 1905, in the period of imperialist expansion, Lenin analysed the political forces in Russia and found the Russian bourgeoisie were turning towards autocracy and the counter-revolution. But in this epoch of the socialist world revolution, our “Congress-Communists” have discovered hidden revolutionary qualities in the Indian bourgeoisie. Therefore, in order not to lose this newly recruited ally of the “Congress-Communists” in the coming bourgeois democratic revolution, we are advised to become the tail of the Congress. Ours is a bourgeois democratic revolution, therefore, the bourgeoisie have still their revolutionary role to play

and we must carry this class along with us and must not make it panicky with the national revolutionary slogans of the proletariat—such is the policy of the “Congress-Communists”.

Exactly the same attitude was adopted by the Russian Mensheviks towards their “own” bourgeoisie and towards the democratic revolution. Lenin waged a merciless struggle against this vulgarisation of Marxism. Criticising the Mensheviks, Lenin wrote: “One of the two things, gentlemen: either we, together with the people, strive to bring about the revolution and obtain complete victory over Tsarism *inspite of* (Lenin’s italics) the inconsistent, selfish and cowardly bourgeoisie, or we do not accept this ‘inspite of,’ we do fear that the bourgeoisie will ‘desert’ the revolution. *In the latter case we betray the proletariat and the people to the bourgeoisie,* (my emphasis, S. T.) to the inconsistent, selfish and cowardly bourgeoisie.” (Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution).

In another place, Lenin writes: “The New Iskra-ists (i.e. the Mensheviks —S. T.) have learnt by rote that the economic basis of the democratic revolution is the bourgeois revolution and ‘understood’ this to mean that the democratic task of the proletariat must be degraded to the level of bourgeois moderation and must not exceed the boundaries beyond which the ‘bourgeoisie will desert’. On the pretext of deepening their work, on the pretext of rousing ‘the initiative of the workers’ and defending a pure class-policy, the Economists, in fact, delivered the proletariat into the hands of the liberal bourgeois politicians...the new Iskra-ists on the same pretext are in fact betraying the interests of the proletariat in the democratic revolution to the bourgeoisie, i.e. leading the party along a path which objectively means that.” (Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution).

So far we have discussed the bourgeois democratic revolution in the epoch of feudalism and in the period of expanding imperialism. Let us now see if in this period of perennial crises of imperialism, started by the Great War and deepened by the socialist revolution in Russia, and in this epoch of the world socialist revolution, the bourgeois democratic revolution is going by default. Of course historically speaking, in certain countries due to certain specific conditions, a bourgeois democratic revolution would, if one can so express, be an “end in itself” just as the French Revolution was an “end in itself” in the 18th century, or would it be a phase of the socialist revolution, which will accomplish the democratic task in passing, the duration

of the phase depending to a large extent on the peculiar political situation existing in each country.

That school of thought which considers the bourgeois revolution in the period of declining capitalism and socialist revolution as an "end in itself" errs profoundly. The socialist revolution is the order of the day in our epoch and the party of the proletariat can not accept the tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution as its main objectives. To suggest this is reactionary nonsense, born out of ignorance of the character of the revolutionary task that history allots to the proletariat to be fulfilled in the epoch of imperialism. That task is the socialist revolution, the destruction of capitalism and the establishment of the socialist society. The bourgeois-democratic revolution cannot be the historical task in our age; it was the task of the feudal era.

In countries such as India where the bourgeois democratic revolution could not reach its logical climax due to certain extraneous factors such as the colonial policy of British imperialism, the unfinished tasks of the bourgeois revolution have to be taken up and completed by the proletariat in the process of carrying out the socialist revolution. The bourgeois revolution will be a link in the chain of the socialist revolution, which will accomplish the belated democratic task of the bourgeois revolution. This immediate growing over from the bourgeois revolution to the socialist revolution, this unbroken continuity between them in the epoch of imperialism, and the growth and the ripening of the forces of the socialist revolution, distinguish the bourgeois revolution of the imperialist epoch from that of the feudal epoch.

In the feudal epoch, the bourgeois revolution was the goal, and an "end in itself" because society for a very long time to come could not go beyond the limits of the democratic content of the bourgeois revolution. In the imperialist epoch, the social forces necessary for smashing the bourgeois social order and for pushing the bourgeois democracy to its historical and logical end, namely the proletarian democracy, are ripe. It is necessary to analyse scientifically and to comprehend fully the nature of the central task that history has placed before us in this epoch. Then, one is sure to realise that the bourgeois democratic tasks can only be minor ones which, in the course of its gigantic sweep, the socialist revolution will accomplish. The minimum programme of the revolutionary party of the proletariat covers entirely the task

of the bourgeois revolution. At present, we may have to lay more stress on the fulfilment of this minimum programme than on the maximum programme, but we can never lose sight of the final objective of our revolution or consider a particular phase of our revolution which completes the minimum programme of the revolutionary proletariat as our final objective. Lenin has repeatedly warned us against a "movement without final aims". Such a movement without final aims develops due to two causes—the underestimation of the revolutionary role of the proletariat and fear of the bourgeoisie.

Dealing with the question of the bourgeois democratic revolution under the condition of imperialism, Lenin writes: "The liberation of bourgeois Russia from Tsarism, from the land-power of the landowner, the proletariat will *immediately* (my emphasis—S. T.) utilise not to aid the prosperous peasants in their struggle against the village worker, but to complete a socialist revolution in alliance with the proletariats of Europe". (Two Lines of Revolution).

Further, in his "The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky", Lenin writes: "Things have turned out just as we said they would. The course taken by the revolution has confirmed the correctness of our reasoning. First, with 'all' the peasantry against the monarchy, the landlords, the medieval regime *and to that extent, the revolution remains bourgeois democratic*, (my emphasis, S. T.) then, with the poorest peasants, with the semi-proletarians, with all the exploited against capitalism, including the rural rich, the kulaks, the speculators, and to that extent the revolution becomes a socialist one. To attempt to raise an artificial Chinese wall between the first and the second revolutions, to separate them by anything else than the degree of preparedness of the proletariat and the degree of unity with the poor peasant is to seriously distort Marxism, to vulgarise it, to substitute liberalism in its stead."

Our "Congress-Communists" have done exactly that which Lenin has so sharply warned us against. They have raised a Chinese wall between the bourgeois democratic phase and the socialist phase of the socialist revolution in India and have separated them artificially and mechanically. They have thus distorted Marxism, vulgarised it and have substituted petty bourgeois liberalism in its stead.

On the problem of the bourgeois democratic revolution under the conditions of imperialism, Stalin writes in his "Foundations

of Leninism” : “When the overthrow of the survivals of the feudal-serf regime becomes impossible without a revolutionary struggle against imperialism—it needs hardly be proved that the bourgeois democratic revolution, in a country more or less developed, should approximate to the proletarian revolution, (my emphasis—S.T.) that one should grow into the other..... That this Chinese wall “theory” is totally devoid of scientific meaning under imperialism (mark the words “under imperialism”—S.T.) hardly needs to be proved : *it is and can be only a means of concealing and camouflaging the counter-revolutionary aspirations of the bourgeoisie.*” (my emphasis—S.T.)

Under imperialism, there is but one revolution, the socialist revolution which insofar as in its first phase fights “with ‘all’ the peasantry against the monarchy and the landlords, the medieval regime, to that extent it remains bourgeois-democratic.” If one suggests more than this, if one attempts to show, that under imperialism, the bourgeois democratic revolution is anything more than a phase of the socialist revolution, then according to Lenin “he vulgarises and distorts Marxism and substitutes liberalism in its stead,” and according to Stalin, such an attempt “can be only a means of concealing and camouflaging the counter-revolutionary aspirations of the bourgeoisie.”

The “Congress-Communists” by their mechanical unhistorical and undialectical estimation of the Indian revolution and by their passion for “paper slogans” (Stalin) are exactly doing what Stalin has warned us against. They are “concealing and camouflaging the counter-revolutionary aspirations of the bourgeoisie.”

A certain Russian Communist had asked Stalin if the Bolshevik Party had not given the slogan of the bourgeois democratic revolution during the October Revolution in Russia. Stalin answers “But who told you that the October insurrection and the October Revolution were confined to, or made it their basic task to complete the bourgeois revolution ? Where did you get that from ? No one denies that one of the chief aims of the October Revolution was to complete the bourgeois revolution, that the latter could not have been completed without the October Revolution, just as the October Revolution itself could not have been consolidated without the bourgeois revolution having been completed..... All that is undeniable. *But can it for this reason be asserted that the completion of the bourgeois revolution was not a derivation of the October Revolution but its essential feature, its chief aim*” ? (my emphasis—S. T.) To one Comrade Pokrovsky

who had muddled the issue like our "Congress-Communists," Stalin wrote : "Lenin considered that completion of the bourgeois revolution was a *by-product of the revolution*, which fulfilled this task *in passing*". (my emphasis, S. T.) I hope this will suffice for all of us in the matter of understanding the character of the revolution under imperialism.

Let us also discuss another very important point concerning the character of a revolution in the imperialist epoch. No bourgeois democratic revolution is worth its name which does not create favourable conditions which are indispensable to the growth and expansion of capitalism. Lenin considered the unhampered development of capitalism, which was made possible by the bourgeois democratic revolution and by the bourgeois democratic revolution only, to be the indispensable socio-economic background for the socialist revolution and socialism. He subjected the Narodniki (the Russian Populists) to sharp criticism and withering taunt for their fantastic "theory" about the possibility of socialism in Russia on the economic foundation of feudal economy without Russia's passing through the capitalist phase. Lenin pointed out that it was impossible for any country to skip over one social stage and to land at the next.

In 1905, the period of expansion of imperialism, Lenin wrote : "Marxism teaches that at a certain stage of its development a society that is based on commodity production, and having commercial intercourse with civilised capitalist nations inevitably takes the road of capitalism itself. Marxism has irrevocably broken with all the nonsense talked by the Narodniki and the anarchists about Russia, for instance, being able to avoid capitalist development, jump out of capitalism or skip over it, by some means other than the class struggle on the basis and within the limits of capitalism." (Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution).

This was certainly a true characterisation of the process of social and economic development of a society based on commodity production till the victory of the socialist revolution in Russia. This factor, which is of the highest importance to the social evolution of mankind, has made the theory of the inevitability and the absolute necessity of the capitalist development as the pre-requisite for the socialist revolution, out-dated.

"Skipping over the capitalist development", was the slogan that Lenin issued in the period following the victory of the proletarian revolution in Russia. By giving this slogan, Lenin wanted

to point out that the victorious socialist revolution in Russia and the existence of the first Workers' State of the world have made it superfluous, historically speaking, for those countries which lack capitalist development to go through the painful process of capitalist development. They can skip that stage with the help of the proletarian state and take to industrial development under conditions of planned socialist economy and not under the conditions of capitalist economy. Countries which are backward in capitalist development such as India could skip over the bourgeois revolution and go straight for socialist revolution with the help of the socialist state. Industrialisation without the development of capitalism is thus made possible, and industrialisation under capitalist condition of production, which is the essence of bourgeois democratic revolution, is no longer a historical and social inevitability. From this, it follows that in the epoch of decaying capitalism, the bourgeois democratic revolution loses its socio-economic significance in the backward countries and its only significance in our times can consist in its helping us to understand the role of the various strata of the peasantry in the course of the developing socialist revolution.

I would like to draw the attention of all earnest revolutionaries to this slogan of Lenin—"Skipping over capitalist development,"—a slogan which condenses within itself the historical result of the far-reaching changes which the October Revolution has wrought in sphere of world politics.

Lastly, I would like the "Congress-Communists" to ponder over these lines of Stalin, and to make revolutionary use of them. In his "Foundations of Leninism" Stalin writes: "Formerly, the analysis of the premises of the proletarian revolution was usually approached from the point of view of the economic situation in any particular country. This method is now inadequate. Today, it must start from the point of view of the economic situation in all, or a majority of countries from the point of the stage of world economy.....Formerly, it was customary to talk of the existence or absence of objective conditions for the proletarian revolution in individual countries or to be more exact, in this or that advanced country. This point of view is now inadequate. Now we must say that the objective conditions of the revolution exist throughout the whole system of imperialist world economy..... Formerly, the proletarian revolution was regarded as the consequence of an exclusively internal development in a given country. At the present time, this point of view

is inadequate. Today, it is necessary to regard the proletarian revolution above all as the result of the development of the contradictions within the world-system of imperialism.”

If the “Congress-Communists” would really assimilate the significance of these words and learn to evaluate Indian politics from the international angle, they may still correct the hopeless political blunders which they have made in their estimation of the character of the revolution in India and of the forces of the revolution.

After his release from jail in 1937, M. N. Roy joined the Congress and came out with a number of pseudo-Marxist theories in support of his policy of collaboration with the bourgeoisie. Most of these theories were Menshevism in a Indian garb. As a part of his politics of illusion and false hope, Roy raised the slogan of a Constituent Assembly and urged the transformation of the National Congress into such an assembly. In this article, Tagore exposes the hollowness of the slogan and its true Menshevik character. The original article was written in 1938 but was revised by the author in 1946.

ON THE SLOGAN OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

The slogan of a constituent assembly is in the political air of India today. Since it was first raised by M. N. Roy some years ago, it has now been taken up by Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Bose and other Congress leaders. So have the "Congress-Communists".

One hears and reads about the slogan of a constituent assembly everywhere. From the rightist Congressmen to the so-called leftists such as the "Congress-Communists", the "Congress-Socialists" and the followers of M. N. Roy, there is complete unanimity on the question of a constituent assembly. As the slogan holds the centre of the political stage, it will be necessary for us to discuss its various implications in some detail.

The slogan of a constituent assembly is a slogan of the democratic revolution. It was the slogan of the great French Revolution of 1789—the classic bourgeois democratic revolution.

The idea behind a constituent assembly is to convene a truly national assembly genuinely constituted on the basis of universal suffrage and elected by secret ballot, which has for its sole task the creation of a constitution of a state.

There can hardly be any objection to the idea of such an assembly which will reflect the true opinion of the nation on the question of the nature of government the people of a country would like to have.

The demand for a constituent assembly was a democratic slogan which cut at the very foundation of absolute monarchy and the doctrine of the divine right of the king to rule the people according to his own whims and fancy. The constituent assembly slogan also struck at the very root of the feudal order woven

around the monarchy, which allowed the feudal lords to enjoy some portion of its divine right by the logic of class-transfusion. Since then, the demand for a constituent assembly has insistently been put forward by all revolutionary parties. The Russian Social Democratic Party put forward this slogan during the 1905 revolution in Russia. The liberal bourgeoisie represented by the "Osbovozdniye" group also voiced the demand for a constituent assembly. While supporting the demand, Lenin pointed out that it could no longer be the slogan of the revolution. That was exactly the reason why the liberal bourgeoisie of Russia supported it. A constituent assembly under the conditions of autocracy could never be a national assembly or a genuinely constituted assembly. It can only be a faked assembly suited to the interest of the autocracy. That is why the demand for the constituent assembly was partially "supported" by the Tsar's government which also admitted "the necessity of assembling the representatives of the people but under an electorate system based on high property qualifications or on a narrow class system" (Lenin). Therefore, it is obvious that such an assembly could not be a national one, nor can it be a truly constituent one. The liberal bourgeoisie wanted it, but as we have seen they wanted it under the conditions of autocracy. They did not "demand the overthrow of the Tsarist government" (Lenin) and as such reduced their demand of the constituent assembly to an empty hollow phrase devoid of all revolutionary content and used it as a mere political ruse. The Menshevik section of the Russian Social Democratic Party trailed behind the liberal bourgeoisie. Only the Bolshevik section of the Russian Social Democratic Party under the leadership of Lenin, analysed the political content of the slogan thoroughly, and clearly enunciated the conditions which alone could guarantee the convening of a genuinely national assembly, genuinely constituted.

The third Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Party which was held in London in May, 1905, and was attended only by the Bolsheviks, discussed among other things the question of the constituent assembly. In one of the resolutions passed at this Congress—the resolution on the provisional revolutionary government—we find the following significant reference to the question of a constituent assembly. "The setting up of a democratic republic in Russia is possible only as a result of a victorious uprising of the people, whose organ of government will be the provisional revolutionary government, *the only body capable*

of securing complete freedom for electoral agitation and of convening on the basis of universal, equal, direct suffrage and secret ballot, a constituent assembly that will really express the will of the people". (my emphasis—S. T.)

This is exactly the point. The demand for a constituent assembly is meaningless unless it is supplemented by the demand for a provisional revolutionary government. Only a provisional revolutionary government can make the convening of a genuine national constituent assembly a reality. The Mensheviks by not understanding it and failing to point out the intimate connection between the provisional revolutionary government and the convening of the constituent assembly, the former preceding the latter, and the liberal bourgeoisie for very obvious reasons by not advancing the slogan of the provisional revolutionary government, reduced the slogan of a constituent assembly to meaningless political jargon.

Lenin castigated the Mensheviks for not understanding the relation between a provisional revolutionary government and a constituent assembly and for tailing behind the Russian liberals.

Lenin writes: "Who is to convene the constituent assembly which even the Osvobozhdeniyeists (the group of the liberal bourgeoisie—S.T.) are now ready to accept as their slogan—including the recognition of universal etc. suffrage? Just what should constitute the real guarantee that the elections to this assembly will be free and will express the interest of the whole of the people?... These questions inevitably bring us to the question of the provisional revolutionary government. *It is not difficult to understand that the really free, popular elections to the constituent assembly, completely guaranteeing really universal, equal, direct suffrage and secret ballot are not only improbable but actually impossible under the autocracy.* (my emphasis—S.T.)

"The constituent assembly must be convened by some one; some one must guarantee the freedom and fairness of the election; some one must invest such an assembly with the full power and force. *Only a revolutionary government which is the organ of the uprising, can in all sincerity desire this and be capable of doing everything to achieve this.* (my emphasis—S.T.)

"The conference of the Menshevik New Iskra-ists committed the same error that the liberals of Osvobozhdeniye are constantly committing. The Osvobozhdeniyeists are prattling about a "constituent" assembly and *they bashfully close their eyes to the*

fact that power and force remain in the hands of the Tsar. They forget that in order to "constitute" one must possess the force to do so. (my emphasis—S.T.)

"It is precisely the Osvobozhdeniye position, the position of the constitutional bourgeoisie, that is now characterised by the fact that they regard the decision to convene a national constituent assembly, as a decisive victory and *are prudently silent about a provisional revolutionary government and the republic.* (my emphasis—S.T.). In order to push the revolution further forward i.e. further than it is being pushed by the monarchist bourgeoisie, it is necessary actively to advance emphasis and push to the forefront the slogans which eliminate the "inconsistencies" of bourgeois democracy. At the present time there are *only two* (Lenin's emphasis) such slogans: (1) the provisional revolutionary government, and (2) the republic, *for the slogan of a national constituent assembly has been accepted by the monarchist bourgeoisie and accepted precisely for the purpose of cheating the revolution, of preventing the complete victory of the revolution and for the purpose of enabling the big bourgeoisie to strike a hucksters' bargain with Tsarism.*" (my emphasis—S.T.). (Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution).

In the course of his speech delivered at the Bengal Provincial Political Conference, held at Bishnupur in January, 1938, and reported by the "Independent India" of February 20, 1938, M. N. Roy remarked on the question of the constituent assembly: "They believe that the constituent assembly will be called only after the capture of political power. They seem to confuse the constituent assembly with the legislative organ of the state of free India. The latter can come into existence only when the state is established upon the capture of power by the people. The constituent assembly will rise as the organ for the capture, as the signal for the capture of power and, therefore, must precede the act of capturing the power. The historical function of the constituent assembly will be to lay the foundation of the new state. It will be the creation of the people of India in its fight for freedom. It will meet only once, for one particular purpose, namely, to lay down the fundamental laws of the new state of free India. It will be the instrument through which the people will capture power. Those who maintain that the constituent assembly can be called after the capture of power, evade the all-important problem of the capture of the power."

M. N. Roy complains that there are people who "believe that the constituent assembly will be called only after the capture of political power. They seem to confuse the constituent assembly with the legislative organ of the state of free India." The constituent assembly will certainly be summoned after the seizure of power. How otherwise will a constituent assembly be convened? Who will convene the constituent assembly? That was the question that Lenin put to the Mensheviks. Who will convene the constituent assembly in India, a genuine constituent assembly representing all the people, not an enlarged edition of the Delhi Convention summoned by the Indian bourgeoisie for a circus show? Let us put this question to M. N. Roy, because "in order to constitute one must possess the force to do so" (Lenin).

Does British imperialism in India constitute that force? Obviously it does not. We have not the slightest doubt that if we do not sit content with well-groomed resolutions only, and really desire and strive to convene a genuine constituent assembly, British imperialism is sure to put, in the words of Marx, the "bayonet on the agenda" of our constituent assembly.

Does the Indian National Congress, (it is 'national' in the same way as Mussolini's Fascist and Hitler's Nazi parties are 'national') the party of the Indian bourgeoisie which is more than eager "to strike a hucksters' bargain" with British imperialism and is going to swallow the "Federation" proposal in the same way as it has gulped down the first instalment of the entente cordiale with British imperialism—I mean provincial autonomy—does that National Congress represent the force that is going to convene the genuine constituent assembly of all the people? It is obvious to everybody that the bourgeois Congress, terrified with the prospect of the revolution, cannot convene such a constituent assembly even if it has the power to do so.

The only force which can do it, which can guarantee the convention of such an assembly and which can kick the imperialist bayonet off the agenda, is the provisional revolutionary government, the organ of the revolution which will overthrow imperialism.

The constituent assembly can never be convened so long as British imperialism is in India. It can only be convened and must be convened, only after the seizure of power, after the final smash-up of imperialism. But what extraordinary logic is that which identifies the constituent assembly with the "legislative organ of the state" only because of the fact that the constituent

assembly has been called after the seizure of power! There is absolutely no logical connection between the two and they have been just arbitrarily put together. No one has ever considered the constituent assembly to be a "legislative organ of the state." It has a special function to fulfil and immediately after fulfilling that special function which is to frame the constitution of free India, it will die a natural death.

The constituent assembly can never be the organ of the seizure of power. The organ of the victorious revolution is the provisional revolutionary government, which being formed by the revolutionary party of the proletariat after the seizure of power, will be entrusted by it with the task of convening the constituent assembly. The provisional revolutionary government is by no means the "legislative organ of the state." The fact that it is provisional as well as revolutionary, means that it is not the usual type of government. It acts as the organ of the revolution, convenes the constituent assembly after the seizure of power and after the constitution has been drawn up by the constituent assembly the provisional revolutionary government also dies a natural death, giving place to the new government.

M. N. Roy says: "Those who maintain that the constituent assembly can be called after the capture of power, evade the all-important question of the capture of power." The formulation of the problem is deceptive and fallacious. To maintain that the constituent assembly will be called after the capture of power, does not by any means signify that the question of the seizure of power has been shelved. This is an absurd position that anyone least capable of logical thinking can take up. Lenin considered the constituent assembly as a thing which cannot precede the capture of power but must follow after the seizure of power. Commenting on the resolution on the provisional revolutionary government adopted by the third Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Party, Lenin says: "The resolution of the Congress states that *only* (Lenin's emphasis) a provisional revolutionary government can secure full freedom for the election campaign and convene an assembly that will really express the will of the people, moreover an assembly, that will be the organ of a victorious people's uprising... The constituent assembly must be convened by some one, some one must guarantee the freedom and fairness of the elections. Some one must invest such an assembly with full power and force. *Only* (my emphasis—S.T.) a revolutionary government which is the organ of the uprising,

can in all sincerity desire this and be capable of doing everything to achieve this." (Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution).

Thus, Lenin considered the constituent assembly as something which can be called after the seizure of power, *only* by the provisional revolutionary government. Will Roy now accuse Lenin for evading "the all important problem of the capture of power"?

It is quite true that the central point of a revolutionary movement is the seizure of power. And it is equally true that to talk about the constituent assembly without pointing out the organ of the revolutionary uprising which will make the constituent assembly a revolutionary reality, is nothing but to "evade the all-important problem of the capture of power". This is exactly what the Mensheviks did, for which Lenin took them severely to task. They talked about the constituent assembly but "forgot" to say anything about the relation of the constituent assembly to the provisional revolutionary government in their resolution. This is exactly what M. N. Roy has done by evading "the all-important question of the capture of power" and by making the constituent assembly the instrument of the seizure of power. He has committed the well-known mistake of putting the cart before the horse.

It must also be borne in mind that the gigantic tempo at which historical developments mature during the revolution, may make the convening of the constituent assembly completely superfluous. The history of the Russian Revolution furnishes an instructive instance.

M. N. Roy is happy that after seven years of consistent propaganda, the constituent assembly has been accepted by the Congress "as the central slogan, the focal point of its anti-imperialist struggle." He has every reason to be proud of his achievement! As he rightly points out in the same article that not only the leftists but also "the high placed Congress leaders" who once regarded the constituent assembly slogan "as a utopian dream" have accepted it. We shall have occasion to know why they have accepted it. Roy says: "In the Indian context, the form and the content of the constituent assembly undergo certain changes owing to the inability of certain classes of our countrymen to participate in the democratic revolution." ("The Constituent Assembly", "Independent India", September 19, 1937). Roy has left the "Indian context" unexplained as the theoretical explanation of the Indian context would not allow him to arrive

at the conclusion that the form the constituent assembly would assume in India must be the Congress. He has also vaguely referred "to the inability of certain classes of our countrymen to participate in the democratic revolution," because a critical analysis of the forces of the democratic revolution under the conditions of decaying capitalism and a clear enunciation of the class-forces would not warrant him to arrive at the preposterous conclusion that at the proper time the Congress will be transformed into a constituent assembly. He says: "If we propose to make the constituent assembly a question of practical politics within the next few years, if we intend to place the capture of political power on the order of the day at an early date, we have no other alternative but to advance with the prospective of transforming the Congress into the constituent assembly. There is no reason why at the proper time the Congress representing the overwhelming majority of the people of India, elected by them and owning their allegiance, cannot be transformed into the constituent assembly of the Indian people."

What is this "Indian context"? The "Indian context" is nothing else but the problem on the political emancipation of a colonial people from the yoke of foreign imperialism. It is the national question of the international revolutionary front. Viewed from this angle the "Indian context" means that the belated bourgeois democratic revolution shall be carried out by the proletarian revolution which "in passing" (Lenin) shall carry out the tasks of the democratic revolution. The national revolution in the colonies, and this is the "Indian context" of Roy, cannot mean anything else in the epoch of decaying capitalism and world revolution. As to the "inability of certain classes of our countrymen to participate in the democratic revolution," these vague generalities such as "inability" and the "certain classes of our countrymen" when expressed in precise Marxian terms will appear as the antagonism of the Indian bourgeoisie to the democratic revolution. Roy's vagueness is a conscious act on his part. This is the result of Roy's opportunist attempt to cover up the bourgeois class-character of the National Congress which he tries to prove to be a multi-class organisation and not a political party. According to Roy, this multi-class organisation will organise and lead the democratic revolution. Marxism has taught us that every revolution is a result of class struggle and that every revolution is led by one particular class through the instrumentary of its political party.

The bourgeois democratic revolution in the epoch of feudalism was led by the bourgeoisie then a revolutionary class, just as the proletarian revolution will be led by the proletariat. Lenin has taught us that the democratic revolution in the epoch of imperialism can only be completed under the leadership of the proletariat, the bourgeoisie having turned an enemy of the democratic revolution due to the altered economic and political conditions of capitalism.

But M. N. Roy in answer to questions put to him by X Y Z, writes in the "Independent India" of the June 27, 1937: "I do not believe in the *dogma* (Roy's emphasis) of proletarian leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle. It is sheer nonsense, at best revolutionary romanticism, to talk of proletarian leadership of the democratic revolution in a country where the proletariat is still to form itself into a social class."

What a splendid example of confusion and opportunism. Roy does not believe in the "dogma (!) of proletarian leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle." But may we ask Roy what is this anti-imperialist struggle, if in our epoch it is not the socialist revolution that will fulfil the democratic revolution as its "by-product"?

Can the colonial bourgeoisie lead this democratic revolution? No, they cannot. Firstly, because they are too closely allied with the landed aristocracy as their own economic interests are deeply staked in land. And secondly, because the colonial bourgeoisie in the epoch of decaying capitalism and the socialist revolution, need the help of autocracy and its terror apparatus for their class-existence. That is why the colonial bourgeoisie have completely turned against the democratic revolution. In the semi-colonial China, we have noticed the same thing. The same thing we have noticed in 1905 and 1917 revolutions in Russia, And more recently we witnessed the same development in Spain. Can the petty bourgeoisie as a class lead the revolution? No, being the middle strata, it can never assume the leadership of either the democratic revolution or of the proletarian revolution.

Therefore, we are led to the conclusion that as a class it is the proletariat which will lead both the bourgeois democratic revolution as well as the proletarian revolution in this epoch of decaying capitalism. As such, it is not a "dogma" but scientific truth that the proletariat shall lead the anti-imperialist revolution in the colonial countries.

It is sheer petty-bourgeois opportunism and philistinism which can view the question of "proletarian leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle" as "sheer nonsense, at best political romanticism." Roy qualifies his dogmatic statement by saying that it is nonsense and political romanticism in relation to a "country where the proletariat is still to form itself into a social class." Has the proletariat in India not yet formed itself into a class? Was the Russian proletariat more developed as a class in 1905 than the Indian proletariat in 1938? Most definitely not. The entire statement is unrealistic, unscientific and opportunistic. It is a sly but vain attempt on the part of Roy to justify his theory of the multi-class leadership—in this case the leadership of the Congress—of the democratic revolution in India.

But then comes the gem. Roy says: "But that demands a radical transformation in the structure and the character of the Congress. Today, it is a mere loose mass movement than a disciplined organisation of the masses. It must be transformed into the revolutionary party of the Indian people, the effective organ of their anti-imperialist struggle. Then only will it be able to perform its task of leading the anti-imperialist struggle to victory and of eventually transforming itself into a constituent assembly."

So this multi-class organisation, this "loose mass movement", this Congress, must be transformed into "the revolutionary party of the people." Mark the words "party" and the "people". How a loose multi-class organisation loses its multi-class character and is ultimately metamorphosed into a revolutionary party of the people, "the effective organ of their anti-imperialist struggle", is, of course, known only to Roy. He admits that the multi-class Congress in its present form is not "the effective organ of their anti-imperialist struggle." After it has been transformed into the revolutionary party of the people, it will "lead the anti-imperialist struggle to victory" and then eventually transform "itself into a constituent assembly."

Thus, a loose multi-class organisation will transform itself into a revolutionary party of the people, and this party after the seizure of power will transform itself into a constituent assembly! Take note of the fact that the constituent assembly will be convened not by this revolutionary party but that the party will transform "itself into a constituent assembly." A party transforming itself into a constituent assembly! Has any one heard anything like it anywhere?

Can confusion and muddleheadedness go further than this? But M. N. Roy has spared himself and others even this trouble of transforming the Congress. Thanks to him it would no longer be necessary to change this loose organisation into a party! Contradicting himself with a nonchalance worthy of a master-opportunist, Roy writes: "Primarily, the Congress is a political party. But its structure does not permit it to function effectively as such... Either baffled by the enormity of the task or actuated by some motive, those who are guiding the destinies of the Congress today are constituting themselves into a close political party which excludes all the radical elements." (Party or Parliament? Independent India June 5, 1938).

Another gem from the same precious pen. Roy writes: "By accepting the slogan of a constituent assembly, the Congress has denied the right of the British Parliament... It has once and for all turned its back on the path of a compromise or an understanding with British imperialism."

No, the acceptance of the slogan of the constituent assembly by the Congress, does not by any means signify the abandonment of the path of compromise or understanding with British imperialism by the Congress. This statement of Roy is an example of pure and simple dogmatism, a mere assertion without any theoretical or historical justification. The liberal bourgeoisie of Russia, the Osvobozhdeniye group, accepted the slogan of the constituent assembly in 1905, just with the idea of striking a bargain with Tsarism. Exactly the same thing is true regarding the Congress. This is precisely the reason why not only the "leftists" but also "the high placed Congress leaders," including Mahatma Gandhi who once regarded the constituent assembly slogan "as a utopian dream," have accepted it. These "high-placed Congress leaders", who are nothing if not the champions of the Indian bourgeoisie, have taken up the slogan of a constituent assembly with the sole object of using it as pressure tactics against British imperialism for facilitating a bargain with it.

But Roy is on the right path when he points out that such a constituent assembly cannot be a gift of British imperialism or cannot be held with its permission or approval. Besides this solitary relieving feature, Roy's entire theoretical approach to the question of the constituent assembly is vitiated with opportunism. His standpoint on this question puts him historically in the company of the Russian Mensheviks.

Is there any wonder then that the leaders of the Indian bourgeoisie, the great heroes of the Indian National Congress, have accepted the slogan of the constituent assembly without the provisional revolutionary government and wax eloquent on it?

Even Mahatma Gandhi has found the constituent assembly consistent with his theory of non-violence and truth and has advocated it. Writing on the proposed Federation in the "Harijan" of October 7, 1938, Mahatma Gandhi Says: "As a matter of fact, too, I have said that the Congress will never have Federation forced upon it, and that there was no hope of peace in India till there was independence in virtue of a constitution framed by a duly convened constituent assembly."

There will be "independence in virtue of a constitution framed by a duly convened constituent assembly." So, independence is the gift of a constitution and of a constituent assembly; not of a revolution! And the constituent assembly is a gift of imperialism subjected to pressure, but not the result of the overthrow of imperialism!

Once again in an article entitled "The Constituent Assembly", in the "Harijan" of the November 25, 1939, Mahatma Gandhi says: "Hard facts have, however, made me a convert and, for that reason perhaps, more enthusiastic than Jawaharlal himself... It will be the surest index to toe popular feeling... Again the constituent assembly alone can produce a constitution indigenous to the country and truly and fully representing the will of the people... The constituent assembly, if it comes into being—as I hope it will—as a result of an honourable settlement between us and the British people—the combined will of the best men of the two nations will produce an assembly that will reflect fairly truly the best mind of India... The principal hindrance is undoubtedly the British Government. If they can summon a round table conference as they propose to do after the war, they can surely summon a constituent assembly subject to safeguard to the satisfaction of minorities... Look at this question from any side you like, it will be found that the way to democratic swaraj lies only through a properly constituted assembly. All resources must, therefore, be exhausted to reach the constituent assembly before direct action is thought of. A stage may be reached when direct action may become the necessary prelude to the constituent assembly. That stage is not yet."

Let us now examine the various points raised by Mahatma Gandhi. Though Mahatma Gandhi has talked of the probability

of starting a movement against British imperialism in order to make the constituent assembly a reality, yet it is clear from the other extracts of the same article that the Mahatma's affection is for that constituent assembly which will be the gift of the British government.

"If the British government can summon a round-table conference, then what objections can they have to convene the constituent assembly?" the Mahatma has anxiously asked.

The British government might take the hint from Mahatma Gandhi and call the constituent assembly with the help of the Congress and the Muslim League. But a constituent assembly convened by British imperialism cannot be anything but a huge circus like the round table conference, a menagerie of landlords, millowners and native princes controlled by the circus manager—British imperialism.

The constitution framed by such a constituent assembly can be anything else but certainly not the "surest index to the popular feeling."

In short, if British imperialism convenes the constituent assembly or does not oppose the Congress and the Muslim League in convening one, then we should understand that some secret arrangement has been arrived at between British imperialism, the Congress and the Muslim League regarding the framing of a constitution hostile to the interest of the masses but suited to their own.

Mahatma Gandhi had once expressed his desire to allow every adult man and woman—the right to elect the representatives to the constituent assembly. He had tried to prove that if every adult in the country enjoyed the right to elect the representative to the constituent assembly then that assembly would reflect the will of the masses. This is wrong and, moreover, a bluff.

As long as capitalism exists, the masses will never be able to send their representatives in sufficient number to an assembly, even if they get the right to vote. The bourgeoisie will utilise money and power to bring its own representatives to the assembly. That is why so long as capitalist society lasts, it is impossible to convene a constituent assembly which will truly reflect the will of the people. Because of this, the constituent assembly which will be the outcome of a conspiracy between British imperialism, the Congress and the Muslim League, may frame a constitution which shall establish, not the democratic swaraj but the

plunder-raj of British imperialists, native princes, landlords and capitalists in India.

Since their release from jail in 1944, the cry for the constituent assembly has once more been revived by the Congress leaders, This time they have met with a ready response from the British government. British imperialism badly needs to come to terms with the Indian bourgeoisie so that it may forge an anti-soviet bloc in India and the East. It also wants to eliminate the threatened American competition in the Indian market and to preserve the Indian market for the joint exploitation by British imperialism and Indian capitalism.

This is the reason why the British government have so readily agreed to the Congress demand for the convening of a constituent assembly. Moreover, the British government is more than confident that the constituent assembly the Congress expects and wants the British government to convene shall on no account jeopardise British imperialist interest in India; as Mahatma Gandhi, Paudit Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel have declared that this constituent assembly will be constituted with the elected members of the central and provincial legislatures. In other words, it will be formed with men who have been elected on the basis of a franchise which has enfranchised only eleven per cent people and only the propertied classes.

Thus, men representing only the millowners, zamindars, stock exchange gamblers, speculators, and black marketeers, in one word all cut-throats, will constitute the constituent assembly of the Gandhian pattern, and it is these men, who protected from the just wrath of the long-suffering and long-cheated Indian masses by the very democratic and non-violent British imperialist bayonets, will draw up the constitution of the future Indian state.

This constituent assembly composed of the exploiters of the Indian masses, is supposed to usher in the much-advertised Krisak-Praja-Majdoor Raj. This sinister bluff has been hatched by the latest convert to Gandhism, the astute but thoroughly reactionary Prof. Ranga who some time back had very cleverly put the slogan of the Krisak-Praja-Majdoor Raj in the mouth of Mahatma Gandhi.

British imperialism, will, therefore, convene the constituent assembly with the representatives of the Indian capitalists and Zamindars and these men are to draw up a constitution which will usher in the Ranga-Gandhian Krisak-Praja-Majdoor Raj,

another name for the purely Gandhian Ram Raj, and both of which are nothing but the Trojan-horse to hide a pure and simple capitalist raj.

Does M. N. Roy now understand why his “high placed Congress leaders” have accepted the slogan of the constituent assembly? What extraordinary similarity there is between the standpoint of Gandhi and the Russian liberal bourgeoisie of 1905, on the constituent assembly and how loyally Roy follows in the footsteps of the Russian Mensheviks! The constituent assembly cannot be the central slogan of the Indian Revolution. The central slogans of the revolution are: First: the Provisional Revolutionary Government. Secondly: the Majdoor Kisan Panchayet Raj—the Democratic Republic of the Workers and the Peasants.

In 1935, the Communist International under the inspiration of Stalin introduced in the Communist movement the policy of "People's Front". In the resolution on People's Front, which became famous as the Dimitrov thesis, the Communist Parties, were enjoined to form joint fronts with various bourgeois parties in order to fight Fascism. In reality, the policy of People's Front was the extension of Stalin's foreign policy of joining hands with the so-called "democratic" imperialist powers—Britain and France—against Hitler to the world Communist movement. The Indian version of the People's Front was the policy of the National Front. Tagore underscored that the international experience had amply demonstrated that whenever and wherever the proletariat had entered into a coalition with the bourgeoisie, they had found themselves politically disarmed and emasculated. Similarly, if in India the Communists entered the Congress and subordinated themselves to the Congress discipline, then the radicalisation of the national struggle would be hampered and wrecked. The policy of the People's Front was a policy of betrayal.

UNITED FRONT OR BETRAYAL

Those were the years of dark despondency in Europe. Backed by German heavy industry and the junkers, Hitler had carried out his coup d'état successfully without any resistance from the revolutionary working class. The Social-Democratic Party, which had betrayed the revolution in 1918 and which had ever since followed the policy of class-collaboration with the bourgeoisie, held back the working class from striking a timely blow at Hitler, betrayed the proletariat for the last time and was smashed by the Nazis in its turn. The Communist Party of Germany, due to serious ideological and tactical mistakes spread over a number of years, could give no opposition to the Nazi counter-revolution. And to the astonishment of everybody and to the grief of the working class of the world, it toppled like a house of cards. The European proletariat was beaten exactly in that particular national front where its political hold was the strongest and its organisation the most powerful. Emboldened by the victory in Germany, international Fascism launched a vigorous offensive against the working class of Europe. In Austria, in France and in England, as a matter of fact, in almost every European country, Fascism thrust out its bloody claws to snatch away from the proletariat the rights which were the fruits of years of fighting and which had been won at a tremendous cost.

Benumbed by the terrible blow of German Fascism and bewildered by the tragic spectacle of the ineffectiveness of the German

Communist Party, which collapsed without offering any resistance to the Nazis, the world proletariat was taken aback and had to strain its every nerve to stem the rising tide of Fascism. The world proletariat was on the defensive. It had to defend with all its might all that it had won through years of relentless struggle and heroic sacrifice. The tactic of that hour of triumphant reaction is the tactic of the United Front. This tactic was conceived and worked out for the first time in France. In 1934, the Communist Party of France and the French Socialist Party agreed to work jointly on certain specific issues, namely against Fascism, against imperialist war and for the protection of the democratic rights of the people. It is clear from these issues, that the United Front agreement was essentially a defensive alliance in its character, and that the pact, moreover, was between two parties which had identical class-roots. The adoption of this correct tactic at the crucial moment of triumphant Fascism led to a spectacular change in the relative positions of the Communist and Socialist parties of France. The numerically insignificant Communist Party increased its membership from a few thousands to over 1,50,000. The correct application of the tactics of the United Front from above and below worked as the most powerful and effective instrument for winning over the working class from the clutches of the opportunist leaders of the Socialist Party. Thus, the tactics of United Front not only proved to be a formidable dam against the rising tide of Fascism, but also proved to be the most potent weapon for striking at the opportunist and compromise-craving elements in the working class movement and for forging a real revolutionary unity amongst the workers so long split up into two contending camps of Communism and Social-Democracy. Thus, the United Front proved in reality to be a two-edged sword: on the one hand it struck at Fascism, and on the other it hit at the social chauvinism and opportunism of Social Democracy which had opened the door wide for the victorious march of Fascism. This is the reason why frightened by the result of the United Front in France, the British Labour Party turned down the repeated offers of the Communist Party of Great Britain for a United Front.

So far the United Front did nothing which was not urged by the most class-conscious Communist and Socialist workers for years both in Europe and America. But soon the tactics of the United Front were freed by deft but opportunist hands from their unitary class-mooring and the sails of the United Front were

filled with the winds of class-collaboration. It was suddenly discovered by "extra-fine revolutionaries" who are capable of hair-splitting analysis of the social forces of our times that in each imperialist country there exists a democratic bourgeoisie and a Fascist bourgeoisie. Therefore, according to these "super-revolutionaries", it is in the interest of the working class and its revolutionary party to form an alliance with the "democratic" wing of the bourgeoisie against its Fascist wing. Thus, the original United Front tactics was expanded to accommodate the "democratic" bourgeoisie and to pave the way for class-collaboration with the bourgeoisie and a much trumpeted bastard emerged from this liaison—the People's Front. People's Front governments were established in France and Spain, and fervent hymns of praise of the People's Front were chanted by international chorus-singers. A simultaneous chorus song throughout the world works as opium dulling the critical sense of the people. This well-known method of mass suggestion was used to make this sabotage of the revolutionary cause appear as a step forward towards revolution.

Few stopped to ask that in the epoch of imperialism and the proletarian revolution, if this sophism of splitting the bourgeoisie into democratic and Fascist wings was not thoroughly unscientific and if it was not tailism of the worst type. Even in 1905, on the eve of the revolution in Russia, Lenin considered the big bourgeoisie as a force against the bourgeois democratic revolution in Russia as "we know that owing to their class position they are incapable of undertaking a decisive struggle against Tsarism; they are too greatly handicapped by the shackles of private property, capital and land to venture a decisive struggle." (Lenin—Two Tactics of Social Democracy in Democratic Revolution). Moreover, he considered the people to be the only force of the revolution. Lenin castigated the Mensheviks for their attempt to tie the proletarian movement to the apron-string of the liberal bourgeoisie. The party of the proletariat must carry on its consistent attack against the bourgeoisie ceaselessly and in no case should the proletariat stop its campaign of exposure of the bourgeoisie.

Lenin says: "Here, we have before us the New Iskra philosophy in its complete, pure and consistent form; the revolution is a bourgeois revolution, therefore we must bow to bourgeois vulgarity and make way for it ... By that we would place the proletariat entirely under the tutelage of the bourgeoisie (while

retaining for ourselves complete "freedom to criticise" ...) and compel the proletariat to be weak and mild in order not to frighten the bourgeoisie away. We emasculate the immediate needs of the proletariat, namely, its political needs which the Economists and their epigones have never thoroughly understood, out of fear lest the bourgeoisie be frightened away. We would completely abandon the field of the revolutionary struggle for the achievement of democracy *to the extent required by the proletariat* (my emphasis—S.T.) in favour of the field of bargaining with the bourgeoisie and obtaining their voluntary consent ('not to desert') *at the price of our principles and of the revolution itself*". (my emphasis—S.T.).

There are four fundamental points which Lenin stressed. First, no bowing to bourgeois vulgarity and making way for it even when the revolution is a bourgeois revolution. Secondly, we should never compel the proletariat to be weak and mild and place it under the tutelage of the bourgeoisie. Thirdly, we should never emasculate the political needs of the proletariat out of fear lest the bourgeoisie be frightened away. Fourthly, we should never make democracy an end in itself just as bourgeois liberals do, but should carry on revolutionary struggle for democracy "to the extent required by the proletariat" for the overthrow of capitalism.

That was how Lenin analysed the role of the proletariat in a bourgeois revolution at the beginning of this century, in 1905. Could he have ever imagined that in the thirties, the Menshevik "theory" of tailism, of limping behind the bourgeoisie, of emasculating the political needs of the proletariat lest the bourgeoisie be scared away and the stupid shouting about democracy in the sentimental bourgeois fashion should be resuscitated again in the form of People's Front? Could he have ever imagined that in the period of the proletarian revolution a whole bunch of "subtle revolutionaries" will crop up who, discovering differences in very vital political nuances between the liberal imperialist bourgeoisie and the Fascist imperialist bourgeoisie, shall manoeuvre with such super human skill that it will result in a united front between the liberal imperialist bourgeoisie and the proletariat against the Fascist bourgeoisie!

In reality, the People's Front is the front of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat against the proletariat. It is Popular Front only in the sense that it is very popular with the bourgeoisie, and it is "at the price of our principles and of the revolution itself."

Even in the epoch of the bourgeois democratic revolution, the people can have no special alliance with the bourgeoisie against autocracy. The vacillating bourgeoisie will fight the autocracy only to strike a bargain with it at the cost of the people. The bourgeoisie are from first to last against the people. Their opposition to the autocracy is always half-hearted and inconsistent, and in the epoch of imperialism, it is doubly so. The proletariat must make the best use of the bourgeoisie's opposition to autocracy but it can do so only when it has not tied itself any way—organisationally or politically—to the bourgeoisie.

In his "Address to the Communist League", Marx wrote in 1850: "In the case where a struggle against a common enemy exists, a special kind of alliance is unnecessary. As soon as it becomes necessary to fight such an enemy directly, the interest of both parties fall together for the moment... During the struggle and after the struggle, the workers at every opportunity must put up their own demands, in contradistinction to the demands put forward by the bourgeois democrats. They must check as far as possible all manifestations of intoxication for the victory and enthusiasm for the new state of affairs and must explain candidly their lack of confidence in the new government in every way through a cold-blooded analysis of the new state of affairs. They must simultaneously erect their own revolutionary workers' government besides the new official government."

Such was the conclusion that Marx drew in 1850 from his experience of the revolutions of 1848. It was not yet the epoch of finance-capital and the proletarian revolution. It was the period when the bourgeoisie were still trying to wrest power from feudal autocracy and to establish their political power as a class in several countries of Europe. In short, it was the period when the bourgeoisie as a class had still a revolutionary role to play. Even then, Marx considered it unnecessary for the proletariat to enter into any kind of special alliance with the bourgeoisie. In the era of imperialism and of the socialist revolution, the bourgeoisie *as a whole* have turned counter-revolutionary. Even in those countries, where the bourgeois revolution has not yet been completed and has been belated due to historical reasons, the bourgeoisie are too deeply connected with the landed aristocracy and much too dependent on autocracy for its own protection against the onslaught of the working class to work for their destruction. *The bourgeois-democratic task of the revolution must be carried out in the imperialist epoch by the proletariat*

without the bourgeoisie and against the bourgeoisie. In this epoch "a special kind of alliance" with the bourgeoisie is not only not necessary, but is positively harmful to the revolutionary cause. Indeed, it amounts to converting the proletariat into a political appendage of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie. Thus, it means the virtual sabotage of the revolution.

The history of the People's Front governments of Spain and France in these last few years is an objective vindication of and testimony to our theoretical stand-point.

In February, 1936, the Communist Party of Spain not only agreed to allow the republican bourgeoisie a majority in the joint election tickets but also decided to have a programme common with them. We all know what a common programme of this variety means. It is always the programme of the ruling class imposed on the people as the common programme. Exactly this was the case in Spain. Since the Communist Party of Spain woke up one fine morning only to discover the revolutionary potential of the Spanish bourgeoisie to carry out the democratic task of the revolution, it decided to enter into a coalition ("the special kind of alliance") with the Spanish bourgeoisie in order to carry out the democratic tasks jointly. The programme of the People's Front, which is supposed to achieve the democratic tasks of the revolution contains these points. On the question of Spanish industry and banking, it declared the banks to be at the service of "national reconstruction," closing one's eyes to the fact that credit could not be forcibly extended to fields other than the profitable ones. The republican parties did not accept the measures of nationalisation of the banks, proposed by the workers' parties. The republicans did not accept the principle of dole to the unemployed as demanded by the workers' delegation. "Great plan of public works, protective tariff, agrarian measures, all these will fulfil the task of absorbing unemployment," the programme stated.

Can there be anything more thoroughly reactionary, more abjectly in the service of capital, than this programme? The banks will be put entirely at the service of the bourgeoisie; but not only the banks, also the working class is placed entirely at the disposal of the bourgeoisie; no dole to the unemployed; public works to solve the problem of unemployment. Indeed, "national reconstruction" is the ideological trojan horse within which the enemies of the working class have always taken shelter.

On the question of land, the programme declares: "The republicans do not accept the principle of the nationalisation of land and its free distribution to the peasants solicited by the delegates of the Socialist Party." In place of nationalisation of land, the programme suggests the buying over the landed estates by the government for distribution of land amongst the peasants.

Thus, the agrarian programme of the People's Front has been conceived and formulated only with an eye to safeguard the interest of the landed aristocracy. The peasantry was sacrificed at the altar of the People's Front which wanted to assure the landed aristocracy of its respectability, so that the nobility may not be scared away from the People's Front.

So far as the colonies are concerned, not a word about them in the programme of the People's Front. The status quo in Morocco was maintained as a result of which Franco's Fascist counter-revolution was hatched and supported by the Foreign Legions. The Church was left untouched, and was allowed to carry on its nefarious monarchist propaganda to its heart's content. Only education was in the process of secularisation. The old monarchist army was left in tact. The monarchist officers' corps was too sacrosanct an organisation to be disturbed in any way by the People's Front. Democratisation of the army was also a subject too profane to be mentioned in its programme.

This is the programme of the People's Front which in its class content is a front of the enemies of the people who due to absolute political bankruptcy of the working class parties trapped the working class and the peasantry in a front which was wholly against their interests. And the balance sheet of the People's Front government was not slow to reveal this. The economic and political foundations of Fascist counter-revolution were not undermined by the People's Front. In fact, the People's Front saved and objectively strengthened the counter-revolution by acting as the buffer between reaction and the revolutionary proletariat. The counter-revolution shrewd and clever as it is, realised this, and attacked the proletarian movement with increasing aggressiveness. The People's Front government in order to demonstrate its "neutrality" declared workers' meetings and demonstrations illegal and arrested hundreds of workers who were on strike. Strikes were declared unlawful. On May 26, 1936, twenty-three peasants were killed and thirty were wounded as a result of firing by the Civil Guard on the peasants who had taken possession of a landed estate at Yesta in the province of

Albacete. The People's Front's Minister of the Interior sent a telegram of congratulation to the Civil Guard.

In the Cortes, the Communists and the Socialists vied with each other to prove the innocence of the Popular Front government in this affair, and as a check to the future repetition of such wanton measures proposed the acceleration of agrarian reforms.

Thus, the revolutionary struggle of the peasantry against the landed aristocracy was changed into attempts at agrarian reforms of the People's Front government. When 80,000 workers of Madrid went on strike on the issue of 36-hour week, the People's Front government, compelled them to submit to arbitration and forced them to accept 40-hour a week.

The arguments put forward by the Socialist as well as by the Communists in justification of the actions of the People's Front were a native concoction of opportunism, tailism and reformism. They agreed that the Fascists were egging on the workers to struggle against the capitalists with the hope that they ultimately come into conflict with the People's Front government so that the Fascists may have a favourable situation for carrying out their counter-revolutionary coup d'etat. Therefore, the workers must "know how to end the strike, without renouncing the possibility created by the settlement of continuing to discuss in the mixed labour-board the problems of strike." ("Mundo Obrero" July 6, 1936).

The conclusion is obvious. It meant that though the capitalists started the offensive against the workers and had unleashed brutal terrorism against them, the workers must not retaliate against the Fascist aggressors with a revolutionary counter-offensive but must submit to Fascist terror and wait for the People's Front government to counteract this offensive by discussion in the Cortes and by the acceleration of the various measures of reforms. Thus, the People's Front government substituted pure parliamentarism in the place of revolutionary action of the proletariat.

At the same time, the People's Front government's offensive against the people continued. Azana, the monarchist "republican", who headed the People's Front government, assured Gil Robles and his Fascist bands that the government would reorganise its system of defence in order to stamp out the rule of violence, meaning thereby the strikes and demonstrations of the workers. His speech ended with an attack on Communism and Gil Robles and his gang of murderers drew the only logical

conclusion that could be drawn from that speech and shot down some workers in Madrid.

The general strike declared by C.N.T., the anarchist organisation, as a protest against the murders was not supported by either the Socialists or the Communists. They still maintained their solidarity with Azana, the republican agent of Spanish Fascism. Strike-waves surged to revolutionary heights all over Spain. The miners of Asturias struck, demanding the dismissal of two People's Front Ministers those in charge of agriculture and labour. Over a million workers were on strike at the end of June and the beginning of July of 1936. Both the Socialist and the Communist partisans of the People's Front appealed to the workers to call off the strikes as they were causing irritation to the republican Fascists and other rightists. The People's Front government let loose the Civil Guard against the workers and the peasants. Scores of militant workers and peasants were shot and hundreds were sent to prison. The government also decided to organise a special militia to fight, suppress and murder the workers and the peasants. This extremely reactionary measure received the holy benediction of the working class partisans of the People's Front. This Fascist militia was hailed as the People's Front militia. After Azana and his People's Front government had prepared the stage for the open outbreak of counter-revolution, General Franco, with his Foreign Legions and the officers corps left intact by the People's Front, made his public entry on the political stage on July 17, 1936.

This is, in short, the ideological and practical contribution of the People's Front towards the Fascist counter-revolution in Spain. Class-collaboration with the bourgeoisie and the suppression of the agrarian revolution and of the independent movement of the revolutionary proletariat can have no other result, notwithstanding the conscious attempts to cover up that collaboration by giving it such misleading name as the People's Front.

And in France? In France, the People's Front government comprised the Communist Party of France (the Communist Party did not enter the Cabinet but it was committed to the programme of the Popular Front government and as such could be said to be a part of the government), the Socialist Party and the Radical Socialist Party, successfully held the revolutionary proletariat in leash, all in the name of the mythical unity of interest of the democratic bourgeoisie and the proletariat. They turned

the French proletariat into an appendage of the French bourgeoisie, supported the French bourgeoisie in their schemes for rearmament, and systematically rob the French proletariat of its hard-earned rights, all again in the name of the 'national' interest. The leadership of the People's Front was in the hands of the bourgeoisie as represented by the Radical Socialist Party of Herriot and Daladier.

Daladier's foreign policy of rapprochement with Hitler was approved by the Chamber of Deputies by an overwhelming majority. The Socialist partners of the People's Front supported Daladier. On the question of special powers in the domain of finance, Daladier won his demand for ruling by decrees by a majority of over 250 votes. This time, the Socialists abstained from voting, and took up a hypocritical "neutral" attitude. Daladier with his Fascist boots trampled the People's Front and reduced it to dust. The People's Front in France was formed with the object of defeating Fascism, but the logical outcome of the class-collaboration policy of the People's Front was just the opposite. The most sinister and principal contribution of the People's Front in France was the "Munich agreement", the bloc of the "democratic" imperialism of France with Fascist imperialism of Germany against Soviet Russia. Daladier's Fascist gangsterism against the French working class was made possible by the fatal tactics of the People's Front class-collaboration which held the proletariat back from taking a revolutionary offensive against its own "democratic" bourgeoisie. This treacherous policy did not lead to the strengthening of democracy but to the smothering of democracy. It only accelerated the Fascist tendencies of the "democratic" bourgeoisie unhindered by the revolutionary opposition of the masses.

The French Communist Party ceased to carry on its fight against the two-year military service. It refused to fight the Fascists with independent action of the working class. The Stalinist youths declared that it was not necessary to fight the Fascists. In the third and fourth arrondissement (districts) of Paris, they made pacts with the Fascists youths and the Jeunesse patriots. In May, 1935, Laval went to Moscow and he and Stalin issued the famous declaration: "M. Stalin understands and fully approves the measure of national defence taken by France to raise its armaments to the level of its security."

Chemodanov, the secretary of the Russian Communist youth organisation, was sent to Paris by Stalin in April, 1935, He

strove to justify Stalin's betrayal of the proletarian revolution by the typically grotesque logic of Stalinist agents. He said: "If there is a war it will be undoubtedly against the U.S.S.R. This will not be a war between the classes. If Hitlerite Fascism wages war against the U.S.S.R., it will be a war of Fascism against Communism. Your duty, comrades, is at the front. If in this period you make your revolution in France you are traitors." So to work for revolution would be acts of traitors, but to surrender to the French bourgeoisie and to goad the masses on to the war would be the heroic act worthy of a revolutionary Communist! Such is the essence of Stalinism!

The French Stalinists took the hint of their pay-master with the characteristic servility of the agents. The French Stalinists were fuming and frothing against the Socialists. No united front with them against the Fascists. Thorez, the French Stalinist leader, declared on the April 13, 1934: "At this moment, some opportunists of the C.P. of France are proposing to the party that it abandon its policy of the united front from below and carry out a policy of the bloc with the Social Democracy. At this moment, there are forces demanding that the Communist Party of France shall finally abandon the position of Bolshevism, in order to return to the Social Democratic rubbish heap."

Thus, to have a bloc with the Socialists is opportunism, but to have a bloc with the Fascists, according to the Stalinists, is the height of revolutionism!

Vaillant Couturier, a prominent French Stalinist, declared on the June 7, 1936: "What is outstanding in this movement which grows from hour to hour...is the reconciliation of the pious and religious beliefs from the Communists and Socialists to the National Volunteer, from the Catholic to the unbeliever and the speed which characterises the work taken up for victory."

So, hand in hand with the Fascists, Vaillant Couturier and the French Stalinists marched to assure the victory of the French bourgeoisie.

In another moment of delirious ecstasy, Vaillant Couturier declared on the July 12, 1936: "We shake hands with sincere Croix-de-feu and with sincere National Volunteers with all those who really wish the well-being of the people."

"Croix-de-feu" and the "National Volunteers" were Fascist organisations. So, very naturally, the Stalinist, Vaillant Couturier,

expected the French Fascists to "really wish the well-being of the people."

The slippery path of class-collaboration landed the old Mensheviks and the Stalinist neo-Mensheviks in the same morass of treachery to the proletarian revolution. After sacrificing the interest of the proletariat to that of the French bourgeoisie for a number of years and after substituting chauvinism in place of proletarian internationalism on the question of rearmament, thus accepting the defence of the fatherland deception of the bourgeoisie, and finally, after consolidating French imperialism at the cost of the French working class, the People's Front has assisted the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia and has finally helped the formation of the coalition of French imperialism and German Fascism against Soviet Russia.

There are the net results of the People's Front in France.

The subtle "difference" between "democratic" imperialism and Fascist imperialism so far as the proletarian revolution is concerned, discovered by the opportunist Stalinist chorus-boys, has melted away into nothingness in the light of historical reality of the period of declining capitalism and the ascending socialist revolution. The People's Front, as the theory and practice of class-collaboration, stands once more entirely exposed and condemned by the political experience of Spain and France.

Just as in Spain likewise in France, both the Communists and the Socialists discouraged the strikes that the French workers started as a protest against the fiscal policy of M Bonnet who as the Finance Minister reduced the wages of the workers and inflated the currency in order to please the financiers. The 40-hour week was a sop to the working class. It was invariably respected in the breach as the capitalists found it necessary for the workers to work more than 40 hours a week for the 'national interest'. In June, 1936, stay-in-strikes broke out throughout France. The Stalinists, true to their pledge to the French bourgeoisie, spared no pains in breaking the strikes. Vaillant Couturier and Thorez, the Stalinist leaders, worked hard to end the strikes. In fact, Thorez declared, "One must know when to end a strike."

Vaillant Couturier dramatically stated on July 12, 1936: "Unity, unity, unity. It is on unity that the future of our country depends." 'Humanite', the Stalinist daily of Paris, wrote on the June 6, 1936: "It is a question neither of demagogy nor of insurrection. It is simply a question of making the bosses give back a little of their purchasing power to the men who have for

four years lost upto thirty per cent of their purchasing power, and in some cases even more." Comments on these declarations of the Stalinists are superfluous.

Rightly did the *Paris Soir*, the bourgeois daily, write on the June 7, 1936: "Suddenly in the face of the fire that has broken out, they (the Stalinists) had adopted the role of extinguishers."

The Communist and the Socialist parties of France frowned upon the strikers. M Thorez, the secretary of the Communist Party, ordered the Communist workers to resume work. N. Salengro, the Minister of the Interior of the Popular Front government, issued a threat to the workers that in future strikes would not be tolerated. Only M Zyromski and his band of dissident Socialists urged the workers to strike as a defensive measure against the offensive of the French bourgeoisie directed against the French working class under the smoke-screen of Popular Front.

Thus the Popular Front in Spain and France is nothing but a device which gives a carte blanche to the "democratic" bourgeoisie to dominate the working class. It is tantamount to the sacrifice of the working class and the toiling masses at the altar of "democratic" capitalism.

Since the People's Front tune has become the fashionable and favourite tune with the Stalinist chorus-boys, the Indian chorus-boys naturally enough could not but take up the tune. And what was worse, that if there was even an occasional correct note in the singing of the European and American chorus-boys, the Indian chorus-boys sang the People's Front tune entirely in the falsetto. It must be said in the defence of these Indian chorus-boys that they are not wholly responsible for their singing the People's Front tune entirely out of tune. They sang not because they could sing but only because they were ordered to sing. And as we all know every mechanical performance is bound to be nauseating and vulgar.

On being ordered to sing the tune of the People's Front, the Indian chorus-boys, after many a sleepless night, discovered that in the peculiar political conditions of India, the Indian National Congress is the political expression of the People's Front, and if it is not yet so, it can be so transformed. So, our chorus-boys started singing hymns to the National Congress. The Congress is the anti-imperialist People's Front. The Congress is not a party, it is a platform of all the classes of India, of the entire people. So sing the "Congress Communists", the "Congress Socialists" and the Royists.

As the Indian revolution will be bourgeois democratic in character (a'la chorus-boys), therefore, the Indian bourgeoisie have a revolutionary role to play in this revolution, sing our chorus-boys, cleverly forgetting or intentionally ignoring the specific character of our epoch, the nature of the revolution in that epoch and the class-forces of the revolution as determined by the specific character of the epoch and of the revolution of our time. *In a colonial country, where the bourgeois democratic revolution has not been completed and has been historically belated, and has to be accomplished in the epoch of declining capitalism, it approximates the proletarian revolution and must be viewed as only the bourgeois democratic phase of the proletarian revolution.* Moreover, only the people can carry out these bourgeois democratic tasks of the revolution as the bourgeoisie by the logic of the inherent contradictions of capitalism, have been transformed by the dialectics of social development, from the leader of the bourgeois revolution to its opponent. When the world-bourgeoisie is against the revolution, the bourgeoisie of no country can be otherwise.

And when they sing the tune of the Popular Front with the Indian bourgeoisie and with the bourgeois National Congress with such superb ecstasy, do the "Congress Communists", the "Congress Socialists" and the Royists ever remember the experience of such a front in semi-colonial China? The lessons of the Chinese Revolution of 1925-1927 have been lost on them.

The Communist Party of China entered into an united front agreement with the national compradore bourgeoisie of China represented by the Kuomintang. The theoretical basis of this policy was the misconception that in a semi-colonial country like China, all the four classes would form the national revolutionary bloc against the imperialist bourgeoisie of the world. The same fatal logic was responsible for surrendering the leadership of the Chinese revolution to the Chinese bourgeoisie and their party—the Kuomintang. The Chinese workers were discouraged in their attempts to form Soviets, the peasants were forbidden to launch a jacquerie against Chinese landlords, lest the Chinese capitalists and the landlords were scared away from the national revolutionary bloc. To crown it all, the proletariat of Nanking and the revolutionary peasants were disarmed by the Chinese Communist Party lest they frighten away the Chinese bourgeoisie from the joint front. The result was that inspite of all that pandering to the bourgeoisie, indeed, because of this pandering, by the Communist Party, the bourgeoisie, so long unnerved by the

gigantic sweep of the Chinese revolution, regained their nerves and massacred Chinese workers and peasants.

This is history written with the blood of thousands of the Chinese workers and peasants. Messrs chorus-boys, this is history you will do well to study and digest. It may wake you up and make you realise the colossal betrayal of the Indian masses that you are perpetrating by your policy of the united front with the Congress and the Indian bourgeoisie.

The "theory" of the anti-imperialist national bloc, a bloc of which the Indian bourgeoisie form a component part, is another name for class-collaboration and betrayal of the national revolution. *In the epoch of decaying capitalism, the anti-imperialist struggle for national liberation is identical with class struggle against capitalism*, the bourgeoisie having forfeited the right not only of leading the revolution but of even participating in it. But according to M N Roy, "class struggle of the Indian workers is identical with the struggle against imperialism but the entire struggle against imperialism is not a class struggle. This point has to be borne in mind, otherwise all talk about united front would produce no result", ("Independent India," July 25, 1937).

M. N. Roy speaks in terms of idealist philosophy. His categories are timeless and spaceless. He says, "the entire struggle against imperialism is not a class struggle." We do not want this sort of vague, nebulous formulation. We want to know definitely if the struggle against imperialism in a colonial country, such as India, and carried on in the epoch of decaying capitalism, is or is not a class struggle. The anti-imperialist struggle in India is identical with the class struggle of the Indian workers and peasants against their oppressors—the imperialist and the imperialist-backed Indian capitalists and landlords. The urban petty-bourgeoisie, proletarianised, pauperised and with endless grievances against Big Business, are also drawn in the orbit of class struggle. In this epoch, the colonial bourgeoisie in general and the Indian bourgeoisie in particular, having turned against the revolution, the democratic revolution has lost its 'national' character. But what M N Roy is actually trying to do is to smuggle the Indian bourgeoisie into the arena of anti-imperialist struggle as an anti-imperialist force through the back door of the united front. This is exactly what is meant by the line "but the entire (mark the word 'entire'—S.T.) struggle against imperialism is not a class struggle." The next line betrays his motive still more clearly. He says, "This point has to be borne in mind, otherwise all talk

about united front would produce no political result". Translated in plain language, it means that as in Spain, France and China, likewise in India, the anti-imperialist United Front must include the bourgeoisie and, therefore, the anti-imperialist struggle must not be considered as identical with class struggle. Otherwise, the "friends" of the democratic revolution in India, the Indian, bourgeoisie, will be scared away and will leave the united front sty. This disgusting tailism of making the revolutionary mass movement subservient to the interest of the bourgeoisie in the name of the anti-imperialist struggle is the logical corollary of Roy's theory of the multi-class leadership of the national struggle. It is the Indian variation of the class-collaboration theory of the People's Front so disastrously practised in Spain and France. In order to make our study of opportunism complete, let us now see what the Indian devotees of Stalin have to say on this point. In the "National Front", the mouthpiece of the "Congress Communists," an article entitled, "The National Congress and the Working Class", which appeared in the issue of the April 17, 1938, has been paraded as the "Draft Thesis" in order to lend to the article the much-needed illusion of cogent reasoning and seriousness. In the article, the "National Front" declares: "The formulation that the Congress is a bourgeois organisation and as such unsuitable to be the basis for building the anti-imperialist People's Front is wrong in the given situation today. On the other hand, we must take our stand on the thesis of Dutt and Bradley which asks us to broaden the unity already achieved under the Indian National Congress and transform it into the unity of the *National Front of the Indian people fighting for independence and democracy.*" (their emphasis).

According to the "Congress Communists", the formulation that the Congress is a bourgeois organisation and as such unsuitable to be the basis for building the anti-imperialist People's Front is wrong "in the given situation today". So "in the given situation today" the formulation, *only the formulation*, (my emphasis—S. T.) mind you, that the Congress is a bourgeois organisation is wrong, the reality of the Congress being a bourgeois organisation is not denied, only its formulation as such "in the given situation today" is wrong. Is not the logic unassailable? The political character of the organisation must be camouflaged. The Congress, the bourgeois organisation, must be shielded by the "Congress Communists" and must be made to appear as the suitable basis for building up the anti-imperialist People's

Front. In whose interest is this attempt a concealment? Will it serve the interest of the Indian masses if they are hoodwinked by the "Congress Communists" who hide the real bourgeois character of the Congress from the masses, and if the Congress, the party of the Indian bourgeoisie, is trumpeted before the masses as the worthy basis for building the an imperialist People's Front? No, this treacherous policy will spell disaster to the revolutionary mass movement. The Congress, the political organisation of the bourgeoisie, cannot, and should not, form even a part of the People's Front, let alone the talk of its building the basis of the People's Front.

If the bourgeoisie are taken in as partner of the revolutionary people in the national front, it will be tantamount to the sabotage of the revolution. This class-collaboration is bound to act in favour of the dominant class which, in the name of united front, will push forward its class interest and will side track the revolutionary issues. This is exactly what has happened in Spain and France and that is what is happening in India. The "Congress Communists" have laid stress on the phrase "the given situation today." What is so special about "the given situation today", may we ask? "The given situation today" has only this fundamental difference with the situation of yesterday that due to grave tactical mistakes of the Communists and the betrayal of the revolution by the Socialists, there has been a setback in the international revolutionary situation and, for the time being, the political balance has turned against us, in favour of Fascism. So far as India is concerned, besides the above mentioned difference in the international political situation, which is bound to affect her also, the opportunism and class-collaboration policy of the "leftists", who again led the masses back into the fold of the Congress acting as loyal agents of the Indian bourgeoisie, has pushed back the revolutionary masses into the fold of the bourgeoisie.

The "Congress Communists" declare that they have taken their "stand on the basis of Dutt and Bradley thesis which asks us to broaden the unity already achieved under the Indian National Congress and transform it into the unity of the national front of the Indian people fighting for independence and democracy". In their thesis on the anti-imperialist People's Front, R. Palme Dutt and Ben Bradley speak of the necessity of unity and rightly point out that "that unity cannot be regarded as something abstract, but can only be unity on the basis of the anti-imperialist

struggle." Then, they proceed to show the class-basis of the unity and here opportunism and class-collaboration are subtly introduced. Dealing with the classes that are camp-followers of imperialism they say "some sections have their interest bound up with imperialism, e.g. the Princes, landlords, money-lenders, reactionary religious and political elements which live on exploiting communal differences, elements among the merchants and wealthy classes who favour co-operating with imperialism". Here, with the idea of building a united front with the Indian bourgeoisie, Dutt and Bradley have graciously exempted the Indian bourgeoisie from the stigma of being in the camp of British imperialism. After minute analysis, they have found that only "elements (mark the word "elements"—the hunger for class-collaboration with the bourgeoisie has been signalled by the word, "elements"—S.T.) among the merchants and wealthy classes who favour co-operating with imperialism". Not the entire Indian bourgeoisie but some elements of the bourgeoisie are anti-revolutionary and want co-operation with British imperialism, so spoke Dutt and Bradley in the year 1936! But in 1928, the Sixth World-Congress of the Communist International, from the Chinese experience and also of the Indian mass movement drew the conclusion that the semi-colonial and the colonial bourgeoisie have deserted from the camp of democratic revolution to the camp of the enemies of revolution. But Dutt and Bradley have found only "elements" amongst the bourgeoisie are in favour of co-operation with imperialism, and the big bourgeoisie as a whole do not favour co-operation with imperialism. When "theories" are made to order they can hardly conform to the social and political realities. This is clearly proved from this "elements" theory of Dutt and Bradley. Class-collaboration with the democratic bourgeoisie has been ordered in the name of a National Front in India. The class-collaboration with the Indian bourgeoisie takes the form of a united front with the Congress, the political party of the Indian bourgeoisie. But this class-collaboration with the Indian bourgeoisie can be possible only if the Indian bourgeoisie can be made out to be a revolutionary class, at least in the democratic sense. The "elements" theory is a grotesque distortion of the political reality in India.

Dutt and Bradley say: "We on the Left have many times criticised sharply the existing leadership and tactics of the National Congress...But this criticism against particular policies is in no sense intended as a criticism against the masses in the

Congress. Our opposition to a particular leadership or to particular policies is only intended to assist the mass army of the national struggle represented by the Congress."

The least that can be said of this statement is that it is very far from the truth. In the past and before they became votaries of a united front with the liberal bourgeoisie, the Communists in general and the Communist International in particular considered the Congress as the political party of the bourgeoisie. There was absolutely no reason for Dutt and Bradley to make the futile attempt to hide this well-known fact. The true justification of a theory or policy is to be sought in objective reality, not in falsehood or intentional distortion. Any one acquainted with the line of the Communist International, till the so-called People's Front line was adopted, knows fully well what attitude it took towards the role of the colonial bourgeoisie in the national revolution and of the role of the Indian National Congress. The present band of the "Congress Communists" as late as March, 1936, in the special number of their 'theoretical' organ wrote: "In spite of its widespread mass influence and claims to represent the whole nation, the Congress is definitely a class-organisation of the Indian bourgeoisie... Thus the native bourgeoisie need mass influence both

"(1) to bring pressure on imperialism and drive a hard bargain with it, and (2) to be able to disrupt the movement of anti-imperialist masses from within, when it threatens the whole social structure.

"This dual role of the Indian bourgeoisie explains the paradoxical attitude of the National Congress—sometimes grovelling before imperialism and its allies, confining itself to constitutional opposition, begging the government to recognise its loyalty and sometimes posing as the leader and champion of national revolutionary movement."

None who knows these "Congress Communists" would accuse them of independent thinking and of saying anything which is not ordered by their paymasters. This quotation proves to the hilt that this was the line of the Third International till the People's Front class-collaboration policy was adopted.

If till March, 1936, the Indian bourgeoisie was a most unreliable class from the standpoint of the revolution "grovelling before imperialism", how could that same Indian bourgeoisie get metamorphosed into a revolutionary class, is something which baffles everybody?

Has there been a fundamental change in the historical context which would explain this change in the bourgeoisie? No, there has been no change and there can be no such change in our epoch so far as the bourgeoisie are concerned.

The fact is that it is not the bourgeoisie who have changed, it is the "Congress Communists" and their comrades-in-opportunism, the People's Front class-collaborationists in Europe and America who have changed in their attitude towards the bourgeoisie.

Dutt and Bradley, after waxing eloquent on the remarkable unity that the National Congress has achieved, say: "The National Congress can play a great part and a foremost part in the work of realising the anti-imperialist People's Front. It is *even possible* (my emphasis S.T.) that the National Congress by the further transformation of its organisation and programme *may become* (my emphasis—S.T.) the form of realisation of the anti-imperialist People's Front."

The unity achieved by the Congress and so enthusiastically praised by Dutt and Bradley is the unity achieved on the programme of reformist nationalism, and not that of national revolution. It is the same kind of national unity of which Hitler and Mussolini are never tired of talking about. The unity that is achieved by sacrificing the cause of the masses and of the revolution is the favourite theme of the bourgeoisie everywhere and, lately, it has become so of the People's Front protagonists too.

The National Congress cannot play "a great and foremost part in the work of realising the anti-imperialist People's Front." On the contrary, because of its bourgeois class-character it must play, is already playing and it will increasingly play "a great part and a foremost part" in frustrating the growth of the anti-imperialist People's Front.

The transformation, both organisational and ideological, of the National Congress must inevitably follow the interest of the class of which it is the party. Already the tightening up of the Congress machinery shows clearly the class character of the Congress. "Truth" and "non-violence" in the hands of the Indian bourgeoisie and their chosen prophet play the same role as "law and order" do in the hands of the autocracy. "Truth" and "non-violence" came to the aid of the Congress in forming an alliance with the Bihar Zamindars. Under the quib of the tenancy reform to help the impoverished peasantry, the Congress Ministry in Bihar has done its best to safeguard landlord's interest. "Truth" and "non-violence" have prompted the shooting

of workers in Bombay by the Congress Ministry. Also "truth" and "non-violence" have inspired the Bombay Trades Dispute Bill in order to rob the working class of its legitimate right to defend itself against the capitalists. Compulsory arbitration, the Fascist method of forcibly suppressing the militancy and initiative of the working class to fight back the capitalist offensive, has been planned all in the name of "truth" and "non-violence".

This hypocritical slogan of "truth" and "non-violence" is a weapon of concentrated violence in the hands of the Congress to defeat the masses of India. The transformation, both organisational and ideological, of the Congress bears the unmistakable mark of Fascism. But all these do not worry Dutt and Baradley. They declare that "it is even possible that the National Congress by further transformation of its organisation and programme may become the form of realisation of the anti-imperialist People's Front".

The statement has been intentionally couched in vague terms, such as "even possible" and "may become" so that opportunism may find suitable loopholes to wriggle out in time. It can then be said that no positive assertion had been made, only the possibility of the Congress becoming the anti-imperialist People's Front, if certain conditions were fulfilled, had been visualised.

Opportunism always visualises possibilities where none exists. Kautsky, Hilferding and their ilk have always spoken of things as "possible" and "may become". It is a well-known trick of opportunism. Kautsky argued his "peaceful phase of imperialism" theory on the grounds of "possible", "may become" and "under certain conditions". But we all know that such conditions can never be fulfilled, therefore the sophism of "possible" and "may become" is another name for side-tracking the real issue.

The concrete reality of the organisational and programmatic transformation of the Congress bears no doubt that it is moving towards the opposite direction to one which would lead it towards the People's Front. Yet, outraging the political reality, a hint has been thrown, a suggestion has been made, that the Congress "may become the form of realisation of the anti-imperialist people's front".

When such a direction come from Dutt and Bradley, the mentors of our Indian chorus-boys, small wonder that the "Congress Communists" should repeat the same opportunism with abiding loyalty to their chiefs.

A united front with the Congress is being practised with vengeance. The "leftists" of the Congress walked out of a sitting

of the All-India Congress Committee after having taken infinite pains to convince the High Command of their loyalty and devotion. The supreme revolutionary gesture of the "leftists" at the last meeting of All-India Congress Committee was reflected in the resolution brought by the "Congress Communist", Niharendu Dutt Mazumdar, congratulating the Congress Ministers for the progressive measures they had adopted in relation to the workers and peasants. A momentous resolution indeed! This "Congress Communist" would have done well to bring the resolution after the shooting of Bombay workers by the Congress Ministry. As a matter of fact, this too was done. On the November 9, 1938, just after the Bombay shooting, a meeting was held at the Albert Hall in Calcutta, to protest against the Fascist goondaism of the Congress Ministry of Bombay. At this meeting, two "Congress Communist" chorus-boys whose names are synonymous with vile opportunism vied with each other in exhibiting their loyalty to the Congress. Bankim Mukherji said: "Anger and sorrow have been kindled in our minds by the oppression that has been perpetrated on the workers of Bombay. Still, we are proceeding with restraint with our eyes fixed on national solidarity and unity". Niharendu Dutt Mazumdar said: "Our charge against the shooting is that it has pitched a brother against a brother." The sacrifice of the class interest of the proletariat for the sake of "national solidarity" and "unity" objectively means bowing to Fascist ideology. Such was policy of the German Social Democrats who in the name of "national solidarity and unity", paved the way for Nazi victory in Germany. Bankim Mukherji surely is in good company. Niharendu Dutt Mazumdar in his lyrical outburst of opportunism has dubbed the shooting of the Bombay workers by the Congress Ministry representing the capitalist as a "clash between brothers". Communists all over the world have been taught by Marx, Engels and Lenin to consider shootings of workers and such other brutalities as the expression of the irreconcilable antagonism between two antagonists—the proletariat and the capitalists. But the class antagonists have been characterised as brothers by a "Congress Communist" class-collaborationist.

The 'leftist' pipers of the Indian bourgeoisie have piped the proletariat far away from their own trench towards the Congress trench—the trench of the enemy of the proletariat. Let the proletariat beware !

