

# British Imperialism Strikes at the Indian Unions

AT the end of March Anglo-Indian police, armed with more than a hundred warrants, descended on the headquarters of left wing trade unions, the Workers' and Peasants' Parties and the Youth League in all the principal Indian cities except Madras, and at one blow, arrested most of the active working class and peasant leaders in the country.

Calcutta, Bombay, Poona, Allahabad and Lucknow each had its day of police terror.

A few extremely interesting facts show very clearly the true causes at the bottom of this wave of terror with its arrests of workers and peasant leaders throughout India.

Most of the arrests took place in Bombay, where the Indian trade union movement has fought out its most successful struggles. In this connection the "Bombay Labor Gazette", a government publication, admitted, in January of this year, "The Girni Kamgar (left wing textile) Union shows a phenomenal growth in membership. At present, this union reckons a membership of 65,000."

Who are the trade unionists responsible for this extraordinary success? The same official source gives their names. The chairman is Alwe; the general secretary, S. A. Dange; the treasurer, S. V. Ghate; the vice-presidents, S. H. Jhabwala and B. F. Bradley; the assistant secretary, K. N. Joglekar. All these leaders have since been arrested.

All those arrested—in the other Indian cities as well as Bombay—are the most active workers in the Indian trade union organizations; all have played prominent parts in the great strike movements in past years.

Another reason for the government's action is the growing influence of the Workers' and Peasants' Parties among the Indian masses. Three of those arrested, Mirajkar, Pendse and Joglekar, were candidates of the Workers' and Peasants' Party in the recent Bombay municipal elections. In spite of the limited number of workers who enjoy the ballot, it received from 3,000 to 4,000 votes, only a very little less than the candidates who were elected. It must be remembered

that of Bombay's 1,200,000 inhabitants, only 90,000 possess the ballot, and of course among those who can vote are the labor aristocracy. It is obvious that, if all the workers could vote, the Workers' and Peasants' Parties would receive a tremendous majority. Hence the government has every reason to wish to crush this movement.

The warrants for the arrests were issued from the district of Meerut, near Delhi, and it is probable that the "conspiracy" which they charge refers to the conference of the Workers' and Peasants' Party which was recently held there.

It must also be remembered that in India many things are illegal and are severely punished though they may be perfectly legal in England itself. For example, there is the case of Hasrat Mohani, chairman of the All-India Moslem League, who in 1922 was sentenced to two years' imprisonment for a speech in which he demanded complete independence for India. The speeches at the Workers' and Peasants' Party conference in Meerut in October, 1928, naturally demanded the independence of India, the removal of the various state boundaries, the nationalization of land and of the instruments of production, etc.

According to the latest reports, the trial of all the class war prisoners was to be held at Meerut in the middle of April. The attorney, Dawan Chamanlal, has undertaken to defend all those arrested. The majority of them are now in solitary confinement in the Meerut prison.

The prisoners have protested against this action and against their treatment as criminals instead of political prisoners.

The following list of the most outstanding of those arrested by the Anglo-Indian government during the present mass terror, with a record of their functions and activities in the labor movement, sheds light on the meaning of the new wave of arrests in India and the intentions of the Anglo-Indian authorities.

Among those now in Indian prisons are: S. H. Jhabwala, general secretary of the Great Indian Peninsula Railway Workers' Union, with a membership of 41,000 and organizational secretary of the All-India Railwaymen's Federation. He has official connections with numerous Indian trade unions. The municipal commissioner in Bombay threatens him with legal prosecution for "inciting the municipal workers".

S. A. Dange is general secretary of the street carmen's union of Bombay and of the Bombay Textile Workers' Union, with a membership of 65,000, assistant secretary of the All-India Trade Union Congress and prominent member of the All-India Workers, and Peasants' Party. He has been active for several years in the labor movement. Until 1924 he was editor of the "Socialist" in Bombay, then he was sentenced to four years in prison at the Communist trial in Cawnpore.

S. S. Mirajkar, secretary of the Union of Workers of the British India Steam Navigation Company, secretary of the Workers' and Peasants' Party of Bombay and candidate in the recent municipal elections in Bombay.

S. V. Ghate, vice-president of the Municipal Workers' Union of Bombay, treasurer of the Bombay Textile Workers' Union and member of the Central Committee of the All-India Workers' and Peasants' Party.

D. R. Thengdi, former chairman of the All-Indian Trade Union Congress, chairman of the Kirkee Arsenal Workers' Union in Poona, member of the All-India Congress-

Committee. He has been active for a number of years in the proletarian movement in India and is one of the founders of the Indian trade union movement.

P. C. Joshi, secretary of the Workers' and Peasants' Party of the United Provinces, member of the Central Committee of the All-India Workers' and Peasants' Party and editor of the "Kranti Kari", a workers' and peasants' paper.

M. G. Desai, a young student and journalist, editor of the "Spark", a labor paper founded recently in Bombay.

Philip Spratt, a young Englishman, was prosecuted a few years ago for his revolutionary activities in India but later freed. Last April he was sent by the Bengal Trade Union Federation to lead the strike of jute workers in Chengail. He took an active part in the railway workers' strike at Liloah, in the jute workers' strike at Bauri and in the iron and steel workers' strike at Jamshedpur.

Kalam is a functionary of the Workers' and Peasants' Party in Jhansi.

B. F. Bradley is vice-president of the Bombay Textile Workers' Union.

So far from these arrests terrorizing the masses, however, the effect has been quite the opposite, the workers throwing themselves by thousands and tens of thousands into protest strikes and demonstrations, with a fighting spirit which proves the profoundly revolutionary character of their whole movement and forecasts its ultimate triumph.