

The Agrarian Problem in India

I.—Imperialism, the Oppression of the Landlords and Moneylenders and the Peasants

(1) The Indian villages suffer from the bitter oppression and exploitation of the British imperialists, from the rule and exploitation of the landlords and money-lenders, from the ruin and handicrafts of home industries by foreign capital, from the exactions of the merchants and traders, from the fact that their vitality is drained by the British invaders and their numerous assistants and auxiliaries. They suffer together with the whole country from national servitude and slavery. They are crushed and strangled by the iron hand of British capital, which mercilessly squeezes out ruinous taxes, transfers Indian raw material to England at a trifling price, which has fixed its greedy claws into all the wealth of India and in every way hinders its industrial development. India is a colony of British imperialism. The sweat and blood of the millions of toilers of India is converted by British capital into super-profits. With their aid it maintains its domination over the defenceless and ruined country.

British imperialism works hand in hand with the worst oppressors and exploiters of the Indian villages, strengthening, inspiring and utilising them for the further enslavement of India. Its direct support consists of the **landlords, moneylenders and intermediary merchant capital**, which helps it to exploit the country. If the Indian peasant could freely cultivate his land and not slave on a pitiful plot of land rented from the landlord, if he were not strangled with debts and taxes, British imperialism would be unable to keep this enormous country with 300,000,000 inhabitants in hopeless servitude. At the same time, if it were not for the power of the British invaders, the power of their banks, their commercial and industrial firms, their domination in all the decisive branches of national economy, then the landlords and moneylenders would not be able to maintain their hold over the Indian peasants.

(2) British imperialism has cut India off from the rest of the world and hinders its free development. Having taken possession of the country by violence and trickery, British capital has seized the forests (half of the forests belong to the government) and the chief sources of irrigation (one-quarter of the cultivated land is irrigated from sources belonging to the government), has seized the best land for its plantations and estates (1½ million acres, the exported products of which comprise almost one-fifth of the cost of all the exports of agriculture), has established a barbarous system of taxation plunder and ruin of the peasants (the income of the Anglo-Indian government from the land tax and other taxes is almost nine-tenths of its total income, and even this sum is insufficient by 25 per cent. to cover all its expenses for the support of troops, officials and tax collectors). It has partly submitted to itself the old rulers, the native rajahs and feudalists, and has partly replaced them by zamindars and its own officials.

In some provinces the British conquerors have established the zamindar system, making the landlords responsible for the payment of the taxes. . . . In other districts they have introduced the renting of land by the peasants for indefinite periods and the direct payment of the land tax to the government. In addition, in a number of places, they have introduced a combined system, making the ownership of land depend on the payment of a tax depending on the harvest. This unevenness of the land system was caused, firstly, by the desire to utilise the conquest of India in order to plunder its land and forest wealth, to seize the irrigation system and carry on the most shameless taxation plunder. Secondly, the British conquerors have tried to remove the part of the upper Indian feudalists who offered some resistance, not wishing to give up their previous power and income. Thirdly, they aimed at strengthening their own power, acting as the supreme judge in conflicts between isolated groups of feudalists and landlords and in conflicts between the peasants and the feudalists and landlords who were not sufficiently yielding to the British. Finally, in this sphere also the British conquerors tried to carry out their fundamental rule, "divide and conquer," setting the local rank, caste, religious and tribal interests against each other, putting some in an unprivileged situation compared with others. Further changes took place in these land systems under the influence of the fact that British capital more and more converted India into a supplier of raw material and food for Great

Britain, while at the same time, owing to this, the power of the upper feudalists and landlords and merchant capital was increased, as the supporters and servants of the British invaders. In the districts of ryotwar, where the primary peasants to a great extent had access to the land, there has also arisen a landlord class which has seized the greater part of the land by violence, usury and chicanery. On the other hand, the ruin of the peasants in these districts by taxation also helped to deprive them of land and ruin them.

British imperialism keeps the chief banks in its own hands. It dictates the exchange rate of the rupee, compelling the population of India to sell at a small price and to buy at high prices. It squeezes out the accumulations of the country. It owns the railroads and steamers, arranging everything so that farm products can be easier and more cheaply carried to the ports for export. The population of India suffers from a shortage of everything, not having free access to the world market, not having even the possibility of unrestrained commodity exchange between the various provinces and districts of the country. While the internal trade turnover of India is twelve times as great as the foreign trade, the whole commercial system, consisting of innumerable middlemen and agents of British capital, from the foreign banks to the village aratdars, mahojahs, marwaris, etc., are constantly and untiringly working to deprive India of necessities and reduce the price of its products. Along these commercial channels, millions of yards of foreign textiles, masses of foreign manufactures, come into the country and destroy peasant home industries and ruin the small handicraft men. British imperialism has established a monopoly on salt, spirit, etc. It takes its levy on every pinch of salt. British capital stands fiercely on guard so that India cannot become a developed industrial country. It owns the mines, the big factories, which produce equipment, etc. It tries to leave India without big industry which could produce its own machines, and struggles frenziedly so that the greater part of India will remain a big village working to enrich the British bourgeoisie, its banks, factories and mines over the sea. In India a slow growth is taking place in light industry, chiefly the textile industry, giving work only to a small portion of those who cannot maintain themselves on the land in a state of semi-starvation.

The British raj means the constant, organised and merciless robbing of the Indian villages and their barbarous oppression. The unseen hand of the British invaders penetrates everywhere, into the most distant and isolated corners of the country, because British capital has violently taken possession of the chief sources of existence of hundreds of millions of Indians. It has possession of the minerals, the forests and the chief irrigation enterprises of the country. The best land has been taken for its plantations and estates. The Indian peasants have no fuel and no wood for small repairs. Their animals are dying from under-nourishment. Their land dries up from insufficient irrigation. They struggle helplessly on small scattered strips of land, harried by the tax collector, the landlord and the moneylender. But British capital receives hundreds of millions of rupees in profits from the Indian minerals, forests, land and water. The irrigation systems alone produce a profit of 20 per cent. on capital.

British capital has divided India into pieces and supports the existence of the native princes who occupy almost two-fifths of the area of the country. In these native states the peasants have no rights whatever. They are plundered as people were plundered only in the most distant times. They are not looked on as people. In British India the same takes place but in a concealed manner, under the cover of the British troops, the police and officials. Hundreds of villages, whole districts are ruined by plundering military posts organised to force out tribute. The word of the British sahib and his servants—the tasildars, judges, landlords or police—is law. And the law is a fist striking the peasant in the back. If a farm labourer or peasant wants to go on to new uncultivated land or to work in another country, or even into the town, he is not allowed by his state of servitude, which is guarded by British capital. It only takes farm labourers into its plantations when it needs them. The overwhelming mass of the village population are tied down to the land which cannot feed them because British goods have forced from the market the manufactures of the peasant

families and handicrafts, while the weak industry of the towns, crushed by British capital, cannot provide work for tens of millions of people who are unable to feed themselves in the country. Every year the Indian peasants on the average earn less than the British government spends to keep a prisoner in jail. All India forms a big British prison, but the Indian villages are the worst dungeons of this prison, where the convicts work for their jailors.

At least two-thirds of the land suitable for cultivation is owned by the imperialists and landlords, while more than nine-tenths of the village population of India own one-third of the land. In some provinces and districts (Bombay, Bengal, North Madras, the Central and United Provinces), big landed estates occupy a still larger area and still more drive the peasant masses into the impasse of starvation. The distinction between districts of zamindars and ryotwars is more and more being erased. During the time of British rule, there has been a steady growth in the ladder of intermediate rent receivers who rent out land which they themselves rent from others. A herd of parasites of various degrees feed on the backs of the Indian peasants. This takes place because the peasants are crushed down by the rule of the imperialists, big land ownership and usury. They cannot find free land for cultivation or find any other source of income. As a rule the peasants receive land from the landlords on share-cropping conditions (batai) and hand over to the landlords at least one-half of their harvest, but more frequently two-thirds or more. Sometimes the landlord lends seed and some implements to the peasants, most of whom are without land, and takes a larger proportion of the harvest. Sometimes the sowing and cultivation take place entirely at the cost of the peasants. However this may be, the whole existence of the landless peasants or those with little land depends on the whim of the landlord, usurer and tax collector. The fact that the peasant land is split into small plots widely separated from each other, the absence of pasture for the cattle, the absence of forest rights, the seizure of the water and the best situated land by the landlords and the village landgrabbers, the extreme poverty and smallness of the peasant equipment, all lead to the enslavement of the toiling peasants and farm labourers by the landlords and moneylenders. The Indian village is the kingdom of forced labour. Not only in Orah, but also in Behar, Orissa, Bengal and other provinces, there is a flourishing system of "begar," compulsory labour service for the landlords. In many places the landlord has the right, without payment and whenever he thinks fit, to use the labour, oxen, plough and cart of "his" tenant peasant. The landlord forces from the peasants "salaam," "hatiana," "motorana," etc., whenever he needs money. The landlord's personal estate ("seer") is usually cultivated by un-free tenants. The tenant has no rights except to cultivate the land which he rents and to live in the house which he has bought or built. The parasite landowner owns the grass and the wild honey in the forests, the skins of all animals which die on his land, the brushwood. Especially in the native States, the landlords make all kinds of exactions on the peasants. The situation of the peasants without land and implements borders on slavery. The "Kamia" in Behar and Orissa receives in kind one-third of the pay which is given to a free farm labourer. He is also obliged to make his family work for the lord, he never sees money, and can never pay his debt throughout his whole life. A number of the native tribes supply farm labourers to the landlords, and these labourers are in the position of slaves without the right freely to dispose of themselves or their property.

The toiling peasants, plundered by the landlords, moneylenders and imperialism, are also compelled to carry out many services without payment. The landlords and the British officials compel the miserable, oppressed peasants to make new roads and repair old ones, to build and repair bridges, to clean water-pools and dig canals. The peasants do not receive anything whatever for their labour, for the work of their oxen or for their tools. The peasants are forced to supply transport free of charge for officials, elders, chowkidars and other lords. All this is an additional load on the peasants. If the ruined peasant cannot carry out the labour and transport obligations, he is heavily fined and sometimes is beaten up and flogged.

The peasants not only hand over to the landlords a large part of their harvest, but imperialism has given to the landlords the right to make all kinds of collections from the peasants.

If there is a birth, death, or marriage in the family of a landlord, the surrounding peasants have to pay from their harvest for

the expensive ceremony which usually accompanies such happenings. The landlord takes advantage of every such case to fleece the peasants still more.

When selling or mortgaging his tiny rented plot of land, the ruined peasant is sometimes compelled to pay 25 per cent. of the sale price or the mortgage to the landlord. As a result of all these additional exactions, not to mention labour and transport obligations, he frequently has to pay out half of the part of the harvest which the landlord takes for himself from the peasant strip. Unlimited and extensive exactions are additional and open plunder.

The priests and churches of all religions are also big landowners. The Hindu temples, their tremendous wealth and land, are the private property of the descendants of the founders of the temple. The incomes of the Mussulman "Wakfs" and the Sikh "Gurdwars" should be used for charitable purposes and education, but in reality they go into the pockets of the mullahs and mahants. The peasants live still worse on church land than on the land of the landlords. They have to supply vegetable oil, food and their own labour for the temple services. They have not even such limited rights as are given by "permanent" tenancy on landlords' land. Imperialism is the defender and patron of temple and priest landownership. Increasing the land tax on the peasants, imperialism reduces the tax on the land of the temples, mosques or altars, or else remits it altogether. Under the protection of the British plunderers, church landownership flourishes greatly. In Punjab one-tenth of the land tax is paid by temples and altars. Temple land reaches a great size in the south of India (Madras and the native States). Inam land in Bombay and Madras is also a means of enslaving the peasants.

The British invaders have deprived India of freedom and independence, and at the same time have ruined home industries and handicrafts, taking a great deal from the Indian villages as regards these important sources of income, and giving nothing in exchange. The textiles of Lancashire in England and the chief Japanese textile goods are rapidly killing the spinning wheel. The products of foreign factories are taking the last handful of rice from the Indian poor peasants, but at the same time there is nowhere to go from this want and poverty. In a backward, enslaved country, the machine and the gains of science and technique are available only for a few selected rich people who exploit Indian poverty. The peasants' common land on which they formerly fed their cattle has been plundered by the imperialists, the landlords and the moneylenders. In Bengal it was needed to sow jute which was necessary for the British factories, and the landlords soon seized it. Only a minority of the Indian villages can keep cattle for cultivating the fields. If a farm has less than 20 to 40 acres, a pair of oxen or buffaloes would eat up everything. The starved and dying cattle cannot give milk to the sick and the children. Therefore in India death carries off twice as many people as in England. Child mortality is three times as great.

The peasant has nothing with which to repair his plough or door or to warm his family. The forests are owned by the British invaders and the zamindar landlords, who do not even allow cattle to graze in the forests.

The British rulers in India are building enormous dams and other structures for artificial irrigation, so that the Indian land will not cease to grow raw material for their factories—cotton, jute, oil seeds, etc., but the water has been seized by the strong of the world. The landlords, zamindars and landgrabbers are the owners of the streams and springs, while the water, without which the land will die, is more and more leaving the drying peasant pools.

But it is worst of all with the land. The village land is tilled everywhere in petty little strips scattered in ten to thirty different places. The peasants only exhaust their strength and exhaust the land for which they have no fertiliser. In some of the strips it is not even possible to turn a plough. The plots are so close together, so intertwined with each other, that the land which should feed the peasant becomes a trap for him. Even on these pitiful plots of land, mostly rented, he is squeezed by the hand of the landlord. The law does not allow a peasant to dig a small water-pool without the permission of the landowner. He cannot put up the necessary buildings. He seeks for water and separates himself from his neighbour by thick walls, goes to law for every inch of ground, and rushes from side to side, unable to find his rights anywhere.

The greater part of his harvest goes to the landlord and

moneylender. He must pay his rent either by selling or giving up the harvest. He sells his harvest at a time when the market is full of agricultural products and when prices are low, because the landlord, the moneylender and the tax collectors stretch out their hands towards the peasant harvest. The peasant is underweighted and plundered, and from this his exploiters forge out new wealth for themselves. The peasant gets ever deeper into debt servitude because any misfortune on his farm, a bad harvest, the death of his cattle, a sickness in the family, the death of relatives or the marriage of a daughter drags him into the net of the moneylender.

His farm is ruined more and more. He cannot buy agricultural implements. He has neither land nor seed nor water to carry on a profitable rotation of crops, while, as a rule, the Indian peasant and his family are starving and without work for nearly half the year. He grows grain to feed himself, but, instead of feeding him, his labour supports and nourishes his ruin and servitude. After the landlord and tax collector, a ravenous horde of baki, mahojans, marwaris, etc., rush on his harvest, which has been produced by the hands of farm labourers and peasants, and they take the fruits of his unbearably hard labour to the enslavers of the country, to the British imperialists. The Indian soil is becoming less and less fertile from this ruin of the peasants. The rice harvest in Japan is twice as high as in India. The harvest of wheat in America is higher by one-third. The administration of the Indian villages is in the hands of the British invaders, appointed or hereditary patells, police and the panchayats who help them, consisting of representatives of the highest castes, office holders and landgrabbers. The peasant masses have nowhere to turn for help and protection.

II.—The Class Differentiation of the Villages

The Indian villages are no longer the previous villages which lived isolated to themselves, divided into castes and not knowing what took place around them. From behind the back of the foreign enslavers of India there has arisen a new power, the power of money, the market, wealth. Some representatives of the old landlord ranks were unable to combine the power of the fist with the power of the purse, and they went under. While in their place there arose rich moneylenders, city capitalists, prosperous landowners, etc. Many brahmins, who previously lived on the backs of others by the right of blood, now stretch out their hands for alms, while the moneylenders, merchants, or new landlords from Sudra squeeze profits out of the toilers who are in their power. The old castes are beginning to lose their old power as a source of division of the toilers and exploited. However, the division into higher and lower castes and untouchables is supported by the imperialists, landlords, moneylenders and the representatives of the highest castes who live by renting out land, usury and the exploitation of the labour of others. The shameful division of people into castes is required only by slaveowners. Not only the caste system, but also the former apparently irreconcilable division of Hindus and Mussulmen into "higher" and "lower" tribes, etc., no longer has the same influence on people as previously. Though in one part of the country the blood of the Hindu peasants is sucked by the Mussulman spider—the landlord or moneylender—in another part the blood of the Mussulman peasant is sucked by the Hindu spider—the moneylender. Capital has invaded the country and sorted out people in a new manner. It is not the former castes and ranks, the division according to religion or tribal origin, but classes, which have begun to unite people in their life and struggle for their national rights, for their burning class interests and demands. In places where private property is growing and multiplying in the means of production, where there is an increase in the number of people who hire working hands so that these hands will work on their land with the help of their machines for their advantage and enrichment, in such places society inevitably splits into two camps, into two divisions. One division consists of those who, having nothing to work with, are compelled to sell their labour power for work on means of production belonging to others. The other division consists of those who exploit the labour power of others owing to their wealth. Capital and labour are the two really irreconcilable camps of every bourgeois society. In India this division is becoming stronger and stronger, simultaneously with the growth and deepening of the gulf between British imperialism and the Indian people. British capital rules and dominates in India. But in India there are the Indian city bourgeoisie, Hindus and Mussul-

men, who own factories in Bombay, Ahmedabad and other places, who have their banks and commercial offices, their steamers, shops and warehouses. In India there is a numerous factory proletariat working in the factories of British and Indian capital. The Indian exploiters try in every way to keep the Indian villages back from the class struggle, and, with this deceitful aim, they claim that there are no classes in the Indian villages. They try to maintain peace between the landlords and the peasants whom they exploit, between the village rich and the farm labourers. In reality, the development of capital has turned the entire old system of village relations upside down. The exploitation and oppressions of the foreign invaders, the servitude and oppression of the landlords and moneylenders are becoming more and more unbearable because it is already impossible to live in the old manner, while imperialism and its hangers-on are trying to maintain and preserve the rule of the old servitude in the form of bondage and combine it with the new hired slavery.

Capitalism is the system of hired slavery, while feudalism is the supreme power of landlord servitude and the stick. India is at the crossroads. It has moved from its previous place in the direction of capitalism, but cannot reorganise itself from top to bottom on capitalist lines because imperialism inspires the old servitude and prolongs it by renewing it. Nevertheless the power of capitalism is already making itself manifest in the fact that in place of the old self-contained village there has arisen the new village, not living to feed itself but working for the market. The village community is more and more falling to pieces owing to the growth of property inequality and the exploitation of one member of the community by another. The community rights in the panchayats and in everyday life are more and more being seized by rich land grabbers from the highest castes, moneylenders, merchants and kulaks. The villages increase the sowing of jute when the price of jute rises and cut down on the sowing of cotton when the price of cotton falls. The power of capitalism manifests itself in the fact that in addition to the vast majority of the landlords who rent out nearly all their land and get rich by enslaving the tenants, there is growing a new strata of landlord employers who are beginning to run their own farms, using more modern implements, seed, fertilisers and hired labour. On the other hand it is manifested in the fact that the once united peasants are becoming differentiated, and kulaks or village bourgeoisie are being formed from the richer strata who have some surplus in the means of production (land, cattle, implements, seed, etc.) compared with the number of working hands in the family. They cultivate the land by means of constant hired labour. In addition to the kulaks at the top, there is growing up at the bottom a numerous class of **constant hired agricultural workers and day labourers**, who possess nothing but their labour power. **The village poor**, who form the majority of the Indian peasants, do not possess the necessary means of production to carry on their own farming. They have to sell their labour power to keep alive. However, the greater part of them are deprived of this possibility because they cannot find work either in the town, because of the insufficient development of industry or in the village which is suffering from the decline of agriculture. They are ruined, deprived of land, become paupers and starve. The intermediate position between the kulaks and the village poor is occupied by the middle peasants who do not constantly use hired labour, who suffer from insufficient land and the oppression of the landlords and moneylenders, but who sell part of their products on the market and can only make ends meet in the most favourable years.

In India a number of **districts of commercial agriculture** have already been formed, where special crops for the market are mostly sown and cultivated. These are the cotton districts of the Deccan, the jute districts in Bengal, wheat in Punjab, rice in Burma, sugar cane in the United Provinces, ground nuts in Madras, Bombay, Orissa, the Central Provinces, tobacco in Bombay and Madras. Along with these there are the British tea plantations in Assam. Dependence on the market is greatest in these very districts. Here the **enrichment of a small group of landlords, moneylenders, merchants and kulaks who trade in these crops**, is going on most rapidly. Here the toilers without land or with very little land are most rapidly being converted into the agricultural proletariat. Here hired labour is mostly squeezing out the usual landlord and moneylender servitude. Here capital subordinates all the conditions of production to itself more than anywhere else. The capitalist development in agriculture is carried out here not suddenly, not en-

tirely, but in a partial manner, paying great tribute to the accustomed servitude. Before starting a big capitalist farm, the landlord forces the tenant to sow on the rented land the crops which are most profitable to him. He begins to give out improved seed and lends cattle and implements so as to assure the most profitable harvest. He introduces capitalist farming with strong animals, machines and workers, first of all on the land of the "seer." Thus he becomes a big supplier of wheat, cotton jute, sugar cane. He changes from a landlord enslaving the tenants by means of land rent into a manufacturer of wheat, cotton and jute, exploiting hired workers.

The kulak most frequently starts by obtaining working hands, lending out part of his productive surplus and fodder to the poor and middle peasants at hard times and afterwards compelling them to work off their debt. In addition to this, in view of the great shortage of cattle and especially fodder in India among the vast majority of the peasants, there is a flourishing system of hiring out cattle and implements. In reality the peasant who works on his own bit of land to pay for hired cattle or implements is not working for himself but for the person who receives profit from the surplus of cattle, implements or seed. Often the kulak is a small village shopkeeper. He gives out goods on credit and takes the harvest of the debtors as half-payment.

As the great mass of the village population in India use hired strips of land to provide the most miserable income, it is not surprising that the kulak very often gets rich by moneylending. He makes people work for him not as hired workers but as debt slaves. He contrives to jump on the peasant's back like a new landlord enslaving tenants. The very air in the Indian villages is infected with shameful slavery, and the people are so crushed and downtrodden that it is sufficient to have one or two pairs of bulls, a surplus of seed, fodder or food, to have a little extra money or commodities, in order to become not only the master but the lord before whom all must bow. Surplus land gives almost unlimited power over the tenants. In India there are no free peasant farms on free land. The land and water are in servitude. The farm labourers and the toiling and exploited peasants are in servitude. The kulaks gather scattered plots of land into one unit, consolidate themselves on the best land, seize on the use of water. The kulaks rent land on better conditions than the poor and middle peasants. For them the land is not a source of food, but a means of growing rich. The kulaks sell their commodities at higher prices than the exploited masses of the villages. They can wait for a good buyer and higher prices. They are nearer to the town market and are not so much short-weighted. For great masses of the peasants the use of the land means lifelong servitude and work for a single landlord and moneylender, from whom it is impossible to escape. The statement of the imperialists, landlords and capitalists that co-operative societies will set them free from the net of the moneylender is false and deceitful throughout. Most of them give loans only to the landlords, moneylenders and kulaks, and serve as an instrument for enriching and helping them.

But along with this mass in India there is a numerous **agricultural proletariat**. Year after year hundreds of thousands of workers come from Madras, Bengal, the United Provinces, Behar and Orissa, to the tea plantations in Assam, from the North of Behar and Orissa to gather the jute and cotton in Bengal, from the upper parts of Madras to the delta districts. Hundreds of thousands of coolies go to work in the tea plantations in Ceylon, South Africa and other places. For the farm labourer, a nameless master—to-day one person, to-morrow another, to-day in one place, to-morrow in another—is more profitable than a parasite which sucks out the whole life of its victim and never releases it.

The village poor are also drawn into seasonal work for wages. They themselves partly lead the existence of hired workers. Frequently the poor peasant is a farm labourer with a plot of land, working his whole life to pay rent to the landowner. However, in view of the great shortage of work and the tremendous shortage of land the poor peasants are tied down to their poverty-stricken life in the place where their fathers lived previously. It is their lot to carry the chief burden of the landlords' exactions, servitude, usury, debt slavery and caste oppression. If the agricultural worker comes from the ranks of the poor and is unable to break away from his accustomed place, he suffers especially from the savage system of servitude and slavery. According to the 1931 census in British India (without the native States), 22 per cent. of the 75½ million village population were reckoned as

farm labourers and village servants. In the plantations of the imperialists there is semi-forced labour. The recruiters bring in workers like cattle, compelling them to submit to the despotism of the planters. Coolies and plantation workers are recruited by special recruiters and sirdars who rob them. In some places the planters give them plots of land, reducing them to servitude and reducing their wages to a miserable level. At the same time, feudal servitude in many places keeps the farm labourers in the position of debt slaves or household servants, enslaved together with their families.

If the agricultural workers come from the so-called lower tribes—i.e., those without any rights—or out of the ranks of the lower castes or outcast, they are mercilessly exploited and reduced to the level of cattle. A tremendous stratum of the agricultural proletariat consists of a mixed mass of debt slaves, absolutely impoverished and starving peasants, coolies without rights, along with farm labourers working for wages. It is precisely this which prevents the agricultural proletariat from uniting into an independent class force. However, it is more and more being forced to such an independent situation by the conditions of its life. The pressure of the market, the power of money and the new capitalist order compel the farm labourers and peasants to seek new places, to leave the districts where the power of the landlord, the moneylender and the tax collector is maintained most strongly, to places where this power is less, where there is more free undivided land, where there are greater possibilities freely to apply labour to the land. In these places kulak farms grow up most quickly and there is most need for hired labour power. But even there the imperialists give out the land to the big landlords, moneylenders and merchants. The uncultivated land and partly cultivated land at the edge of the jungle is a safety valve from the old servitude which has existed for centuries in the old populated places. However, even here there is little space. Millions of acres of land in India lie uncultivated because the peasants are tied hand and foot by unpaid taxes, labour obligations and unpaid debts. In freedom, they live as if in prison. They have no strong cattle and good implements to cultivate new land. They are chained down to exhausted plots of land which can hardly provide a starvation existence because they are kept back by the chain of British imperialism, the chain of the slavery of the landlords and moneylenders.

The capitalist development in agriculture in India is taking place slowly, with difficulty and delays. It is accompanied by the dying out of millions who cannot get a handful of rice for their labour, worn out by starvation, malaria and epidemics. In sweat and torment, India produces raw material for the factories of the British capitalists. It is a market for their goods. It is a milch cow for capitalist robbers who seek fabulous super-profits in the conquered country. India exports a large proportion of its produce over the seas as tribute. The Indian peasant cannot always cover his expenses, but simultaneously the country is dying from industrial backwardness. The imperialist town plunders the colonial village for every spool of cotton, for every piece of iron. The majority of the population of India are without work for months, but at the same time they suffer a shortage of everything, while the number of workers in subsidiary branches of industry connected with agriculture is very small. The industry of India, squeezed in the vice of imperialism, is kept undeveloped. At the same time, **hundreds of millions of rupees of the "educated" Indian lawyers, capitalists, and merchants are buried in the ground, forming a new burden, a new slavery for the Indian villages.** In the Indian villages, only 10 per cent. are literate. There are no hospitals, no doctors, and over two-thirds of the taxes which are squeezed out of the peasants are expended on the suppression of India, for the support of the British army, the police and officials, grafters and robbers.

British capital keeps India in savagery, slavery and oppression, but again it is the toiling population of India which has to pay for this humiliation and backwardness. Various districts of India which produce jute, cotton, ground nuts, rice, work chiefly not for the home market but for export, and above all for the payment of colonial tribute. But precisely because the Indian villages work like convicts chained to a cart, the products of their fields and orchards are being forced out from the markets of Europe, Asia and Africa, by the competition of countries whose land has not been exhausted by barbarous servitude and who utilise modern machine technique. Indian wheat has been killed for ever as a marketable

commodity by the tractor and combine. Indian cotton is attacked by American and African cotton. The ground nuts are killed by the competition of African farm oil, while sugar is threatened by the plantations of Java, Cuba and the Philippines. In the jungle world of capitalism, the backward are struck at. Thus India, bound in imperialist chains and entangled in landlord and usurer servitude, also suffers **the blows of capitalist rivalry**. The more the country exhausts itself by unbearable labour for its enslavers and local parasites, the more it supports its own slavery, poverty and backwardness.

The last four years of acute poverty, hopeless ruin and starvation should open the eyes of all the toilers to the real position of the Indian villages. It is as if a destructive storm had passed over the peasant huts and barns, sowing calamity and misery everywhere. **The price of all village commodities has fallen to half or even a third.** The raw material produced by peasant hands has sharply fallen in price. There has been a specially big fall of the raw material exported for British and other factories. In the rich imperialist countries, which enslaved colonies, capital is being crushed by its own wealth. The rivalry of the capitalists, the disorganisation of economy by them and the ruin of the masses have reached such a point that the market is without buyers. The factories, which have been stopped by the capitalists, no longer swallow up Indian raw material, and India as a colony has to play the pitiful role of an **appendage** of the manufactures of others. The price of goods brought over the sea has not fallen from all this half as much as the price of jute, cotton and ground nuts, but the greedy claws of the parasites—**the imperialists, landlords and moneylenders**—stretch out towards the throats of the peasants. It is true that the crisis has badly hit also some landlords and moneylenders, merchant and industrial bourgeoisie and kulaks, and some have profited. But, naturally, the chief blows have fallen on the toilers. The peasants have not been able to cover their expenses for cultivation and are being compelled to pay increased rapacious taxes, interest and rent. **Over two milliard rupees gold were withdrawn to England during these years from India, which was dying of starvation and ruin.** During these years the British robbers filled the villages with their troops and police so as to force out of the peasants absolutely all taxation arrears, moneylenders' debts and unpaid rent. In ordinary times, the Indian villages are constantly underfed and pauperised because the pressure of taxation and the hungry claws of the moneylender and landlord have compelled them to produce more and more but to sell always **cheaper and cheaper** for export. Now this impoverishment has reached the last extreme because, in view of the general stoppage of the market, unemployment and falling prices, they are compelled to pay rent which was inflated long before the crisis to such a level that it could only be paid if the peasant's products were sold at the **most favourable prices**. The knife of the moneylender, whose debt cannot be paid because of falling prices, has cut into the body of the peasants. The peasant masses, deprived of their last anna, are squeezed to the wall by the tax-collector. At the same time hundreds of thousands of workers in the towns, on the railroads and building works, in the plantations and rich capitalist farms, tens of thousands of handicraft men are deprived of their wages and have **come into the villages for food**. The crisis has caused specially strong devastation in the districts which sowed only jute or cotton, or rice or oil seeds, in the districts of Burma, Bengal, Punjab, United Provinces, Bombay, Behar, Madras. Hopeless poverty makes it impossible to reorganise the peasant farms. Watering his crops with tears and blood, giving over the land to the moneylender, the peasant is **forced to further produce low-priced crops** because he is strangled by a cruel noose of debt.

The crisis has not weakened but has **strengthened the exploitation and oppression of the imperialists**. It has not weakened but **strengthened the servitude of the landlords and moneylenders**. At the same time, while the majority of the peasant farms are undoubtedly in a state of ruin and decline, capital even in the present conditions gains new victories in the Indian villages. A small circle of capitalist landlords and kulaks in the United Provinces, in Bengal, in Madras, have partly begun to produce sugar cane themselves and have partly compelled the peasant tenants to go over to this crop, because this is favourable to the interests of the British imperialists in supplying England with Indian sugar. In Sind, Rajputana and Punjab, there are increased sowings of high-grade cotton. Over four years of starvation and ruin have thrown millions of Indian peasants into the ranks of the landless farm

labourers, have greatly increased the indebtedness of the peasant masses to the imperialists, landlords and moneylenders, increased the dependence of the peasants on them, enriching the British financial sharks with hundreds of millions, giving new millions of acres of peasant land to the landlords, moneylenders and kulaks, bringing about the **rapid enrichment of a small "selected" upper group of kulak land-grabbers**. Lies and deceit are spread by the pretended friends of the people, who claim that all suffer equally from the fall of prices, the stoppage of industry and unemployment. No. Four years of ruin have shown that the strong and rich always get richer and stronger at the expense of the toilers and the exploited, at the expense of their poverty and humility. They are even now seeking this way out of the situation—the imperialists in the further enslavement of India, the Indian parasites in the further ruin of the majority of the people. The crisis teaches the toilers of India one thing—salvation lies through struggle, through a conscious, organised and irreconcilable struggle against the oppressors and exploiters, and not through peace with them. Peace with them means reconciliation with our own slavery and ruin.

(To be continued.)

The Labour Movement

The Strike of the Greek Seamen

By Kostas Grypos

Reports are coming in from the various ports of Europe, Africa and America regarding the last outbreaks of the strike of the Greek merchant seamen, which commenced in some English ports at the beginning of March and then spread to all the Greek ships coming into harbour.

The Greek mercantile fleet is one of the most important branches of Greek industry. The fact that it was capable, under the severe conditions of the economic crisis, of standing the competition of English and Norwegian shipping is solely owing to the circumstance that the Soviet Union has chartered the larger part of the Greek ships and because the exploitation of the crews is monstrous. The pay, the food and the living quarters provided the Greek seamen are the worst in the world. No medical attention is provided. If a seaman falls sick whilst on a voyage he must simply wait till the ship puts into port. The position of the Greek seaman is so indescribably bad that some months ago the London "Times" strongly criticised the inhumane conditions in the Greek mercantile marine. This was, of course, not out of sympathy for the Greek proletarians, but in order to show by what means the Greek shipowners are able to compete with their English rivals.

In the most remote ports of the world there are unemployed Greek seamen who are handed over to misery and despair. The unemployment benefit which the Greek government grants to the unemployed seamen is a mockery. The unemployed seamen abroad obtain support from the Greek Consulates only when they enforce it by agitation under the leadership of functionaries of the Red Seamen's Union.

But this degree of exploitation of one of the oldest and best developed sections of the Greek proletariat would be impossible were it not for the active co-operation of the reformists and reactionary leaders of the seamen's union, who live on the sweat of the seamen and are prepared to commit any base treachery at any time. A year ago the result of this co-operation between the shipowners and the reformists was a regulation of wages which legalised the misery of the seamen.

It was precisely against this regulation that the present strike, which is now approaching its end, broke out—of course against the will of the reformists and mainly under the leadership of the Red Seamen's Union. The striking seamen have almost everywhere put forward the same demands: (1) increase of pay to 7 to 7½ English pounds a month; (2) eight-hour day; (3) improvement in the exceedingly bad food and its control by a ship's committee; (4) abolition of the fascist penal regulations, and granting of trade union liberty; (5) unemployed seamen to be granted benefit to the extent of 40 drachma a day, free sleeping accommodation and food, and medical aid for themselves and their families; (6) engagement of seamen to be under the control of delegates elected by the majority of seamen; (7) general amnesty for working-class fighters in Greece.