

A stylized, high-contrast map of India is rendered in black ink on a reddish-brown background. The map shows the outline of the country, including the Indian subcontinent and the island territories. The map is partially obscured by the large, bold text of the title.

INDIA

in

REBELLION

By
Henry
Judd

25¢

India In Revolt

HENRY JUDD

With an Introduction by

MAX SHACHTMAN

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*Dedicated to the
Bolshevik-Leninists of India
Banner-Bearers of Socialism*



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Introduction

Two irrepressible forces are at work undermining the present world order of imperialism. One is the working class of the imperialist oppressor countries. The other is the people of the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the objects of imperialist oppression. The rallying cry of the working class of the advanced countries is: Forward to the proletarian socialist revolution! The cry that awakens hundreds of millions of colonial peoples from centuries of torpor, backwardness, humiliation, is: Forward to national independence!

The only road to socialism was long ago embodied in the theory of revolutionary Marxism, and confirmed over and over again in life. The problem of the road to national independence for those peoples and countries deprived of it by imperialism is now particularly complicated by the sweep of the Second World War. Most countries of any consequence have abandoned neutrality in face of this penetrating international scourge; the quasi-neutrality of the remaining handful of small countries is vanishing before our eyes. It is of course utterly impossible to consider the problem of national independence "by itself," separated from the World War. Where the advanced independent countries of the West fail to resist the suction that draws them inexorably into the camp of one imperialist belligerent or another, the weak, backward and imperialistically dominated colonies and half-colonies can hardly be expected to succeed. They have not even made serious attempts to resist. In the nature of the case, they cannot.

The colonial struggle for national independence is a struggle against dependence upon imperialism, that is, for freedom from imperialist domination or control. But not all classes in the colonies are equally interested in this struggle, are equally consistent in prosecuting it, are equally capable of carrying it through. The class struggle rages—even in the colonies! In fact it assumes especial sharpness and irreconcilability there because the bourgeoisie is not in a position (as it is in the big imperialist countries) to corrupt its proletariat or to moderate its hostility by granting concessions and reforms. The bourgeoisie does not really fight for national independence, because it cannot attain it. Why not? Because the overthrow of imperialist rule *demand*s such an unleashing of the multi-million-headed worker and peasant mass, such a whetting of its social appetite, as to assure in practice that it will pass directly from its struggle against foreign rule to the struggle against any class rule whatsoever, that is, against its own bourgeoisie as well. If, therefore, the colonial bourgeoisie appears at the head of any mass movement against imperialism, it is essentially in order to conduct a struggle of limited liability, to play a modest and reactionary game of blackmail. Having no serious hope of ruling exclusively in its own name, its highest ambition is merely to get a larger portion from the table of its imperialist overlord. To get it from its master of today it threatens to enter the service of a rival, competing master. The threat is real in this sense: the colonial bourgeoisie is utterly incapable of conducting a war against *imperialism*, but it is quite capable of fighting *one* imperialist power, which is not at all the same thing. A study of the last two decades of Asia's history offers more than enough proof of this assertion.

This should not, of course, prevent the really revolutionary and progressive classes in the colonies from joining and supporting even such limited struggles as are launched, for one reason or another, by the national bourgeoisie, and from endeavoring to convert the struggle into a genuinely revolu-

tionary national war against imperialist rule and for complete sovereignty. This can be done only if the working class, as the most authentic spokesman of the popular masses, establishes and maintains inviolate its political and organizational independence from "its own" national bourgeoisie as well as from the foreign imperialists.

However, when the struggle between rival imperialisms breaks out into open warfare, and extends to the colonies themselves, converting them into actual battlefields, the indispensability of proletarian independence in the colonial struggle acquires added significance. Formerly the leadership of the proletariat was necessary for victory in the fight for colonial independence. It is now necessary if the fight is to have any progressive significance at all. In other words: where the imperialists turn a colony into their own battleground, any struggle conducted up to then by the colonial bourgeoisie against one of the imperialist nations loses—and under the circumstances it cannot but lose—its national and progressive significance. To retain this significance, it would be necessary to conduct a struggle against both the "main" imperialist enemy and the "friendly" imperialist enemy; in other words, against the system of imperialism itself. But this is precisely where the capacities of the colonial bourgeoisie prove inadequate. Against one imperialist power it can lead a struggle of sorts and has done so; it does not and cannot fight against imperialism. The extension of an inter-imperialist war to its own land promptly demonstrates this truth again. The inherent relationships between the colonial and the imperialist bourgeoisies are such as inevitably to bring the former under the dominion of the latter; that is, to bring it into the imperialist war as an integral part of the imperialist camp. Therewith the very content of yesterday's just colonial war is changed.

We saw this happen in the First World War with such countries as Servia, Persia and China. We have already seen it happen in the present World War with countries like Ethio-

pia, Iran, Burma and, again, China. In each case the struggle of the country against its imperialist ruler was both just and progressive. In each case, support of the struggle made possible the advancement of the main aim of the working class in our time—the weakening, the undermining and, finally, the destruction of parasitic, reactionary imperialism. But as the present imperialist war rolled over each one of these countries in turn, their struggles for independence were swallowed up, were decisively subordinated to the inter-imperialist struggle. As soon as the iron ring of the imperialist war closed over these colonial and semi-colonial lands, the native bourgeoisie became part and parcel of one imperialist camp or the other. Whoever has not seen this process unfold in the present war suffers from grossly defective political eyesight. Whoever has paid no attention to this process before has the opportunity of observing its political, class mechanics at work in the sub-continent of India as the ring of the imperialist war draws tighter around the country.

Does this mean that the ring cannot be broken out of? Is the fight of the colonial peoples doomed, at least for the duration of the imperialist war? The answer to both questions is, No. The fight for colonial independence cannot be conducted *under the leadership of the bourgeoisie* where the war sweeps over the country, because this class invariably converts the national struggle into part of the imperialist conflict. The ring of the imperialist war *can* be broken out of, but not by the bourgeoisie. That task requires the organized efforts of the genuinely revolutionary classes, the workers and peasants of the colonies, led by the former. This conclusion is supported by the theory of Marxism and fortified by the experience of the struggle. Once the imperialist war makes a battlefield out of the colony, its struggle for national freedom must be *relaunched*, because no struggle is any longer worthy of that name, and therefore of the support of the people, unless it is directed against both imperialist camps, and therefore

against the imperialist war itself. The struggle of the colonial people can acquire progressive significance again only if it transforms the imperialist war to which its own bourgeoisie has subordinated it, into a war against imperialism. Even in the colonies, no class is capable of doing this except the proletariat.

The present work by Henry Judd is invaluable because, we venture to say, it is an analysis of the Indian problem from the only correct and objective standpoint. All other works on the subject are written for one of the following purposes: 1. to show that India does not merit independence from kindly English rule, at least not yet; 2. to show that India does merit its independence from Britain in order that it may join the Asiatic Co-Prosperity Sphere (in other words, Japanese propaganda works); 3. to show that India does merit independence in order that it may come under the rule of the Indian bourgeoisie (which is no less vile and exploitive than the British); 4. especially recently, to show that unless India gets some concessions, her bourgeoisie will not fight energetically for the imperialist interests of the United Nations in the war.

Judd has nothing in common with the interests and specious arguments of the imperialists and the particularly disgusting imperialist-democrats. His concern is exclusively with the genuine national interests of the Indian people and the manner in which they are interrelated with the movement for the liberation of the whole world from exploitation and oppression. To compare the resulting work with the works on India written by all other contemporaries shows that such a concern, such a bias, is not only *not* incompatible with an objective assembling of factual material and with an unassailably scientific analysis and conclusion, but is the indispensable prerequisite for it. For our part, we add that the views presented in this introduction on the relationship between the colonial war against imperialism and the war of the imperial-

ists against each other, flow from Henry Judd's analysis and conclusions on India, and are inseparably linked with them.

The author's credentials are years of intensive study of the history of India and its struggle, of the nature of modern imperialism, a long period of political writing in the revolutionary Marxist press on this and related subjects, an equal period of activity among Indian national-revolutionary movements in the United States. In addition, he had the opportunity not long ago to study the problem on the spot, during a visit to India, when he was able to interview and discuss with a number of representative political personalities. In our view, however, these only supplement in him the fundamentally required qualifications: an uncompromising hostility to all imperialist rule, a passionate devotion to the cause of a genuinely free India—and more, to the cause of a world union of free socialist countries.

M. S.

November 16, 1942.

CHAPTER I

India—the Land and Its People

THE immense, wedge-shaped sub-continent of India juts out into the stormy Indian Ocean. This land of almost 400,000,000 people—dark and unknown to most peoples of the world—has become a rebellious storm center of the world, swept by waves of bloody struggles. It is the object of this work to describe the background of the Indian crisis, to delve into its causes, to describe some of the special features of the Indian Revolution and to explain the fundamental ties that link India's march toward freedom with the battles of the American working class.

India is a land of 389,000,000 people (1940 census). It is the bulwark, the core and nub, the "kingpin" of the British Empire. Like some precious nugget of inestimable worth, its British rulers have made every effort to guard it at all boundaries and avenues of approach. Buffer states (Afghanistan, Nepal, Tibet, Baluchistan) lie close to India's sides; lesser colonies (Iran, Iraq and, until recently, Burma and Malaya) bolster India's mighty flanks; great naval bases (Gibraltar, Malta, Alexandria, Trincomalee and, formerly, Singapore) guard India's water entrances and exits. History's greatest imperial defensive network has as its object the defense of India, world's largest and wealthiest colony!

The people of India are a racial mixture resulting from a known history of 6,000 years of civilization, the product of countless migrations and conquests by European and Asiatic migrants. In this country of contrasts, the men of the North (Afghans, Sikhs, Punjabis, etc.) yet have a fundamental common culture and communal heritage with the smaller, darker Tamils and Madrasis of the South. The great river systems,

the easily navigable coasts, the absence of high, impassable mountains within India itself—all these factors have given India a basic cultural and historic unity, accompanied by an endless mingling of blood strains, religions, traditions, languages, etc. Regardless of what foreign rulers may say, *India is essentially a unified, homogeneous nation.*

India is a colony. There are only a few cities, scattered over a huge agrarian land. Of its people, 75 per cent live on the soil. They are small farm proprietors or tenants (*kisans*), feudal serfs who slave for a landlord (*rajah*), or wandering, landless farm laborers. On the parched plains of south and central India—the Deccan—peasants bitterly struggle with the earth and famine; in Assam Province, where the Himalayan mountain roof bends toward the Bay of Bengal, laborers on British plantations gather leaves from the tea plants growing in the rocky malarial soil; on the rolling lands of the Punjab and United Provinces wheat and grains are harvested. There is no machinery, no farm equipment. The *kisans* work as they did sixty centuries ago! In many places the land is old and worn. It must have water. The history of landed India is the fight for water, for irrigation.

India is the classic land of contrasts. But we do not mean “contrasts” in the travelogue sense of the word. The traditional portrait of India as a land of *fakirs*, turbans, the rope trick, snake charmers, *yogis*, etc., is a false portrait drawn by interested imperialist parties who are anxious to justify their unwelcome stay in the land of Hindustan. The contrasts we refer to are the contrasts produced by the superimposition of modern, capitalist economy and industry upon a backward, Asiatic feudal base. The contrast of primitive methods of agriculture with modern railroads and airplanes; the contrast of slow, backward handicraft industry with up-to-date factories and plants representing great concentrates and aggregates of imperialist capital; the contrast of great manorial estates and homes (occupied by the *ferenghi*—the white rulers) with the

world's worst slums of Bombay, Calcutta, Cawnpore, etc.; the contrast of great wealth in the hands of the English and the feudal princes with the incredible and grinding poverty of the great Indian masses. These are *social* and *political* contrasts that explain the causes and source of the revolutionary upheaval that rocks the Indian sub-continent.

The great natural wealth of India, above all, lends emphasis to the contrast of wealth and poverty between the naked, starving *kisan* on the one hand and the English banker, merchant or trader on the other. The contrast between the feudal princes (the Nizam of Hyderabad with his annual income of \$50,000,000, his pure gold bars worth \$250,000,000 and his heritage of jewels appraised at \$2,000,000,000!) and their miserable subjects—these are the contrasts that accumulate and store up within the minds of India's people. In Burma, Ceylon and South India there is oil, cotton fibre, rubber, tea and jute. In the Punjab are wheat, rice and grain fields, the granary for all India. In peacetime, the ports of Karachi, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras overflowed with huge stocks of jute, coffee, tobacco, oils and fats, leather and hides, cotton and grains, silks, jewels and gems bound for England and the European markets. Yet none of this wealth goes to the people, whether they have grown it with their own hands or dug it out of the earth! Their poverty remains, the polarization between the workers and peasants, and their white and native masters, becomes sharper.

This is why, essentially, India is in revolt. The people can no longer stand their impoverishment and their enslavement to foreign forces. Whatever may be the outcome of the present civil disobedience, anti-British campaign launched by the All-India National Congress, it should be clear that this movement is the first revolutionary upheaval of oppressed peoples during the Second World War.

What is happening in India today? The first, most elementary and initial stages of the *democratic* phase of India's

revolution have begun. The people, the workers and peasants of India, are feeling their strength, testing their master's strength and determination, seeking to assert their democratic right to national independence. The All-India character of the independence movement, the fact that every province, every city and every district has been affected, reveal the depths of the nationalist, anti-imperialist feelings of the people as well as their desire to see things through to the end. There is tremendous confusion in India, but every worker and poor peasant has been intimately stirred by the first struggles on the road to revolution.

India is and will continue to be a matter of great concern to all workers and thinking people. We must emphasize that the major events of the Indian revolution are yet to come; what has already happened is a mere beginning. Such a movement as this, a *social* movement of masses of people, cannot be killed or counteracted by the bayonets and bullets of a handful of white imperialist soldiers, aided by native policemen. The dramatic days of August and September of 1942—when hundreds of Indian workers and students died under British machine gun fire—are the prelude to the broader and more sweeping battles. To understand the depths of the struggle we must go into the background and history of Britain's occupation and domination of India, tracing the rise of Indian nationalism.

CHAPTER II

The Coming of the White Sahib

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

I am interested in missionary work in India and have done much work of that kind, but I am not such a hypocrite as to say that we hold India for the Indians. We hold it as the finest outlet for British goods in general, and for Lancashire goods in particular."

(Lord Brentford to the British Parliament.)

*

For 250 years England has been in India. As far back as the 1500's, Dutch, English, French and Portuguese merchants had contacted Indian coastal towns and brought back to Europe the products of its famous handicraft industries. In a series of wars fought all over continental Europe and the newly-discovered North American continent, the rising capitalist class of Great Britain established its right to penetrate into India by force of arms. By 1708 the famous British East India Company—that notorious set-up for plundering—had secured the right to monopolize all trade with India. In that year began the *territorial* conquest and occupation of the land of the Hindus.

"The aristocracy wanted to conquer India, the moneyocracy to plunder and the millocracy to undersell it." In these words, Karl Marx summed up one hundred years of British colonial policy in 1853. All three sections of Britain's ruling class, aristocracy, industrial capitalists and merchants, succeeded in their respective methods of naked robbery.

The British conquest of India was carried out piecemeal,

in the most ruthless, treacherous and bloody manner. It was like any other barbaric invasion, long known to easily accessible India, except in one important aspect. Britain, in the course of 150 years of constant warfare against the Indian people brought about a revolution that destroyed the entire framework of ancient Indian society! Whereas India, in previous days, had been able either to repel or absorb the invaders because of its superior civilization, now she succumbed to the superior power represented by the most advanced and unified nation of western civilization, England.

What was the nature of this *social* revolution, unconsciously engineered by the imperialists of Great Britain? It was carried out during this extended period of conquest as England, taking full advantage of the internal struggles between the warring divisions of the Great Mogul, the lesser Moguls, Mahrattas and Afghans, swept over the land, from Mogulate to Mogulate, as far as the Punjab.

It was nothing less than the destruction, transformation and uprooting of the most remarkable of all ancient civilizations! This civilization had been built primarily upon two foundations: (1) Communal ownership of the land (no private land-ownership); (2) A system of artificial soil irrigation, vitally necessary to the agricultural life of the country. Upon this material foundation had arisen the *independent Indian communal villages* and village confederations, with their harmonious village economy based upon the union of agricultural and manufacturing pursuits. These villages had a limited, closed-in economy that pivoted around the handloom and the spinning-wheel, the two essential instruments of handicraft industry. Imposed upon this base was the *caste* system: a social organization of innumerable caste divisions that followed from an Asiatic *hereditary* and minute division of labor within the village. And finally, over all, stood the despotic political state with its administrators, bureaucrats and priests. The whole system was like a delicately-balanced watch in ex-

quisite balance. The march of the white troops up the Ganges toward Delhi upset the balance and destroyed the mechanism!

The first steps were carried out by the East India Company, which ruled supreme in India up to 1858. The company plundered the accumulated gold and jewels of the Hindu and Mogul rulers; in the conquered territories it neglected the artificial irrigation and public works systems; it established *private* landlordism and *private* property in land in those territories it controlled; it forbade the export of surplus Indian products to Europe and to England.

With the ruthlessness of armed force, the native communities and industries were overthrown. Indian goods (mainly hand woven cloths) were excluded from England as early as 1697. Rickarts, an English writer on Indian affairs, estimated that in the first 60 years of the eighteenth century, five billion dollars in direct plunder had been brought back from India. The *London Daily News* wrote: "The whole wealth of the country is absorbed and the development of its industry is checked by a government which hangs like an incubus over it." The collapse of the ancient industries ruined millions of artisans and craftsmen and left the old urban centers of industry, Dacca, Surat, Murshidabad, etc., depopulated. At the famous Warren Hastings trial it was revealed that in 1771, one-third of the Bengal population, i.e., 10,000,000 persons, had died as the result of a ghastly famine induced by the crisis in agriculture.

In the eighteenth century the East India Company was at the height of its powers. It was a period of unequalled pillage and destruction in which English speculators and adventurers accumulated huge fortunes at the expense of a great country. In "theft, bribery, confiscation, taxation—every conceivable method of squeezing money and goods out of the inhabitants," the British *Conquistadores* made the efforts of their Spanish brothers in Mexico and Peru appear puny. Those celebrated English heroes (to this day!) Warren Hastings and

Clive, were, in fact, common thieves, murderers and looters! The degree of their success, however, elevated them to the ranks of the nobility.

Grown rich upon its stolen goods and capital, English capitalism itself was changing. The English industrial capitalist class had obtained mastery of the world's greatest productive plant (at that time) and utilized this control to regulate the world market. Within England itself great changes took place during the latter part of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The mercantilist-financial oligarchy was replaced by the more powerful English industrial capitalists and merchants (the *nouveaux-riches*). This new ruling class displayed an even livelier interest in India, but changed the nature of English exploitation of that land. Private merchants and shipping syndicates began to replace the Company; cotton cloth and cheap manufactures from Lancaster and Manchester mills poured into India to complete the destruction of native industry. A new period—one of *capitalist-imperialist* penetration—began for the unhappy land. Further territorial encroachment, this time under imperialist direction, took place. Systems of private land ownership and land tenancy (*Zemindaree and Ryotwar*) were established and legalized. It was a mere hundred years ago that India was cursed with the creation of *Rajahs and Maharajahs*, set up by the British crown as puppet supporters of the Empire. India became a prime source of foodstuffs; English-owned plantations were established to grow tea, coffee, etc.; heavy land taxes were placed upon the *kisans*.

The result of this second phase of imperialist operations in India has been described as follows: "Pressing upon the people of India in a manner to produce great distress is the land tax, in addition to which is the water tax in the irrigated areas. The land tax keeps the mass of the population in a state bordering upon slavery. Millions cannot get sufficient food. At the end of his year of labor, the farmer finds his crop

divided between landlord and the government. He has to go into debt to the village shopkeeper, getting credit for food and seed in the ensuing year. Since 240,000,000 people in India are connected directly or indirectly with agriculture, this means that a large majority of them, probably two-thirds, are living in a state of squalor." (Isaiah Bowman, *The New World*.)

The struggle between different sections of Britain's ruling class ended with the triumph of the "millocracy." Naturally, these same industrialists took control over India. "At the same rate at which the cotton manufactures became of vital interest for the whole social frame of Great Britain, East India became of vital interest for the British cotton manufacturers" (Marx, 1853). The primitive agronomy of India, previously sufficient to give each community its simple necessities, yielded to capitalism. Static, hereditary Hindu society crumbled before the pound sterling. New, mobile and shifting groups replaced the ancient castes of India. By 1857, the English capitalists, making use of the great Sepoy Mutiny* that had occurred, were able to wrest all control of Indian affairs out of the hands of the Company and force revocation of its charter. Parliament, i.e., the legislative center of the English capitalists, took over and the rule of English capital over India was formalized.

A direct, governmental administration under the "Better Government of India Act" was established, replacing the former system of Company administrators. To imperialist Eng-

*The "Sepoy Mutiny"—known in India as the First War of Independence—was actually a mass uprising of the people under the reactionary and historically antiquated leadership of the old feudal rulers (King of Delhi). The desperate character of the struggle, the fact that it took two and a half years to suppress, with enormous casualties on both sides, prove how ridiculous is the fairy tale taught in the schools that the "Mutiny" was caused by the issuance of greased cartridges to the Indian soldiers. No, it was the first of many struggles of a people attempting to assert their right to national freedom! Since this experience the British have learned that they must compromise and deal with the feudalists and big landlords, against the people. This is the origin of the "Native States."

land, India became useful and necessary for three primary purposes: (1) To draw forth from the rural population the product represented by abundant crops of cotton and food-stuffs (wheat, rice, sugar cane, tea, etc.). (2) To sell upon the Indian market the cotton and textile manufactures, the small manufactured articles and the machinery produced in England, the world's workshop. (3) To invest surplus, idle capital in railroads, plantations, finance, etc., at the super-profit rates yielded by the exploitation of boundless and cheap labor.

The new exploiters inaugurated a new technique of exploitation. They commenced an active development of the country, as differentiated from the open plunder and destruction of the mercantilist Company. They began to build a network of railroads, to repair and open up new roads, to lay a telegraph system and establish a mail service. British banking, British law and jurisprudence, British educational methods, British administration were introduced all over the country. From 1857 on modern British imperialist rule sat firmly in the Indian saddle and dictated the scientific robbery of hundreds of millions. "This period of modern imperialist expansion was marked in India by an intensification of British exploitation, and a corresponding change in its character, wherein the finance-capitalist exploitation of India came to dominate all other methods. Nevertheless the new basis of exploitation did not replace the already established forms of plunder and industrial and trading exploitation, but was auxiliary and parallel to these processes." (*The New International*, March, 1942.)

A large part of the wealth plundered from India was re-invested, during this period, within the country itself. It flowed back, in the form of British investment capital, into public works, government buildings, railroad construction, plantations, etc. The investment of this capital became the single most important source of profits and revenue. Its ex-

pansion from 11 per cent of Britain's overseas investment (1911) to 25 per cent (1937) denoted a consolidation of Britain's hold over the economic life of India. These investments, however, were confined almost entirely to undertakings that had nothing to do with modern Indian industry. They were poured into railroads, transport, plantations, further wars of expansionist character, administrative and bureaucratic expenditures, etc. Industry was deliberately neglected since Britain did not wish to create manufacturing competitors. The imperialists were interested in India for its commercial, trading, raw material and marketing values. That was all that mattered to the money grubbers of London!

Today, the white imperialists of England control every decisive and important factor in India's political, social and economic life.

1. They regulate her trade and commerce with the outside world by means of their tariff control.
2. They control the land system through their power of taxation, legislation and fixing of land rights.
3. They control India's commerce, both external and internal, including road, railroad and river transportation.
4. They control Indian law and legal procedure through their network of British-administered courts and institutions.
5. They control labor in the factories and set its conditions of labor through their rulings and decrees.
6. They control the educational system, the press, the radio, the colleges—every institution of public life.
7. Most decisive of all, British finance capital owns the foreign banking system, a system that works together with the government's financial and exchange policies.

Never, in all history, has a nation been so scientifically subjected to over-all rule by a foreign power as India is ruled by England! The *only* thing the workers and peasants of India can "claim" as their own is their indescribable and inexhaustible poverty! This is the net result of 150 years of foreign rule over 385,000,000 people.

CHAPTER III

The British Stake in India

The fundamental principle of the English has been to make the whole Indian nation subservient, in every possible way, to the interests and benefits of themselves. They have been taxed to the utmost limit; every successive province, as it has fallen into our possession, has been made a field for higher exaction....

(*F. J. Shore, Former Indian Colonial Administrator.*)

*

Even in times of relative peace, the governmental structure set up by the British over India contained little or no democracy. The English-appointed Viceroy was armed with full veto and decree powers and lorded over a so-called Legislative Assembly heavily weighted by appointments, restriction of voting to property-holders, elections based upon religious and communal divisions, etc. The network of governmental appointees, civil service administrators, judges, tax collectors, inspectors, land assessors, petty supervisory officials extended to the remotest village and the most backward district. It formed a parasitic growth upon the back of the Indian people.

Furthermore, the British utilized other measures and means to administer the nation. In the native states sit the autocratic princes, organized nationally into the Chamber of Princes—the most reactionary body in India. Each prince has a British adviser who generally manages affairs while the prince wallows in Oriental fleshpots and degeneracy. The princes are abject tools of the central authority. The finances and economy of their states are managed by the *Diwan* (adviser); foreign affairs, military and taxing powers are no longer in their hands. Over the prince's head is suspended the threat of incorporating his lands into British India. By this

method, the English have extended their realm of exploitation to an additional 90,000,000 people who have the misfortune of residing in these states of feudal slavery.

In addition, a basic adjunct of imperialist domination consists of the British-Indian Army, made up in peacetime of the British Regular Army (58,000) and the Indian Army (166,000) of Sikhs, Moslems and Gurkhas, officered by Englishmen. Attached to this armed force is the Royal British Air Force. These armed forces are kept strictly isolated from the people at all times and are granted numerous special privileges to further stimulate their mercenary character. They are, in spirit and method, a force of armed foreign occupation.

And finally, there is the Indian Civil Service, the administrative bureaucracy. For a long period made up solely of the favored sons of the English aristocracy (from Oxford and Cambridge), it now includes many Indian middle class professionals and Brahman aristocrats. There is a myth and fairy tale spread about by apologists for British imperialism and its spokesmen, such as Lord Halifax, current British Ambassador to America. According to these folk, the Indian Civil Service is run by the Indian people, there being less than 600 Englishmen in the service. Let us grant this figure. The point is: *What posts do they occupy?* We would like to hear the Right Honorable Christian Gentleman deny that the British occupy all the highest posts; the non-competitive, decisive and policy-making positions! Yes, there are a majority of Indians in the Civil Service—filing clerks, stenographers, typists, errand boys, etc.

This, in brief, is the government that rules India—Viceroy, Army, Princes, Civil Service. Since the beginning of the present war, under the Defense of India Act adopted by the British Parliament, virtually all powers have been centralized in the hands of Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy, who rules India as a dictator, together with General Wavell, commander of

the armed forces. Constitutional, legal and parliamentary rights and liberties simply do not exist in wartime, revolution-torn India. Nothing could better describe the situation than the words of India's revolutionary socialists:

"British imperialism has instituted a system of repressive legislation, progressively inaugurating a *gendarme* régime not less systematic and ruthless than that of Russian czarism or German fascism. Since the commencement of the imperialist war, repression has been many times intensified. Even those nominal rights previously possessed by the masses have been openly withdrawn, and a naked rule of terror substituted through the Defense of India Act. . . . The press has been gagged by a series of iniquitous Press Acts and a systematic police censorship of all publications. Rights of free speech and assembly have been so curtailed that they are practically non-existent. Radical and revolutionary political parties are compelled to lead an underground existence.

"The right to strike no longer exists in all 'essential war industries.' . . . Thousands of militant mass leaders have been imprisoned on flimsy pretexts or detained without trial. The restriction of individual movement by means of externment and internment orders has become a commonplace. . . ."

This is a description of India, the colony of British "democracy"—not German-occupied Poland or France!

Now, what is the objective of this cruel and tyrannical apparatus that rules over 389,000,000 people? This dictatorship has not taken shape and does not exist in order to satisfy some sadistic streak in British character. *It has been created to preserve and perpetuate the British stake in India!* It exists to satisfy and fulfill the lust for profit, and power to exploit, that runs deep in the minds of the minute handful of British bankers, Tory imperialists, capitalists and merchants. The dictatorship over India is, in a word, a direct product of British capitalism in the period of world imperialism.

Lest there be no mistake, we shall list accurately, and in precise detail, just what is the *British stake in India*.

1. Interest on the Indian public debt of \$3,600,000,000, amounting to \$100,000,000 per year.*

2. Fifty per cent of the capital in industry, mining and transportation is British.

3. Two-thirds of the capital in banking, insurance, plantations and commerce is British.

4. Grand total of British capital holdings—approximately \$7,800,000,000, yielding average profit of \$700,000,000.

5. British capitalists hold monopolies in shipping (98 per cent), tea, coffee and rubber plantations, jute industry.

6. English agents control 50 per cent of cotton and milling capital.

7. The Reserve Bank of India and the Imperial Bank possess two-thirds of the bank deposits.

8. Direct holdings and interest are as follows:

(a) National sterling debt	\$1,400,000,000
(b) Share of national rupee debt	720,000,000
(c) Private investments	1,040,000,000
(d) "Home Charges"—expenditures	1,400,000,000
Grand Total	\$4,560,000,000

(*The Problem of India*, K. S. Shelvankar, p. 66.)

9. India is England's best customer, supplying: Jute, cotton, tea, coffee, tobacco, oils, fats, leathers and hides, grains, silks, textiles, pulses and flours, metals and ores, wool, fruits and vegetables, coal and coke, lac, mica, coir, spices, hemp, etc., etc. (approximately \$200,000,000 per year.)

10. India is England's best customer, buying: Finished textiles, machinery and millwork, oils, prepared grains, automobiles, instruments, apparatus and appliances, paper, chemicals, wood and timber, manufactured wool, hardware, drugs

*Most of India's public debt was accumulated in conducting wars against Ceylon, Abyssinia, Bhutan, Afghanistan, etc., for further British expansion. The First World War alone cost India £1,200,000,000!

and medicines, munitions, clothing, clocks, watches, matches, shoes, coal and all sorts of consumers' goods (approximately \$185,000,000 per year.)

11. Wartime India is of immense value in supplying men, munitions, small supplies, etc. India produces hundreds of materials used in warfare.

12. The Chota-Nagpur steel and iron center is English owned. This is one of the world's great heavy industry centers.

Here, in brief, is the life-blood of an exploiting empire. The wealth and profit represented by the above has flowed back to London for almost two centuries, where the imperialists live and direct their colonial colossus. The Empire has been built up around the land of India, and its loss, to the English would seal its doom for all time. England would be reduced to a powerful industrial and manufacturing concentration, isolated from its basic market and cut off from the raw materials needed by its machines. The fact that Japan (and Germany to a lesser extent) had been cutting deeply into the Indian market for the last twenty years was one of the basic causes behind the Empire war with the Axis powers. England—that is, *imperialist* England run by Winston Churchill and his class—cannot lose India and continue any more than a man can live with his heart cut out!

This complete dependence of the motherland upon its colonies is a characteristic of imperialism that becomes greatly aggravated as the capitalist motherland becomes more entangled in its economic difficulties. The motherland seeks to solve its problems by a harsher and more intensive exploitation of the colonies. The position of England—formerly the world's workshop—in the world today is one of retreat before its competitors, who have taken one position after the other. But retreat can go so far, and here it halts with India, the nub of the Empire. This is why the people of India will not accept any post-war promise of "freedom" from their rulers,

why they reject out-of-hand any "post-dated check." They do not trust the British Tories; they know they lie in their throats when they talk of future independence; they know that Tory England cannot free India because *it depends upon India!* In the post-war, economic and social difficulties, when England will be torn by unemployment, loss of markets, problems of reconstruction, faced by ruthless economic enemies such as the American capitalists, the English ruling class will turn more ferociously than ever upon India. They will strive to recoup their lost positions by a redoubled draining of the country's wealth, by an intensified exploitation of its people. *What else would one expect of English imperialists?* Where else would they turn to but to what remains of their colonial Empire? The people of India know this (from their experience after the last war, an experience that culminated in the infamous Amritsar massacre). They are prepared for this post-war drive of English imperialism; they are fighting today to see that it never gets the opportunity to start!

What better proof could there be than that section of the Cripps proposal, recently made to India, in which Sir Stafford tentatively suggested that post-war India adopt as its new constitution the Government of India Act of 1935. This Act, only partly in effect today, was unanimously rejected by the entire population and every political party in the country. Nehru branded it a "slave constitution" designed to secure British rule forever. It "reflects in its content . . . merely the determination of British imperialism to beat back the rising tide of mass revolt in India by tightening its octopus hold over the country with the help of a new constitutional machinery. It is a detailed plan for welding together the feudal and land-owning interests as a bloc and for preparing India for participation in England's coming war. It organizes at the top all the anti-democratic and unprogressive vested interests under direct control of imperialist bureaucracy." (*The Indian Federation*, Z. A. Ahmad.)

Here are some of the provisions of this notorious proposal.

1. A British-appointed Governor-General is head of the executive, with power to veto or approve any bill, prohibit discussion or amendment of any bill, suspend the Constitution, appoint or dismiss any Minister, make police rules, issue decrees, utilize the armed forces, etc. That is, the Viceroy remains—his title is changed! “The Federal Government will thus be in reality a one-man rule, unsurpassed in many respects by Oriental despotisms or modern dictatorships.” (*The Indian Federation.*)

2. Section 3 of the Act provides for a federation composed of the British provinces (eleven in number) and acceding native states. The states are given a superior position. Although they have only 25 per cent of the total population, they receive in the two-house legislature provided by the Act, 33 per cent of the seats in the lower house and 40 per cent in the upper house. The Princes may appoint their entire quota of representatives without permitting their 90,000,000 subjects to vote.

3. In the provinces, property restrictions limit the total vote to about 35,000,000. That is, under the Act, 35,000,000 out of 389,000,000 will have the right to vote—not even 10 per cent! Seats are divided along communal lines—so many for Hindus, Moslems, Sikhs, Christians, etc. This is a system of separate electorates.

4. Over 80 per cent of the federal budget is non-votable and outside of legislative control; 90 per cent of federal revenue will come from the provinces, only 10 per cent from the native states.

5. “Although the federal Legislature is as undemocratic as one can imagine a Legislature to be; although capitalists and landlords are in full control of one chamber, and form the predominant element in the other; although the representatives of the Princes constitute the largest single bloc in

both; although, in short, it is an eminently safe, respectable and reactionary body, it has yet very little power.

"Defense and foreign affairs are entirely outside its sphere. So is the regulation of credit, currency and exchange, which is entrusted to the Reserve Bank; and the railways, which are placed in the hands of a special railway authority." (*The Problem of India*, page 189.)

No trade restrictions against England are permitted; any preferences granted to Indians must likewise be granted to the British; boards governing the Reserve Bank and railways are to be appointed by the Governor-General.

And this act of bondage and brigandage was proposed as the basis for settlement by Sir Stafford Cripps! Is there any wonder why this spokesman of Tory Churchill was unceremoniously booted out of the country by the people! In every one of its dealings with India—be they at bayonet point, or at the diplomatic round-table—imperialism engages in only another form of maneuver to retain its unwanted hold upon a great nation and people. The policy of empire demands this; Tory England will never release its death grip upon India. That hold must be broken and smashed by the will of India's people.

CHAPTER IV

Indian Nationalism

The Indians will not reap the fruits of the new elements of society scattered among them by the British bourgeoisie . . . till the Hindus themselves shall have grown strong enough to throw off the English yoke altogether. At all events, we may safely expect to see, at a more or less remote period, the regeneration of that great and interesting country.

(Karl Marx.)

*

Such a régime as has been installed by the British over India's people could not, of course, exist without the most intense opposition. India has not lacked the necessary human material and widespread social discontent for a powerful liberation movement. It took imperialism one hundred years of constant warfare to conquer the country; two and a half years to subdue the first open rebellion, the Sepoy Mutiny; and a dictatorship such as we have described, to remain in power. England, by its oppression, has brought upon itself a gigantic wealth of hatred that pours out of every fiber in the body of India.

The All-India National Congress (INC) is the best known expression of Indian nationalism and remains at the head of the official movement for self-determination. For many years it was an open, pro-British fraternal organization. Through it Britain worked to build up and cultivate the friendship of a native class of industrialists, merchants and small capitalists. In the 1890's, however, under pressure from the *Swarajist* Party (Home-Rule Party) of C. R. Das, the Congress began to change and to demand certain political and democratic concessions from the British authorities. It was at this time that India saw its first working class and peasant mass organ-

izations, springing up spontaneously among the new city industrial workers and the dispossessed peasants of the countryside. Likewise, there were also the first manifestations of terrorist acts carried out by Indian students. Britain had destroyed the base of ancient India in its occupation of the country and had substituted the forms and institutions of modern capitalist imperialism. By this act it had created two new classes within India itself—a *native capitalist class*; a *native working class*. These classes formed the base for the nationalist opposition.

We have mentioned before that India, since the overturn of its original economy, has had relatively little economic or industrial development. Is this due to a lack of natural resources and materials? No, it is the result of a policy deliberately fostered by the white *sahibs* who, anxious to see the country remain as a raw material producing colony, have done everything in their power to prevent the growth of an industry parallel to and competitive with their own home industry. "The industrial development of India . . . bears no relation to Indian needs. The vast resources of India have never been tapped. The rate of industrial advance, far lower than that of other large non-European countries, has not, even in modern times, kept pace with the decline of Indian handicrafts—with the result that from 1911 to 1931 there has been a reduction in the proportion dependent on industry (including domestic industry)." (*The New Internationalist*, March, 1942.)

By manipulating the tariff and currency, Britain has prevented the development of the country's rich resources in mineral and mining deposits. Coal is found in every part of India, copper, iron ore, vast areas of petroleum, rare minerals (tungsten, manganese). These resources remain essentially unexploited and lie in the ground for want of capital. Whatever industrial development and expansion of native capital that did take place (within the uncomfortable space permitted by the British) was of a distorted and lop-sided char-

acter in the field of light industry, particularly cotton manufacture. The native capitalists and merchants were granted, with imperialist consent, small shares of capital in certain mills, plantations and mines. The needs of Britain during the First World War forced a relaxation of this discouragement of native industry and gave it, despite British reluctance, a real stimulus. England has not completely succeeded in checking industrialization. There have been built, mainly since 1914, 6,713 factories employing 1,215,000 workers (1931). Cotton, spinning and weaving mills account for 502 of these factories and one-third of the workers. Whereas India in 1913-14 had imported a total of 3,100,000,000 yards of textiles, in 1936-37 it imported only 800,000,000—thus revealing the growth that had taken place in its most important native industry.

In their order of importance (that is, the capital invested and the number of workers employed) we find the jute industry, rice mills, munition plants (now utilizing over 300,000 workers), lumber mills and tea factories. The iron and steel industry is definitely established, as well as sugar refining and cement manufacture. Making of such minor products as lamps, paints and enamels, soap, matches, etc., is a development of the last 20 years. "Whatever the exact magnitude of this industrial expansion, it has been brought about by Indian no less than by British capital and enterprise. A part of the wealth accumulated through generations of trade and money-lending has at last found its way into industry, and alongside the British capitalist class a full-fledged Indian capitalist class has come into existence which seeks its profits no longer in commerce alone but through investment in large-scale industrial production." (*The Problem of India*, page 155.)

It is this *native capitalist class*, seeking to force their capital into restricted fields, seeking to gain elbow room denied them by the British, that first raised the question of national-

ism on a new, *political* basis. They were forced to do so for their very life and existence. As the character of India changed, with the penetration of British rule, so did the form and content of its nationalist opposition. No longer could the old feudal Moguls and the ancient Hindu aristocracy stand up as the leaders of nationalism. They had either been wiped out in the wars of conquest or had made their peace with the British. New social and economic classes had arisen; a new nationalism—still accepting the general conception of an India freed from foreign rule—had replaced the old leadership.

The nationalism of the native capitalist class, rooted solely in its inferior economic position, was further stimulated by the operations of and tendencies toward a few powerful British combines and monopolies. What chance, for instance, did an Indian capitalist stand against an Andrew Yule & Co., with its control of fifty-four companies in fifteen fields; or against the forty British firms that own the 400 most important concerns in India. How could he wedge his way onto the board of one of the big monopolies against the opposition of the seventy-five Britishers who hold 600 directorships between themselves? The native capitalists were flush up against a mighty, centralized and monopolistic rival which would yield ground only after a fight.

It was in this specific antagonism, operating within the general anti-British atmosphere that existed among the population as a whole, between the dominant and domineering British imperialists and the native capitalists of India, that the Congress Party took shape and form. The specific needs of the Indian capitalist class follow from the very nature of their problem. They are:

1. Economic concessions, primarily permission to invest capital in profitable, virgin fields.
2. Control of tariff boards that fix duties on imports and exports.

3. Control of internal revenue and taxation systems.
4. Control of the India Reserve Bank—that is, credits.
5. Democratic political reforms and concessions to strengthen its prestige and influence among the people.

These deep economic conflicts forced the native capitalist class to utilize the nationalist political movement, in the form of the Congress Party, as a means of strengthening its bargaining power against foreign imperialism. The industrialists and mill owners of Bombay, Ahmedabad, Cawnpore, etc., took over, from 1910 up to the present date, control of the political movement. The Congress Party thereby became *the classic party of the Indian capitalists*, gaining to a considerable extent the support of the middle classes, peasants and workers in its effort to achieve the objects we have indicated. As early as 1905 this conservative, native leadership of the Congress indicated the methods it intended to pursue when, to combat the partition of Bengal into two separate provinces, it chose the method of boycott of foreign goods in favor of Indian goods. It stated its aims, at that time, to be attainment of "colonial self-government within the Empire." Since then the Congress, in one manner or another, has pursued these same negative, passive and conservative methods of struggle to attain its ends. The Congress national movement has become associated, for the past twenty years, with the renowned and world-famous Mahatma K. Gandhi, the incredible figure of Asiatic India.

In the post-war period, beginning with 1920, Gandhi became the leader of the Congress Party. At this time India was feeling the effects of the great Russian October Revolution and the failure of Britain to keep its war promises to India further stimulated the combative spirit of the peasants and the industrial workers. There were great strikes and peasant uprisings in many sections of the country, accompanied by the foundation of the Indian Communist Party. Gandhi took the helm of Indian nationalism and has held it

ever since, in the name of the Indian capitalist class. At the age of 73, Gandhi is still the most authoritative politician and spokesman for these people. During his career (which began during the First World War, when he toured India as a recruiting officer for the British-Indian Army) Gandhi has consistently sought to secure concessions from imperialism by partly mobilizing or threatening to mobilize the nationalist people against England. Gandhi—and we use the name to symbolize the Indian capitalist competitors of Great Britain—has used the Congress and the masses of people as a club, or weapon, by means of which he hoped to wrest concessions and a *sharing of power* with the white imperialists. Obviously, as the position of the Congress and the native capitalists today reveals, he has failed.

What is Gandhism? Why these peculiar methods of political action? Why these unique doctrines of non-violence and passive resistance? The bloody and lengthy struggle that was necessary before Britain could entirely subdue the country shows how absurd it is to seek an explanation for Gandhism in the character or tradition of the Indian people. They are not “pacifists” by nature, or religion! The explanation is more rational and material; it is political and social. Not only does Gandhism reflect the pathetic and weak nature of the native capitalists (we have already described how little they own, contrasted with the master class), but—and this is most important—Gandhism is a deliberately conceived doctrine and ideology for *disarming* the masses of people in advance of any struggle!

The class that Gandhi speaks for, the native capitalists, is confronted with a great dilemma: *How to organize a mass pressure movement that will be strong enough to win limited battles with the imperialist master (and thus win concessions for itself), but at the same time will be weak enough to be firmly yoked and controlled whenever the movement appears to be getting out of hand, whenever revolutionary working*

class and peasant forces threaten to speed the Gandhist conservative leadership aside and pass on to social revolution. Or, to put it another way, Gandhi does not want the liberation movement in India to take on a socialist, revolutionary character, but only a capitalist, private property character. He wants a "free" India, yes, free of the British imperialists and very free for the Hindu capitalists to take over and continue the game of exploitation and landlordism! He fights the British, yes, in the name of his class, to establish its rule over the nation. The peculiar doctrines of Gandhism become clear if we bear this in mind. On the one hand, he mobilizes the people in mass campaigns (*satyagraha*) against the British; on the other hand, he keeps the movement chained to passive methods and, whenever events get out of hand, he calls off the struggle. There have been many instances of the working out of this technique:

1. In the mass civil disobedience movement of 1921-22 Gandhi abruptly called it off and condemned the no-tax campaign of the peasants, insisting on the payment of rent to the landlords and assuring them that the Congress "had no intention of attacking their legal rights."

2. In the great 1930-34 campaign, Gandhi limited the objectives of the movement, condemned mass strike actions, signed a useless (to the people) agreement with the British and called off the movement once again.

Furthermore, leaving aside the question of tactics pursued in the national struggle, the concrete ideas and plans of Gandhi are thoroughly reactionary and unrealizable. According to Gandhi, India must return to the ways of the past; the civilization of the ancient Hindus. He opposes the industrialization of India and favors a return to the independent village economy we have previously described. The one progressive act of British imperialism, freeing India from the backwardness of Asiatic antiquity and breaking up the old village caste system, appears as reaction to Gandhi. His ideal

India would be that of the spinning wheel and salt distillation from the sea. Thus, Gandhi gives partial approval to the conception of caste, except in its most vicious form of "untouchability."

We are most concerned here with the career of the Congress Party prior to and since the Second World War began. It has well been described by the Fourth Internationalists of India. "Since 1934 Gandhi and the leaders of the National Congress have had as their chief aim that of *preventing* the renewal of a mass struggle against imperialism, while using their leadership of the national movement as a lever to secure the concessions they hope to obtain from imperialism. They see in the rising forces of revolt, and especially in the emergence of the working class as a political force, a threat to their own bases of exploitation, and are consequently following an increasingly reactionary policy." (Our emphasis.) That is, the Congress fears the workers and peasants a good deal more than it fears the British. With imperialists one can always strike a bargain; with social revolution, never!

How has this nationalist leadership acted during the war itself? Whoever may have had illusions about Gandhi and his friends must have had them badly shattered by watching their behavior for three years of war. Marked by indecision and fear, Congress policy during the great imperialist conflict now on has revealed more than simple cowardice. It has revealed the inability of the Congress as a force for national revolutionary leadership.

British imperialism dragged India into the war in the most cynical manner. Without any pretense at consultation of the people—or even of their most conservative representatives—England announced that India was at war with the Axis! In response to this bureaucratic act, India was swept by a wave of strikes in the great industrial areas of Bombay, Cawnpore, Calcutta. Peasants in various areas rose, the middle class intellectuals and students were aroused as never be-

fore. From a cocksure position that India would support the war, the British hastily retreated to a position from which they hoped to win the *neutrality* of the country. It became clear that they could not repeat 1914-8, when India gave its support to British deception. The alternative was a rebellious, revolutionary India, or a passive, quiet India fatalistically suffering whatever the war brought with it. To achieve the latter result the British turned automatically to the Congress and its conservative leadership, to Gandhi and his friends, with the object of "making a deal."

At the Ramgarh session of the Congress (March, 1940), recognizing the spirit of the people, the conservative leadership adopted a clear-enough resolution rejecting support of the war. "Congressmen and those under the Congress influence cannot help in the prosecution of the war with men, money or material." "Nothing short of complete independence can be accepted by the people of India. . . . The people of India alone can properly shape their own constitution and determine their relations to other countries of the world, through a Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of adult suffrage." But beyond this resolution the national leaders did not go. Instead, they took steps and measures that made it possible for the British to gain their end—namely, a calming of the atmosphere which would enable an important industrial growth in the munitions and heavy industry fields and a limited military mobilization for service by Indian troops in the overseas territories of Aden, Palestine, North Africa, Malaya, Hong Kong, etc.

The steps of the Congress were along the following lines:

1. Assurance that no effort would be made to hamper any type of British war effort (collections, mobilizations and recruiting, transportation of Indians to foreign territories, etc.). This assurance was given by Gandhi, Nehru and all important Congress officials. Strikes of workers and peasant actions were deliberately discouraged.

2. A steadfast refusal to launch any sort of anti-war mass movement, even along the traditional Gandhist "non-violent" lines. Congress members who proposed to begin a struggle for independence, taking advantage of the difficulties and contradictions of the imperialists, were denounced as "immoral" and "unfair"! As though the struggle against a barbaric and tyrannical enemy were a game of cricket.

3. A concerted drive within the Congress was launched by Gandhi and his followers against the general left wing of the party (including radical nationalists, socialists, communists, etc.).

4. At various sessions of leading Congress bodies, proposals and concrete plans for establishing a *sharing of power* with the British, in exchange for full support to the war, were made. These included hints and suggestions thrown out constantly by Gandhi, the Delhi resolution of the Congress Working Committee (which urged a national government at the center) and a resolution offering to defend the country from external attack by "violent methods," as distinguished from the prior position of "non-violence" in principle. The Congress, in effect, abandoned its position of demanding unconditional independence, convening of a Constituent Assembly, withdrawal of the proposed new constitution, etc. In a word, it did its best to make a compromise with the adamant British.

But the imperialist masters, understanding with whom they were dealing (that is, the weakness and indecision of the Congress capitalist leadership), would not yield an inch. Therefore, early in 1940, the Gandhi leadership resorted to a new tactic; an effort to force the British leadership into a compromise agreement was to be made through a limited civil-disobedience campaign. It was made clear to the masses, of course, that they were forbidden to participate in this campaign; only the chosen of the Mahatma (that is, Congress leaders, petty officials and professional Gandhists) were to be

permitted to offer themselves for arrest. The police authorities obligingly fulfilled the requests, filling the jails at the same time. This form of opposition lasted for about one year and was the least successful of any campaign ever undertaken by Gandhi. The decline of Congress membership numbered about 1,000,000 during this period. This limited opposition, forced upon the Congress by the intransigence of the British Parliament and the loss of many political concessions in the provincial governments continued up to the time of the recent struggle, although it began to assume a more serious and unlimited character with the entry of America into the war, and the march of Japanese imperialism through the British Far Eastern Empire up to the border of India. The Congress conducted its restricted campaign, with its narrow capitalist aims, under the dictatorial direction of Gandhi until September of 1942, after the collapse of the Cripps mission.

The role of the Congress from September, 1939, to September, 1942, is highly significant and filled with political lessons. If the failure of the Congress Party during the First World War was clear, its failure during this war is infinitely more so. Because of the general decline of the capitalist system, and the necessity for the British to restrict the field of operations of its Indian rivals more than ever, the native capitalist has had little or no opportunity for *independent* growth, still less opportunity of gaining concessions and a greater fear than ever of precipitating a struggle of the people that will go far beyond his likes. "The Congress Party is impotent and lacks confidence. Faced with the question of power, of taking over and running the country, it feels itself historically incapable of assuming any responsibility on its own. It is far too weak as a class, far too dependent for its miserable existence upon British imperialism, far too closely intertwined with pure British capital. It dreads the very thought of power because it knows the impossibility of any *capitalist*

solution to India's difficult agrarian, labor and international problems. The Indian capitalist class lacks the will to fight, the urge to power."

But at its left flank stands another class, also created by the social overturn that we have previously described. That class is the Indian working class, the modern industrial proletariat created by imperialism and native capitalism. And at the flank of the workers of India stands the peasantry, particularly that section of it most depressed and cast down by imperialism, the agricultural laborers, the tenant farmers, the poor peasants of the 700,000 villages that make up the Indian countryside. These classes—workers and peasants—for many years silent but active participants in the nationalist struggles; passively following and accepting the leadership of the Congress party and Gandhi—these workers and peasants have begun to speak out openly in their own name, to assert their leadership in the struggle. They, unlike the native capitalists, have nothing to lose since they have nothing. It is upon their action that the ultimate fate of India and its nationalist cause rests. It is important to understand their part in the life of India.

CHAPTER V

The Revolutionary Classes of India

There is not the slightest doubt that the age-long plunder of India by the English, that the present struggle of these "advanced" Europeans against Persian and Indian democracy will harden millions and tens of millions of proletarians of Asia, will harden them for the same kind of victorious struggle against the oppressors. The class conscious workers of Europe now have Asiatic comrades whose numbers will grow from day to day and hour to hour.

(*Lenin.*)

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The Workers

In the history of organized society there has never been a working class occupying such an oppressed, poverty-stricken place in life as the working class of India. "The wage rates of the Indian proletariat are among the lowest, the living conditions the most miserable, the hours of work the longest, the factory conditions the worst and the death rate the highest in the civilized world." (Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India.) There are incontestable facts to prove that this accusation against British imperialism is the sober truth.

There are approximately 35,000,000 workers in India not engaged in agriculture. Of this number 5,000,000 are employed in the modern, centralized industries. *They are the industrial proletariat*, the most revolutionary class of India. They are divided as follows (1935):

Workers in factories	1,855,000
Miners	371,000
Railwaymen	636,000
Water transport workers	361,000
Plantation laborers	1,000,000
<hr/>	
Total	4,223,000

Since the war began in 1939, approximately 500,000 have been added in the heavy and munitions industry fields. This industrial working class is chiefly employed in the light cotton and jute industries, but the war has seen a sharp shift to the heavy iron, steel, cement and coal mining industries. Naturally, since the bulk of capital in India is in the hands of the British, most of these workers (75 per cent) work for English companies. This accounts for the comparatively tremendous size of the working class when we consider the minute size and weakness of the native capitalist class. Thus, from the beginning, the *economic* and trade union struggles of the workers are tied up with the *political* questions of nationalism and independence. Immediately an Indian worker begins to struggle for a better living standard he is face to face with the foreign ruling power with its police force of terror. This explains the bitter character of all Indian strike actions.

The Indian workers are mainly former peasants driven off the land by expropriation, foreclosure and hunger. Agricultural laborers, handicraftsmen of the villages and small farmers become unemployed and move into the cities. The roads of India are filled—the year around—with millions of wandering, homeless peasant workers looking for something to do. These workers are still tied very closely to their villages, but in the principal and new industrial cities they have settled on a permanent basis. "Outside the gates of a factory in an industrial area in any part of India are hundreds, if not more, of the unemployed, waiting every morning to be taken as *badlis* (substitutes) in the place of those who are absent for shorter or longer periods. There is such keen competition to secure even temporary work that the workers (the vast majority of whom are illiterate) do not hesitate to sign any agreement that is put before them, in the hope that at least after serving their apprenticeship for a few months they will be entertained as regular workers with a fixed wage." (*The Industrial Worker in India*, B. Shiva Rao.) The worker is not hired directly

by the employer, but by a jobber or contractor, who acts as the intermediary. "Nothing, in fact, can happen in an Indian factory without some price being paid, and it is a common practice to follow a definite schedule in regard to payment." (*Ibid.*)

When we examine the general earnings of various categories of Indian workers, "it is not difficult to see why the overwhelming majority of workers, like the peasants, are hopelessly in debt. Not only have they no initial resources with which to bribe the jobber and on which to maintain themselves till they draw their wages—often weeks later; not only have they no margin for occasional expenditure—marriages, funerals, etc.—and to tide them over periods of sickness and unemployment, but their income is seldom sufficient to feed and clothe them even in normal times." (*The Problem of India.*) The workers are therefore forced to go into debt. These debts to money-lenders are at high interest rates, the payment of which drains the worker of his earnings and deprives him of many necessities. "The percentage of the worker's income spent on food alone is far higher than in the case of any other country in the world, including China." (R. Mukerjee, *Food Planning for Four Hundred Millions.*)

Here are some typical wages as reported in various government reports and year books:

Coal miners	14 cents per day
Mica miners	12 cents per day
Tea workers	10 cents per day
Textile weavers	50 cents per day
Jute weavers	25 cents per day
Dockers	15 cents per day

Women and children in industry (approximately 1,500,000) naturally receive much lower wages than the above listed amounts, *anywhere from 33 to 50 per cent lower than those of the men.* Indeed, a wage of 50 cents a day constitutes the

equivalent of the wages paid a highly skilled worker in America! Is it difficult to imagine the profits drawn from such merciless exploitation of men's labor power?

We have mentioned above that 5,000,000 Indian workers are modern proletarians. This leaves approximately 25,000,000 of the general working population unaccounted for. It is in this group that we find an even more miserable and oppressed section of India, the famous "Untouchables" or "Men Without Caste"; the genuine "lower depths" of the country; the most depressed strata of mankind in the world. This 25,000,000 is the vast labor reservoir of India. Here are the general laborers without skill or training; the small artisans and craftsmen working at home or in small shops; the sweated laborers of the fly-by-night factories.

From this body of 25,000,000 is drawn the labor employed in road work, public buildings, irrigation and dock work. Its wages, paid by the provincial government or local municipalities, *average around two cents a day when employed*. A majority of these workers are "employed in countless small workshops and factories. Wages are seldom more than a few pennies a day; there is no restriction of hours. . . . In the tanneries, hours of work often exceed twelve, and in the Madras Presidency children from eight to twelve as well as older boys are found at work at night." (*The Industrial Worker in India*.) Similar conditions prevail in the cigarette, carpet, mica, shellac, match, etc., factories.

It is in this category of India's poorest and most exploited laborers that we find the "Untouchables." "The real grievances of the untouchables do not arise from their being denied access to temples or roads. . . . Their future cannot be isolated from that of the workers and peasants as a whole." (*The Problem of India*.) The outcastes are a doubly-oppressed part of the Indian proletariat.

Trade Unions and Strike Struggles

Indian trade unions, and the labor movement, cannot be compared in any respect with those of the United States or England. The proportion of organized workers in India is far smaller than that of the advanced capitalist countries, in none of which do more than 25 per cent of the workers belong to unions. In India less than 10 per cent of the *industrial* workers and none of the generalized body of 25,000,000 laborers are organized. The reason is clear. To have a powerful, organized and stable labor movement, with great institutions such as the United Mine Workers of America, or the Engineers Union of England, it is necessary for the working class to live under a capitalist régime capable of granting concessions out of its profits. In India, where the labor movement has always faced repression from the authorities, where the foreign rulers have been unwilling to give any concessions since they must maintain their rate of super-profit, and not show any signs of political weakness; where the native capitalists are unable (due to weakness) to give concessions—under such conditions a stabilized labor movement cannot exist.

Trade unionism in India is therefore episodic, unstable, passing through rapid ups-and-downs. Most strikes begin spontaneously and spread like wildfire. In the heat of the strike struggle itself, the unions are organized, springing up from the workers themselves. If the strike is lost, the union disappears; if the strike is won, the union remains. The unions that exist (even those with the longest history, such as the Railway Workers or the Seamen's Union) rarely have any treasury—the workers are simply too poor to pay dues; nor are they able to conduct such activities and grant benefits as unions do in the capitalist countries. They are instruments of organization and economic struggle, flourishing most brightly in the midst of the battle itself.

The first great proletarian struggles began after the First World War and lasted from 1918 to 1921, parallel with the first great nationalist upsurge. This coincidence of struggle is always the case, revealing how closely tied together are the economic and political objectives of the workers and people as a whole. It was in 1920, on the wave of this first independent action by the workers, that the Indian Trade Union Congress was formed. There are now about 250 individual unions, with a combined membership of perhaps 300,000 to 400,000. Up until 1930 the Trade Union Congress (TUC) was the organized labor movement, but a split was forced by reactionary, pro-British union leaders who formed the Trade Union Federation.* A further split in the TUC was engineered by the Communist Party (Stalinists) who, in 1930, formed the Red Trade Union Congress of dual unions. This disunity hampered the growth of the labor movement and it was not until 1937 that a new wave of workers' action began, lasting up to the war in September, 1939.

In the first great post-war strike wave, hundreds of thousands of workers were drawn into action. In Bombay alone there were two general strikes, with mass strikes in every large city. Typical of these actions was the strike of Bombay's 150,000 cotton mill workers. "With no funds to maintain them and no help from charitable organizations they stuck to their demands for nearly three months. Many died of starvation in the streets of Bombay; others perished on their way back to the villages; government troops were brought out against them, shooting some, wounding and arresting others." (J. Beauchamp, *British Imperialism in India*.) The strike wave of 1928-29 was mainly unsuccessful, but advanced the workers to a higher level of understanding. These strikes "sowed the seeds of class consciousness. They underlined the political significance of the working class and increased the

*It was this body of labor opportunists without followers who recently endorsed the British terror in India, in the name of "labor."

importance of the trade unions. Revolutionary emblems and slogans became familiar and were inscribed on flags and banners." (*The Problem of India.*) This strike wave and the conspiracy of the government against it reached its climax in the famous Meerut Conspiracy Case, when thirty-one trade unionists and Communists were jailed for a period of four years while they were being tried and then (with the exception of three) were sentenced to long terms.

But it was the strike wave of 1937-39 that showed what power and militancy the workers had accumulated. The great strikes of the Calcutta jute workers and the Cawnpore textile workers were, in every respect, on a plane with the great pre-revolutionary strikes of the Russian workers in Moscow and St. Petersburg. The jute strike lasted for many weeks and brought 250,000 workers into action! The Cawnpore strike became a general strike of all trade and workers in the city. The new industrial towns of Madura, Coimbatore, Nagpur were drawn into the action along with the older cities of Bombay, Calcutta, Cawnpore, etc. Workers in smaller industries like tobacco, match factories, bus drivers, building trades, rope makers, etc., became involved. "All over India the strikes revealed a new spirit of cohesion and discipline in the working class. It fought not merely for the restoration of wages... but as a protest against the victimization of union officials and other workers and to enforce trade union recognition on the part of the employers. Another significant feature was the conscious use of the strike weapon as a protest against the infringement of civil liberties, and the emergence of working class solidarity, not only locally but on a national scale. Big strikes such as that of the Calcutta jute workers and the Cawnpore general strike aroused the sympathy and enthusiasm of workers in every part of the country and they rallied to the support of the strikers by holding meetings and collecting funds." (*Ibid.*, pages 216-17.)

Within the first few weeks of the Second World War, the

Indian working class responded vigorously to the cynical act of imperialism in dragging an unwilling country into its war. A political, anti-war strike of over 90,000 Bombay workers began. There were strikes of workers in Cawnpore and Allahabad; great mass meetings in Calcutta and Madras condemned the war; steel workers, printers, street cleaners, etc., launched local strikes. A tentative, rapidly spreading strike wave not only disturbed the British, but was a sure sign of which class was to take the leading part in future struggles with imperialism. It was only the refusal of Congress to issue a call for nation-wide action—a capitulation we have already described—that prevented this temporary strike wave from precipitating a desperate battle as early as the opening days of the present war. Yet, as we shall show in our description of the present struggle, the retreat to inactivity of India's proletariat was but temporary. This revolutionary class surged back again with renewed militancy and vigor.

This is the working class of India, the only consistently national and revolutionary class in the population. "In the political arena the working class has repeatedly demonstrated its heroism and its readiness for unremitting struggle." (*The New Internationalist*, April, 1942.) We may summarize our reasons for stating that the Indian proletariat is the only consistent enemy of imperialism and is therefore playing the leading rôle in the revolution as follows:

1. It is the most heavily exploited class in India, coming into daily conflict with the foreign imperialists who own and control most of the nation's capital and wealth.

2. It is the most concentrated, disciplined and experienced class in modern India due to the fact that industry and ownership are heavily concentrated in large, monopolized centers and plants.

3. From the standpoint of homogeneity, it is overwhelmingly the largest class. The multi-stratified peasantry, the small group of native capitalists, the city middle-class merchants and professionals are insignificant by comparison.

4. The Indian working class has the least to lose and the most to gain

from revolutionary action. It has no property or properties. Therefore, its spirit of struggle is far greater than that of any other class.

5. Being the most centralized and advanced class, it can lift the struggle to an All-India plane and pose the problems of seizing power and holding it more effectively than groups and classes that are diversified and confined to local provinces, or smaller areas.

In a word, not only has the Indian working class gained for itself the right to lead the nation, but its economic and social position in India's society entitle it to this leading position. "It is only under the leadership of the proletariat that the revolution in India can be carried to a victorious conclusion." (Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India.)

The Peasantry

The vast majority of India's population are peasants, living in the small villages sown thickly throughout the countryside. "Each village is a huddle of mean houses, tiled or thatched, built of mud or dry stone, and containing only one or two rooms, with a yard at the back for storage of grass and fuel. Glazing and chimneys are unknown and a straight line or right angle in any roof or wall is rarely to be found." (Government report, *Social Service in India*.) There are no floors in the homes, nor is there any sanitation, running water, etc. The depressed castes of the villages carry on the *hina-sippa* (low trades) such as hunting, making of pottery and tanning. They are also the fowlers, scavengers and night watchmen. They take care of the common grazing grounds, arrange irrigation and water supply, protect crops from cattle and animals, do road work and building construction, etc. The women carry on domestic duties such as cooking, preparing corn and drawing water. They often work in the fields and erect the primitive buildings.

The peasantry, of course, is the most diversified and varied of the Indian classes. It consists of the following groups:

1. The agricultural *landless* laborers who hire themselves out to landlords or tenant farmers—approximately 30,000,000.

2. The small farmers are divided into two sections:
 - (a) Those who own their land—approximately 23,000,000.
 - (b) Tenant farmers and sharecroppers—approximately 47,000,000.
3. Farmers with larger holdings (over thirty acres) and employing labor—approximately 1,000,000.
4. Landlords and possessors of large estates (the *zamindari*). Many of them own estates covering hundreds of villages and many thousands of acres of land and forest—approximately 500,000.

The farmers with larger holdings and comparatively more wealth are found mainly in the North (Punjab) and central parts of India (United Provinces, Bombay). The small farmers (*kisans* and *ryatwori*) are in Bihar and Orissa Provinces, Madras, Bombay and other parts. Landlordism and absentee ownership is most prevalent among the backward Native States where feudalistic privileges and form of serfdom and tenantry prevail everywhere.

“An impoverished soil and a precarious water supply.” (*The Problem of India*.) These are two of the reasons why Indian agriculture has such a low productivity. Another reason is the excessively small scale of cultivation, due to the tremendous break-up and fragmentation of the land. Nearly 25 per cent of all holdings are under *one acre*; 50 per cent are under *five acres*; 75 per cent are under *ten acres*. Each peasant averages about two and a half acres as his possession. These holdings are not solid areas of land, but isolated fragments scattered over the village area, the effect of the Hindu system of inheritance. “In parts of Bengal, Bihar and the United Provinces, fields the size of tennis courts are common; in other areas, too, there are ludicrously small plots, some so small that it is scarcely possible to turn the bullocks around in ploughing.” (*Ibid.*) As a result, in India an acre of land produces much less than in any country of the world; ranging any-

where from 15 per cent to 50 per cent less for such staple crops as rice, wheat and cotton.

British imperialism broke up the village, gave the communal land as a reward to individuals and aristocratic supporters of its conquest and introduced capitalist economic relations into agricultural life. This lies behind the poverty, the absentee ownership, the indebtedness, the unfair taxation and the fragmentation that exist today.

Landlordism and Absentee Ownership

The *zamindars* (landlords) were created as a class by British imperialism and therefore are completely integrated into its system. They were given deeds of perpetual ownership and their land-tax was fixed forever. They now carry on in the spirit of a feudal, landed aristocracy who rack-rent and exploit their millions of tenants and serfs, with all the inefficiency and drawbacks attendant to such a system.

Often the *zamindar* leases his land to intermediaries who, in turn, do likewise, "so that a long chain of rent-receivers and rent-payers comes into being." In parts of India this chain extends to seven or eight individual leases! So disastrous has been the effect of all this that in the last ten years the area under cultivation (of which 35 per cent has always been neglected) has shrunk, although the population has been on the increase (39,000,000 growth between 1930 and 1940). "The landlords of India have a record of medieval oppression, or rack-renting and usury, and of unbridled gangsterism over a disarmed peasantry, which has made them the most hated exploiters in India. From the beginning, landlordism under British rule has been parasitic in character, since landlords neither supply agricultural capital nor control farming operations. Today, taken in conjunction with its superstructure of sub-infeudation and sub-letting, landlordism is the most effective barrier to the development of modern large-scale agriculture." (*The New Internationalist*, March, 1942.)

Taxation

The principal tax imposed upon the peasant is the land tax. The land revenue system is complex and varies from area to area, depending upon the requirements of the local *zamindars*. In some places it is permanently fixed, in others it is changed every few decades. But everywhere it bears most heavily upon the poorest farmers and tenants. Usually, the tax upon the big landlord is the one that is fixed forever, whereas the tax on the small cultivator varies. Whether he has one or fifty acres, the tax rate per acre does not vary, and he must also pay taxes on sugar, kerosene, oil, salt and other consumer articles.

Since 75 per cent of the land under cultivation belongs to the landlords, we must understand that the land tax placed on their tenant farmers goes principally to them (if we deduct the small proportion the landlord must turn over to the government). This proportion ranges from 10 per cent (Bihar) to 42 per cent (Punjab) and is never over 50 per cent. The balance of the money exacted from his tenants is kept by the landlord, who gives no return for it.

Furthermore, most landlords demand miscellaneous payments and services from their tenants, in typical feudal fashion. In Bengal, this amounts to \$36,000,000 additional tax annually. In the United Provinces, "Among the less legitimate exactions we find that a tenant is expected to give his landlord a *kachcha maund* of wheat whenever a wedding takes place in the family of the latter, also to give one day's ploughing each season to the *sir* land of the *zamindar*." (S. N. A. Jafari, *History and Status of Landlords*.) When all his taxes have been paid, the peasant is left without any reserve or resources.

Indebtedness

Having no other choice, he goes into debt. "Indebtedness, often amounting to insolvency, is the normal condition of a

majority of Indian farmers." (*Social Service*, page 108.) "Everything is against him. Because he is a cultivator he must borrow to secure his crop. Because his holding is small and has to support more persons than it can feed, he must increase his borrowing to keep those persons alive while the crop is in the ground. . . . As the debt grows, the repayment of it becomes more difficult—until at last some calamity comes upon him, repayment becomes impossible and he sinks into a state of chronic indebtedness from which death alone can release him." (Report of the United Provinces Banking Inquiry Commission.)

The bulk of agricultural indebtedness, therefore, is the sum of money (plus interest) needed to keep the peasantry alive between harvests. The money borrowed from the money lenders does not go into machinery or farm equipment or better productive techniques. It goes for rent, interest on previously acquired debts, food and taxes. As an indication of the profound agricultural crisis and bankruptcy that exist we cite the rise of peasant indebtedness to money-lenders, banks and landlords over the last 15 year period and prior to the last war.

Total All-India agrarian debt—(1911)—\$1,125,000,000.

Total All-India agrarian debt—(1922)—2,250,000,000.

Total All-India agrarian debt—(1930)—3,375,000,000.

Total All-India agrarian debt—(1937)—6,750,000,000.

No farm population in the world labors under such a colossal debt as does the Indian peasantry. ". . . The position varies from district to district, but these are its major contours: the land continues to be subdivided more and more; ownership tends to pass increasingly into the hands of money lenders and landlords; and the peasant is reduced to the condition of a tenant at will or a landless laborer. These factors act and react on each other, with the result that the great majority of the peasants are expropriated and enslaved." In these words, K. S. Shelvankar, an authority on Indian agriculture, sums up the peasant question.

But there is still another section of the peasantry which is more oppressed, even though it pays no rent or land taxes and is not in debt to the *baniyas* (money lenders). This is the class of *agricultural laborers* (wandering, landless elements, sub-tenants and wage laborers). The rapidity with which India's peasants have been expropriated and driven off the land is contained in the statistics describing the growth of this group of laborers as follows:

1921—21,700,000 landless peasants.

1931—33,000,000 landless peasants.

Employed at irregular intervals, this class works a bare six months each year and receives a daily wage of two to six cents per day for sowing, harvesting, picking, etc. These destitute laborers are the most militant and explosive section of the peasantry, along with the small tenant farmers (*kisans*).

There is no doubt that during the Indian revolution this peasant mass, victimized by landlordism and imperialism alike, will be a great revolutionary leaven, despite its many divergent layers and strata. Just as the Russian peasantry gave its support to the workers who overthrew the Czarist régime, so will the Indian peasantry give its support to the workers of their land. It is for this reason that the Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India "support all concrete struggles of the peasantry against exploitation and oppression, including struggles for the reduction of land revenue and rent, reduction of debt, and the abolition of feudal dues, forced labor, serfdom, etc. It participates in the activities of *kisan sabhas* (peasant unions) and all genuine peasant organizations . . . and seeks to lay the foundations of the worker-peasant alliance which is the indispensable condition of the victory of the Indian revolution. . . . The party will pay special attention to the interests of the more oppressed and down-trodden sections of the peasantry."

The principal slogans and demands put forward by India's revolutionary socialists for urging the peasants forward on the

road to the agrarian revolution are: *abolition of landlordism without compensation; liquidation of all peasant indebtedness; land to those who till the soil; and peasant committees of revolutionary action, allied to the workers.* With such a program the agrarian revolution is invincible!

CHAPTER VI

The March of Rebel India

So far as there exists any contract between a people conquered by force in former times, and the modern parliament of a benevolent nation vowed to promote their welfare, that is the contract and there is no other.

The truth is that Gandhism and all it stands for will, sooner or later, have to be grappled with and finally crushed. It is no use trying to satisfy a tiger by feeding him with cat's meat.

The loss of India would mark and consummate the downfall of the British Empire. That great organism would pass at a stroke out of life into history. From such a catastrophe there could be no recovery.

(Winston Churchill, December 12, 1930.)



During the course of the Parliamentary debate upon the proposed new constitution for India (the "democratic" characteristics of which we have previously described), Churchill had the following statement, sincerely breathing the vicious hatred this man has for India's people, as a part of his contribution to the debate. It summarizes neatly his position and that of his class with respect to India.

"It is alarming and also nauseating to see Mr. Gandhi, the seditious Middle Temple lawyer—striding half naked up the steps of the viceregal palace—to parley on equal terms with the representative of the King-Emperor. *The loss of India, however arising, would be final and fatal to us.* It could not fail to be part of a process which would reduce us to the scale of a minor power. . . . *The loss of India would consummate the downfall of the British Empire.*" (Our emphasis.)

Let us bear in mind that this man today heads Britain's government, and speaks for the Tory (Conservative) Party of England—that is, the party of the English bankers and

financiers. Then we can readily understand the brutality and desperation of the imperialist methods; as well as the determination of the people in their struggle against Churchill and those who stand behind him. Between Churchill and the Indian workers and peasants there cannot be any compromise; there is a line drawn between them; a line of blood, death and oppression. *Churchill, symbol of all that India suffers from, is the most hated man of Asia*; hated with the same intensity and fierceness that the people of Poland, Norway and France hate another imperialist "Fuehrer." It is therefore clear that the present struggle is but the latest phase in an unremitting and endless process that must continue until imperialism has been wiped out, regardless of whether today's struggle should be momentarily halted or not.

Of course, the specific action of the Executive Committee of the Congress Party, taken in September, 1942, when it adopted a resolution for a mass civil disobedience campaign, had definite causes and reasons. Why, after three years of refusal and capitulation, did the Congress finally take some action? The immediate causes of the struggle may be listed under two heads: (1) The failure of the Cripps mission to India; (2) The onward march of Japanese imperialism and the imminent threat it represented to India. We shall take these factors up separately, not ignoring for a moment the fundamental fact that the workers and peasants were constantly urging on the Congress leaders and demanding some form of action.

The Cripps Mission

We must remember that the only positive thing Sir Stafford Cripps did was offer to cut up India and throw the door open for the Moslems and the Princes to tear the Indian Union. That is first-class, masterly politics...."

(*Lin Yutang.*)

America had its "Mission to Moscow" lawyer; England had its "Mission to India" lawyer. The former, at least, never

made any pretense at being anything but a successful corporation lawyer. The latter pretended to be a "left wing socialist," no less! One deserves "respect" as a working class enemy, without strings attached; the other is a renegade of a particularly revolting type and deserves only contempt. His "mission" sought only to forge new chains around 389,000,000 people! We refuse to grant Cripps credit for one ounce of sincerity in his negotiations with the Congress Party leadership and other political and communal organizations. Cripps traveled and acted as a spokesman for the imperialists of the metropolitan center.

In the first place, Cripps denied India's right to unhampered national independence, proposing instead—in the words of Gandhi—a "post-dated check," to be cashed in after the war. But Cripps knew in advance that India, on the basis of hard experience, approached all British promises with extreme skepticism and that his vague offer could only bring this doubt to an unbridgeable cynicism. The people of India simply will not accept anyone's word; only deeds have meaning to them.

Secondly, Cripps immediately interjected the discordant note of communal and racial antagonism and division when he proposed that the Princes and Moslem-majority Provinces should have the right to secede from the Indian Union if they so desired. That is, he put forward in effect a Balkan-plan for India, whereas one of the great democratic tasks of the Indian Revolution is national unification! A country which we have already described as a basically homogeneous unit, politically, economically and culturally, is—according to Cripps—to return to a bygone day when it was divided into warring Mogulates, principalities, feudal kingdoms and commercial cities! The proposal was reactionary through and through, particularly when accompanied by the suggestion that the constitution of the "New India" be based upon the proposed constitution of 1935 (previously described). No

wonder every organization from the Congress to the reactionary, pro-British Moslem League rejected the conception out of hand. India needs unification based upon workers' and peasants' consent, not additional divisions imposed upon the already existing divisions of the country into British provinces, native states and special Crown-administered areas.

Most important of all was the question of an Indian national government, built around a Congress cabinet, with power over matters of military defense. According to journalist Louis Fischer and other reporters, it is around this issue that the negotiations, on the verge of success, broke down. Fischer claims that Sir Stafford Cripps was double-crossed by Churchill, the Viceroy and the British government. He is supposed to have offered a national government, with *real* authority, to the Congress. Then, when the conservative Congress leaders had already accepted this offer (since it conformed to their major political demand for a national government at the Center—that is, a sharing of power with the British imperialists), Cripps is supposed to have reneged on his offer, under orders from the British cabinet and the Viceroy.

We do not know whether this story of a "double-cross within a double-cross" is true or false. Cripps has denied the story. Certainly, when dealing with hypocritical imperialists bent upon retaining power by any means and equally treacherous "ex-socialists," an honest man can expect anything to happen. We do know that the "defense powers" offered to the Indians were ludicrous. They included control over "canteens, stationary supplies, entertainment, etc." Real military power was to reside with the British General Wavell and the Viceroy, as before. But we are inclined to doubt this superficial explanation of Cripps' failure since we question the *fundamental* nature of the mission to start with. Cripps never expected to solve the Indian problem, except perhaps on the basis of a *complete capitulation* on the part of the Congress. But such treachery was excluded in advance, if one under-

stands the temper of the people. A Congress capitulation would have been followed by a mass desertion of whatever membership did remain. Cripps had another purpose in mind in his mission; this purpose flowed from the world-wide attack upon British imperialism, the increasing unpopularity of British leadership, especially in the light of the Hong Kong, Malaya and Burma fiascoes. Cripps voyaged to India to perform, not a mission, but a farcical drama whose outcome he knew in advance. He went as an ideological repriever of dying British prestige!

Aided by censorship and a generally friendly American press, aided by the cowardly Congress leaders who acted the game with him up to the point where he no longer needed them, Cripps came home from India in a position to say the following: "I went to India with my proposals for independence and freedom. I spoke to their leaders. But they could not agree among themselves, proving that India is disunited, with nobody speaking for the mass of people. This is why we must continue to stay on in India; they turned down my proposals." We did our best, says Cripps, but it wasn't good enough. Now we must run the whole show, with more English and American troops.

But if it had been up to the people, there never would have been negotiations and talks to begin with. An oppressed people do not "negotiate" with their oppressors; they become strong and then cast them off their backs forever! True, the Congress capitalist leaders, consisting of Gandhi, Nehru and Azad, did negotiate for a deal. This only underscores their fear of a mass struggle; their vain efforts to prevent it; their anxiety to check the masses and prevent the uncorking of their revolutionary wrath.

Perhaps "Goodbye Mr. Cripps" can take cold comfort in his outsmarting of the Congress leaders before public opinion. But the rebellion of the people two months later means that he outsmarted himself at the same time. The entire Cripps

episode is now dull history, fit material for investigators of useless efforts to save crumbling empires. When people are on the march the shifty and sneaky maneuvers of contemptible renegades to imperialism have little meaning.

The Defense of India

The people of India have no confidence in the ability of the British to defend their country from invasion. This simple fact further adds to the overwhelming hatred that exists and has undoubtedly contributed to bringing the crisis to a head. Whatever confidence may have existed among middle class circles about British military prowess and organization evaporated with the Japanese victories in rapid succession at Hong Kong, Malaya and Singapore, Burma, the Andaman Islands, etc. In these military conflicts there were involved many thousands of Indian soldiers and many hundreds of thousands of Indian civilians (particularly in Burma). These people did not fail, upon their return to India, to spread far and wide the tales of British stupidity, British bungling, British arrogance and, above all, British refusal, even in the heat of battle with the hot breath of defeat blowing down their necks, to grant a single concession to the colonial people! The story of how, in the retreat from Burma, the Indian natives were forced to flee on a separate and different road from that utilized by the white man (a story which the British never denied, even when Nehru spoke of it) spread to every corner and hamlet of the countryside. The fall of Burma dropped British authority to an all-time low; the masses of India who do not wish their country invaded (they have had enough of invasions) became concerned about their self-defense.

And well might they be concerned! The defenses built up by the occupying foreign power were not meant to meet invasion by a powerful enemy with modern equipment. They were meant *primarily* for subduing internal revolts, adding new territories to India itself and, furthermore, were strong-

est precisely at the point *least of all needed*—the Khyber Pass-Peshawar area, facing Afghanistan and Russia.

Because of deliberate British policy to prevent the growth of heavy, competitive native industry, the supply roots of Indian defense are buried in distant England, an ocean voyage of many weeks' duration. Industrially backward India is incapable of a self-sustaining defensive system. It can produce no mechanized equipment, no tanks, no airplanes (the newly constructed airplane factory at Bangalore is not yet operating!), no trucks or automobiles (only assembly work), no heavy guns, no explosives or chemicals—not a single complex device of modern warfare. India produces many small items (tents, rope, sand bags, etc.); auxiliary military items only. When one considers that a Japanese invasion would come, at least partly, from the sea, with attacks upon India's major seaports at Madras, Calcutta, etc., then the virtual non-existence of any Indian Navy is further proof of how British policy has laid the country at the mercy of invaders. The Royal Indian Navy (!) with a few ferryboats and minesweepers is roughly equivalent to the famous Swiss Navy. Yet British policy deliberately did this to make the country dependent upon the Royal *British* Navy.

As for the Indian Army, which now numbers upward of 1,000,000 men—many of whom are fighting in North Africa, Iran and Iraq, Aden, let us realize what it really consists of, since the British and General Wavell make such a point of its importance as a defense factor.

There is no conscription or universal military training. The Army is made up of hired, trained native soldiers officered overwhelmingly by Englishmen. These troops are drawn from the traditional, so-called "martial areas" of Rajputana, Punjab and Nepal. In other words, it is essentially the same type of army employed during the days of Kipling in the nineteenth century—mercenary soldiers fighting without any ideas or ideals, for the food, money and privileges

they receive. The entire training and spirit of this army is antiquated. For subduing recalcitrant peasant areas; for driving back the mountaineer tribesmen of Waziristan and bombing the Hurs; for chasing the elusive *Faquir* of Ipi (without success); for military policing of the country—that is, in fulfilling imperialist tasks against an unarmed mass of people—this army is more than satisfactory. But against modern armored divisions it would be beaten and outflanked at every step, particularly since it fights for nothing but its meager privileges. Furthermore, the fact that the British use every means to keep the Army isolated from the people, from all political ideas, gives it only a more empty and decorative character. In any struggle *purely* for British imperialist interests, such an army will collapse as rapidly as did the Indian divisions in Malaya and the native Javanese army in the Dutch East Indies. Mercenary soldiers fight well against peasants, but financial rewards cannot induce them to fight for long when life itself is at stake!

And it is this that constitutes Britain's greatest *crime* against the successful defense of India. British rule, based upon terror, gives the people nothing to fight for, whether we mean the trained soldiers in the armed forces or the masses of workers and peasants who could be drawn into guerrilla warfare if they had something to fight for. Lacking any motivation they are either indifferent to appeals for defensive efforts or bitterly proclaim that the only way to defend their country is to get rid of the British masters—that is, *take the defense of India into their own hands!* But the British sabotage and seek to prevent even this. They forbid the people to arm or even possess arms, they refuse to supply them with arms, they crush whatever desire the people may have to meet Japanese invasion with resistance by their constant terror against the masses. It is British imperialism that is responsible all along the line for the virtually defenseless position (militarily and morally) of the country. It is the Viceroy and

his fellow authorities who are the *real* fifth columnists in India, if by that expression we mean foreign agents who sabotage defensive efforts. After the slaughter of close to 1,000 people in the recent struggle, how many Indians will feel inclined to give any support to Britain's military efforts? The white soldiers who ostensibly came to India to fight the Japanese have been used to butcher the Indians! This is British "defense," in practice!

Yes, Britain is anxious to defend India, if by that is meant the defense of its economic holdings, its special privileges, its political rule. Britain is anxious to defend India, the colony of the Empire, but not India, a free and independent nation of 389,000,000 people. This is why the Indian revolutionists, standing firmly against Japanese invasion, proclaim that only an independent Workers and Peasants Indian Republic could defend the country with success.

To arouse the people, to train, educate and equip them for defense, it is necessary for them to have something to fight for. Britain offers nothing but an endless terror and exploitation; a free India would fight to the death against any enemy seeking to restore its former status, just as did the young Soviet Republic of Russia after the October Revolution. To achieve a people's revolutionary defense, the people of India must achieve their liberation and drive out those who stand in their way. That is why the Indian Fourth Internationalists say that India's defense begins at home with the ousting of Britain, principal enemy of the people.

The Revolt in India

These are the two immediate causes of the revolt in India. the breakdown of the Cripps affair brought political matters to a head; the fear of Japanese invasion brought the people to a realization that unless they did something soon they would meet the fate of Malaya and Burma.

What is occurring in India? What are these events in

which close to 1,000 have already been killed (report of L. S. Amery, Secretary of State to India), many thousands more wounded and tens of thousands imprisoned in British concentration camps? Why have troops poured machine gun fire into crowds, bombed demonstrators from the air, whipped prisoners, and performed every cruelty experienced in wartime by a defeated people whose land is occupied by hated foreigners?

India is passing through the latest stage in the unrolling of its nationalist and revolutionary movement. To state it more scientifically, the first, most elementary and initial stages of the *democratic* phase of the Indian social revolution have begun. In the course of these first and confused steps the most noticeable factor present has been the spontaneity and leaderlessness with which the people have acted. The Indian proletariat, grown rapidly in size and weight in the national economy and experience since the last civil disobedience campaign of the 1930's, came rapidly to the fore and played the leading role in the strikes that rocked Bombay, Ahmedabad, Allahabad, Delhi, Poona, Cawnpore, Calcutta and all the leading industrial centers of the nation. Fifty thousand steel workers of the Tata Iron and Steel Workers led the way in a strike of several weeks' duration, all the more significant since it crippled the leading steel plant of the country. The workers, side by side with radical students and middle class elements, came into the streets and there, for the moment, took the movement out of the hands of the conservative Working Committee of the Congress Party, carrying the torch of national struggle in open clashes with the British terror.

The spontaneity and dramatic character of this movement, as well as its All-India extent, have emphasized the depths of nationalist, anti-imperialist feeling, as well as the complete distrust and disgust with the cowardly vacillations of the Congress leadership. Gandhi provided no lead or clue to action; he went to jail with the Working Committee without leaving

a single serious directive to the people. The prompt and vigorous response of the masses in the key centers proved their desire to struggle for independence *now*, no matter the price they were forced to pay. This movement has sunk deep roots and intimately affects every worker and peasant. In terms of proletarian activity, the campaign of 1942 began where all the other campaigns had left off. Previously, the Congress Party moved cautiously, step by step. Anxious not to arouse the revolutionary sentiments of the masses, Gandhi based his campaign tactics upon the merchants, clerks, students and professionals in the cities, and the small landed *kisans* in the rural areas. The workers and peasant masses were drawn into the movement only as a final threat, so to speak, before the inevitable compromise and capitulation on the part of the Congress.

But today the workers and radical students show the way. The part permitted by history to the native capitalist class and its party, the Congress, has become feebler and even openly counter-revolutionary. *It is the oppressed who fight the battles virtually from the start!* Only this can explain the fascist ferociousness of the British who, recognizing this difference, precipitate bloody clashes and seek to wipe out the movement at its inception, no matter how. The British know that if the movement grows and takes more solid organizational forms, they will face tens of millions of militant, determined workers and peasants who will halt at nothing to gain their independence. The 1942 campaign has begun on a much higher level of the class struggle. The Indian proletariat is not merely challenging the foreign capitalists; it is challenging its own native capitalist class for leadership over the democratic revolution.

Among the *peasantry* there has been the same advance in militancy and progressive action. As the workers drift back to the villages, bringing the revolutionary message with them, reports of wider and broader peasant disturbances filter

through the black British censorship. Stories of mass peasant demonstrations, burning of courts, police stations and landlord manors (all places where records of rent, land ownership and indebtedness are kept) come from all sections of rural India. The liberal reporter, A. T. Steele, writes: "More than once I saw riots by undisciplined mobs (he means hungry, landless peasants) invariably followed by police *lathi* charges. . . . Practically all the large towns and thousands of small ones have demonstrations of some kind—many small and inconsequential, others bloody and prolonged. Great numbers of police and troops are engaged in guarding railways, post offices, bridges, factories, government buildings and other targets against attacks and disturbances." And Churchill drools about the "situation being under control"! This dispatch was written on October 21, two months after the campaign began with the arrest of Gandhi. The peasants, with the workers showing the way, are participating in actions that speak a familiar language to those acquainted with the history of great social upheavals: *the agrarian revolution*, the destruction of landlordism, feudalism and imperialist control over the countryside.

But we must not ignore the fact that two great hindrances lie in the revolutionary path to a Workers and Peasants India. We do not refer to the obvious obstacle of British rule and authority, nor the hovering threat of invasion by Japanese imperialism. We refer, rather, to obstacles that—speaking in the name of "independence" and the Indian people—nevertheless give open or indirect support to the British imperialists. There is, first of all, the Communist Party (representatives of Stalinist Russia) which proclaims the necessity of "subordinating" India's struggle to the war (because Russia is an ally of England) and denounce the present struggle of the people.

The opposition represented by the native capitalists—Gandhi and the Congress Party—is more grave and more dan-

gerous. It has already taken on an overt form, with the conspicuous absence of the merchants and middle class Gandhists from the struggles. This opposition is based upon fear and terror; a fear of the violent and drastic nature of the struggle and the participation of the workers at its head. To them, the danger of social revolution (destruction of native landlordism and seizure of capitalist property) is more real than fear of British rule. "Indian reporters close to the All-India Congress said its members, for the most part, still were standing apart from the rioting and that many were concerned over the bloody turn. . . ." (AP dispatch, August 13.) The Congress leaders recoiled in terror before the wrath of the people and shrank back to its meek, subservient position, furtively praying that the English would approach Gandhi for a settlement and permit him to call off the whole matter.

But the workers and peasants have spoken a different language. The Congress Party and the class it speaks for have nothing to offer the people; neither leadership, nor program, nor organization, nor hope for the future. The people must depend upon their own revolutionary organizations and their own program of action. In a country with the complexities of India it is natural to expect many political and mass organizations, each appealing for support. Let us consider the most important of them, excluding those we have already considered in detail (Congress Party, Trade Union Congress) and one we shall consider in our final chapter (Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India).

The Political Parties of India

There are four political organizations under consideration.

The Communist Party (Stalinists); the "Forward" Party of Bose; the Radical Democratic Party of M. N. Roy and the Congress Socialist Party. All of them, in varying degrees, reflect the political backwardness and lack of understanding prevalent among large strata of the city population.

The Stalinists: "We Indian Communists are trying our hardest to convince our fellow patriots that the course of action suggested by the Congress leadership does not lead to our freedom, but cuts our nation away from freedom's battle, divides the progressive forces in Britain and India and only helps strengthen the obstinacy of the imperialists."

This statement of the strike-breaking Stalinists of India, issued in Bombay the day Gandhi was arrested, explains the official position of the Indian followers of Stalin. While hundreds of their "fellow patriots" die under British gunfire, the Stalinists urge them to drop the struggle, accept the British-Cripps offer, and place themselves under the banner of the United Nations. Since this treacherous blow at the nationalist movement, the Communist Party (recently legalized by the Viceroy in return for its noble services to imperialism) has attempted to sow confusion among the workers, urging the trade unionists not to strike or demonstrate; urging the peasants to accept the *status quo*. Aided by the British authorities, who give them all possible publicity and help, they try to undermine the militancy of the workers in a thousand ways.

The party receives instructions from England, whence they originate in Russia. From its former violent anti-British position (during the Hitler-Stalin courtship period), when many of its members openly proclaimed their belief in a coming invasion by Stalin's Red Army to "liberate" India and break the back of the British Empire, the party is now 1,000 per cent pro-war, urging the subordination of colonial independence movements to the "democratic" war camp. There is nothing that would more disturb and cast terror into the ranks of the Kremlin bureaucrats than a revolutionary success—or even a widespread movement—in India. Not only would it mean the danger offered by a revolution on Russia's back step, but it would hamper and interfere with British aid and support to Russian war needs. As a partial exchange for this support from capitalist England, Stalin has offered to Church-

ill his party in India. The role of the Indian Stalinists is counter-revolutionary. This explains its lack of support among the Indian workers, as well as the failure of its anti-nationalist, pro-British propaganda. On the revolutionary soil of India such an organization cannot have any success, beyond that of confusing and fouling up the revolutionary activities of the workers.

The Forward Party: Subhas Bose, former Mayor of Calcutta and former President of the Congress Party, is the head of this organization, now openly pro-Japanese and pro-Axis. Confined primarily (if not entirely) to the province of Bengal, where it has replaced the official Congress and disavowed Gandhi's leadership, the Forward Party is made up of radical nationalist elements from the middle class and students; together with native capitalists who feel they would have more to gain under Japanese rule. Bose, now operating from Germany or some other Axis center, is a long-standing admirer of fascist leadership and bold personalities *à la* Hitler. Without any clear program, except an opposition to the do-nothing Gandhian policy, he placed himself at the head of the left wing of the Congress Party. But his individualistic and bureaucratic behavior, combined with his lack of political understanding and demagogy, brought his anti-Gandhi movement to naught, and he turned toward support of Axis fascism. His party is a reactionary party and completely disloyal to the interests of the Indian revolution. As Gandhi and his Congress Party render objective service to the "democratic" imperialists, so do Bose and his party serve the fascist imperialists who want to seize India. The sole exception is that Bose is an open, paid hireling of Hitler. The Indian worker have no confidence or trust in this man and his friends. They know, from their knowledge of China, that Japan, too, marches as a conqueror and enslaver of the colonial peoples. The Forward Party aims to play the same part in India that the Burma Nationalist Party played in the conquest of that country by Japanese imperialism.

The Radical Democratic Party: Nowadays traitors hide under any name, preferably a "radical" one. This is the "party" of the notorious M. N. Roy, once associated with the Communist International, the Chinese Revolution and the right wing of the Stalinist movement. Roy is undoubtedly the most despised man in India, for he has committed the crime of crimes in the eyes of the people. He has become an open, paid and bought propaganda agent for the British imperialists since his release from jail three years ago. His "party"—ousted from the Congress—is ardently anti-nationalist and pro-war, receiving all aid and comfort from the police in its activities. It would be impossible to mention a more discredited organization and leader than Roy and his handful of associates.

The Congress Socialist Party: This party at one time exerted major influence within the ranks of the Congress movement and the organized trade union movement. Led by a former student of Columbia University, J. P. Narayan, it symbolized in its growth a mass, leftward development in opposition to Gandhi and the right wing of the National Party. Its influence was among middle class radicals, students, organized workers and intellectuals.

But when the war began, although the party proclaimed its full opposition to the war, it failed to furnish any aggressive or independent leadership and remained tied by a thousand threads of politics and sympathies to Nehru and Gandhi. Only Gandhi can lead a campaign, such was its slogan. It waited for three years, steadily losing members and declining in influence among the people. Its average member either returned to the Gandhi fold or dropped out in apathy, so that the party became a shell of its former self. "The Congress Socialist Party has from the beginning followed a policy of utter subservience to the Congress bourgeoisie and remains today completely without a base within the working class." (Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India.)

We see, therefore, that until now all of India's political and professedly working class organizations have failed the people. Either Stalinism, or middle class liberal confusion, or social-democratic and reformist programs, or open betrayal to imperialism has marked the career of these parties. The way, for a long time, has been open for the creation of a revolutionary socialist party, based upon clear-cut Marxist principles. With the launching of the Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India the first step toward answering that historic need has been taken. We shall consider this party and its program in Chapter IX.

CHAPTER VII

Questions and Answers

The future of Great Britain will be decided, not in Europe, not even upon the seas and oceans which are swept by her flag, or in the Greater Britain that has been called into existence by her offspring, but in the continent whence our immigrant stock first came, and to which as conquerors their descendants have returned. Without India the British Empire could not exist.

(Lord Curzon.)

*

Under ordinary circumstances, there is no one so close-mouthed and silent as your British imperialist gentleman, the *pukka sahib* of the privileged clubs and tennis associations. But this silence—really a reflection of his supreme snobbishness, for a *pukka sahib* speaks only to a fellow *pukka sahib*—evaporates in a gush of eloquence when the question is posed to him, *after all, why don't you give India its freedom?* Reasons, arguments, excuses, explanations and rationalizations pour from his lips as he sips his cool *chota peg*. Here we wish to take up a few of the more familiar answers that fill the daily press of all lands.

The principal and most *effective* argument is, of course, the Hindu-Moslem problem. Whenever the problem of India and the incessant demand of its 389,000,000 people for freedom arises, the Hindu-Moslem question is immediately raised, in suitably gory detail. India, they say, cannot be freed because of the "hatred" between Hindu and Moslem!

The argument runs as follows: "We, the English, have India's best interests at heart. We would love to see the country free and standing upon its own feet. But we don't *dare* because of the antagonism between these people. In the name of common humanity we must remain on to prevent the out-

break of civil war between these fanatical groups. We are really remaining in India to prevent bloodshed." So speaks every English Tory, every English Labor Party faker, every English paper, every other apologist for the British tyranny.

The Answer: This argument is a tissue of lies from start to finish, as anyone acquainted with British policy of "divide and rule" cannot but suspect. It is not true that the Hindu people and the Moslem people hate one another, that they are prepared to slaughter one another, that the British must remain to prevent such a catastrophe.

Out of every hundred persons in India, approximately sixty-eight are Hindus and twenty-two are Moslems. The other ten belong to small religious or communal groups we shall describe below. There are, thus, about three Hindus to each Moslem, or a total of about 80,000,000 Moslems. The Moslem population lives scattered all over India, but is more concentrated in the North (Punjab, United Provinces) and in the province of Bengal.

What is at the bottom of the differences and disagreements between Moslem and Hindu? Is it a racial difference, a difference in color or language that has set these two groups and communities into opposition? Is it a difference in appearance between a Hindu and a Moslem?

Absolutely not! These differences have their roots and origins in *economic* questions and problems, primarily. The reactionary elements in the country (imperialists, landlords) take advantage of the fact that Hindus and Moslems belong to different *religious* communities for the purpose of stirring up bitter hatreds. The economic difficulties take on the outward form of racial or religious rivalry. Actually, the difference between these two groups is the same sort of difference as exists, let us say, between the Catholics and Protestants, or between the Baptists and Lutherans in America. Who would dare to suggest that Britain should rule America because there are conflicting communities here, with a definite

antagonism often flaring up between religious communities. Such a person would be laughed out of court or worse. The Moslems of India are not a separate and distinct nationality of people—as the Poles are in German-occupied Poland, for example. *They are a different religious community.* The Moslems do not differ in blood from the Hindus. Races of India's people are mixed from 6,000 years of known history. "Even in Northern India, the Mohammedan population is by no means wholly of foreign origin. *Of the twelve million followers of Islam in the Punjab, ten million showed that they were originally Hindus.*" (*Census Report, 1911, page 128.*)

Hindus and Moslems live together, side by side in communities. Hindu peasants and Moslem peasants work in the same landed areas. Hindu and Moslem workers are in the same factory. Hindus and Moslems speak the same language, depending on the province or geographic area where they live. They have the same economic problems—the problem of living, eating and overcoming their poverty. *All live under the same primitive conditions.* How can they possibly not see who is the common enemy?

But imperialism long ago recognized this fundamental unity of Hindu and Moslem worker and peasant. In 1858 Lord Elphinstone, the Governor General, confirmed the following express policy: "Our endeavor should be to uphold in full force the (for us) fortunate separation which exists between the different religions and races; not to endeavor to amalgamate them!" That is, *divide et impera!* Despite British policy, however, there has been such an enormous racial intermixing during India's thousands of years of history that there is no such thing as a racial group of a pure character in India. Hindus and Moslems look alike, generally act alike and follow the same general traditions and customs. Hindus and Moslems live scattered all over the country, a result of the fact that the Moslems first came to India over 700 years

ago and have been intermingling with the original inhabitants during these seven centuries. The great bulk of present-day Moslems are simply the descendants of the original inhabitants who have been converted to Islam at one time or another.

But what about the Indian National Congress? Isn't that a Hindu organization?

The Congress is *not* a "Hindu" organization, or any other type of religious or communal organization. It is a *political* party, standing on a *political* program. It participates in political actions and elections. It has no religious program or customs and includes members of every community in India within its ranks. Naturally there are more Hindus than any other group in the Congress because the Hindus are two-thirds of the population. However, they are there not because they are Hindus, but because they are nationalists, fighting for the independence of their country. The Democratic Party in America has a majority of religious Protestants in its ranks. Does that thereby make it a "religious" organization, let alone a "Protestant" party? There are many Moslems in the Congress—including its president, Maulana Azad. Many Moslem organizations and religious groups openly give their support to the nationalist aspirations of the Congress. In the Northwest Frontier Province (90 per cent Moslem population) the Congress got 90 per cent of the votes at the last open election!

What is wrong with the Congress is *not* that it is a "Hindu" party, as Mr. Deceitful Englishman claims, but what we have already indicated—its failure to have a revolutionary program of theory and action. Dominated as it is by the Indian capitalist class, it cannot develop a political program for the people and when it assumes constitutional power, as it did during the 1938-39 period, when it controlled seven out of British India's eleven provinces, the Congress right wing followers of conservative Mahatma Gandhi disappoint the

workers and peasants, by failing to carry out any radical agrarian or social reform measures. In the provinces where the Moslems are a majority or a large minority, reactionary interests play up this betrayal on the part of the Congress as *religious* discrimination directed against the Moslem community. That is, the Indian capitalists and their political spokesmen in the Congress are responsible since they provide powerful ammunition to the enemies of Hindu-Moslem unity.

Here we have indicated the *fundamental* basis of Hindu and Moslem discord; what lies behind the bulk of "Hindu-Moslem" riots. The great proportion (90 per cent) of these disturbances take on the form of economic and class clashes between peasants, money-lenders and landlords of *different faiths*. These struggles over land, mortgages, interest, rent, food, etc., are then described and passed off as "religious" riots! Or, often, trouble is caused by antagonism between middle-class Moslem intellectuals and Hindus who are competing for the limited number of civil service and government posts available to educated Indians. The British, who dote on such clashes and many a time deliberately incite them, seek to foster and deepen every petty quarrel and incident in exactly the same manner that a boss seeks to set workers of different faiths against one another in the shop!

But let it be noted that in the present struggle within India there has not been, up to the time of this writing, a single reported incident of a Hindu-Moslem clash! This indicates the fundamental solidarity that prevails over the issue of independence from the British. Hindu and Moslem workers and peasants, precisely because they have the same problems and interests, have shown over and over again, in practice, that they recognize this common bond. To cite but one example: In Cawnpore, a great textile and war industries center, "the Moslem workers have joined the union and have defied all efforts to separate them from their Hindu comrades. Some time ago the communalists of the Moslem League

tried to make a split in the union by bringing out a Moslem League green flag, but the workers pointed to their red flag and said that the blood which had dyed it red was not communal or religious." (Leonard Schiff, *The Present Conditions of India*," page 174.)

Ah, yes, but what of the Moslem League, headed by M. A. Jinnah? Doesn't *that* organization represent the Moslem people? Doesn't Jinnah speak for the Moslems?

Not any more than Coughlin speaks for the Catholic workers of America! At the last elections of the Provincial Legislative Assemblies—held on a communal basis—the candidates of the Moslem League got only 25 per cent of the votes and representatives; the other 75 per cent of the Moslem electorate vote went to pro-Congress Moslem organizations! We have already mentioned the province of the Northwest Frontier, where 90 per cent of the people are Moslems.

Jinnah (formerly a leading Congress member himself!) is a reactionary, pro-British lawyer who heads an organization of religious fanatics, English-bribed landlords and middle class lawyers and intellectuals. He cannot claim any solid support among the Moslem workers and peasants, even in spite of the reactionary Congress policies. The function of his Moslem League (as anyone can clearly see) is to create confusion and additional excuses for British occupation of India. How convenient (to the British) are the threats of Jinnah to precipitate "civil war" if the British should *dare* withdraw! The Moslem aristocracy of the Moslem League spends 75 per cent of its propaganda attacking national independence and the agrarian radicalism of the Congress movement. The remaining 25 per cent of its program advocates the recently conceived "Pakistan" plan of Jinnah. According to this "plan," the Moslems in certain areas (Jinnah has never clearly stated which areas) will constitute a separate federation within India, as distinguished from the Hindus. This reactionary nightmare flies in the face of India's fundamental

unity and would cast the nation back to the day when it was divided into self-contained, narrow, warring kingdoms and empires. It would be a death-blow at the idea of a unified India, a unification vital for its cultural and economic life. Let alone the fact that the uprooting and moving of tens upon tens of millions of people would have to be carried out if Jinnah's scheme were to be put into effect. Jinnah's Moslem League has played a purely pro-British and anti-national rôle in the struggle today; that is why he cannot gain mass support. He is a reactionary stooge of imperialism, working to preserve the power of his masters. "... If the Moslems have awakened to a realization of their position as a minority community, it is only a phase of a wider political awakening. They suffer under imperialism and bureaucracy as much as the Hindus and have developed a militant anti-imperialist consciousness." Wealthy Mr. Jinnah tries to pervert this consciousness to British uses.

But are there not other minority communities and religions in India? What about them?

The Answer: Yes, there are other minorities in India. About 5,000,000 Sikhs, who are a particular religious sect of the Hindu people; several million Indians who believe in Christianity or Buddhism; small groups of Parsees, etc. But what about it? Is there a single country in the world without its minorities of a religious or communal character, not excluding America? Every country seeks to settle and solve its own internal minority problems, understanding that the intervention of a foreign imperialist power only *aggravates*, not harmonizes, the problem.

Would we in America stand for the British ruling our country because we have Negro, Jewish, Catholic, etc., minority problems? The people of India will settle their questions through their own democratic organizations, according to their revolutionary will. British rule, feeding on inner antagonisms, prolongs and amplifies the difficulties. That prolongs its unwanted stay!

And what of the language question? Are there not 200 to 300 different languages and dialects spoken throughout India? Doesn't this prevent unification of the country and its people?

The Answer: To begin with, only English snobs dare pretend that India has "200 to 300" different languages. Probably this myth appears logical to them, since a *pukka sahib* would never stoop to learn the language of the country he has conquered and violated. English is good enough for him, by Jove! Each time he hears a native speak he undoubtedly is impressed with "a new language."

Nehru has given an excellent reply to this imperialist fable. Referring to "that cry of the ignorant that India is a babel of tongues with hundreds and hundreds of languages," he remarks, "India, as everyone who looks around him can see, has singularly few languages, considering its vast size, and these are intimately allied to each other. India has also one dominant and widespread language which, with its variations, covers a vast area and numbers its votaries by the hundred million." (*The Question of Language*, Jawaharlal Nehru, pages 2 and 3.)

The languages of India are:

1. Hindustani—spoken by 125,000,000 and the most widespread of the languages, with its local variations and dialects. It is the basis for an All-India language.
2. The provincial languages of Bengali, Marathi and Gujrati are closely related to Hindustani.
3. In the south of India the people speak Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and Malayalam — Dravidian languages related to one another.
4. In north India, Oriya, Assamese, Sindhi, Punjabi and Pushtu are the languages—all having much in common and similar roots to Hindustani.

That is, there are thirteen languages (not 200 to 300!) for approximately 400,000,000 people—all having much in com-

mon culturally and linguistically. In an independent, federated and unified India the tendency would be toward even greater homogeneity of language, with Hindustani undoubtedly becoming an All-India language known to everyone, in addition to his provincial tongue. Similarity of language is undoubtedly an important factor in a nation's unity, but what has that to do with the imposition of an Anglo-Saxon dictatorship over India?

But won't criticism of England's policy in India stir up trouble for America's friend and ally in the war? Won't the Axis radio and propagandists make use of our criticism and attacks upon British imperialism?

The Answer: What is meant by England's policy? The policy of terror, assassination, imprisonment, etc., conducted by the Tory ruling class against 389,000,000 people? What do the American working class, or the American people as a whole, have in common with a white terror? How can we condemn the crimes of Axis imperialism in Poland, France and half a dozen other countries while remaining silent about British savagery in India. To do so would be to apologize for and whitewash the rôle of British imperialist force in a war supposedly "for democracy." The rule of Churchill over India is on an equally criminal plane with the rule of Hitler over Poland.

The Axis propagandists make convenient and demagogic use of the numerous example of imperialist violence furnished for them by the British. It is the Japanese, particularly, who demagogically appeal to the Asiatic people as the banner bearers of "Asia for the Asiatics." It is they who make the most out of the British reign of terror, who say, in effect: "See what the white man does to you! Come join us against the white imperialist!" The responsibility for this rests upon those who initiate and carry out the acts of violence.

If the workers of America and England, *in particular*, fail to differentiate themselves from this terroristic behavior then

the Indian masses instead of distinguishing between the imperialist overlords and the people, tend to place the blame and responsibility for the crimes committed against them upon the people as a whole! Nothing could be worse, or further from the truth. Particularly shameful has been the long failure and silence of the English workers and labor unions—a silence that continues even today. The fact that these workers sit with folded hands while their fellow workers in India are shot and jailed by the imperialists reflects upon the state of the British labor movement. Let not English or American workers fear to condemn the foreign rule over India; they will have close to 400,000,000 allies in their indictment!

And finally there is the question most frequently heard. Yes, we think that India should have its freedom (after all, doesn't the Atlantic Charter speak about the right of independence and self-determination for all nations?). But for India to be free *now*—wouldn't that play into the hands of the Axis, particularly the Japanese, who are directly threatening India from Burma? Would not an independent people's India succumb to Japanese or German imperialism?

The Answer: To begin with, people learn by experience. The point of view expressed in the above question ("You can't change horses in the middle of the stream"; "Yes, but after the war is over") has been tested, not once but often. Its latest and most recent tests have taken place in Malaya, the Dutch East Indies, Burma, etc.—that is, those colonial sections of the British and Dutch Empires that *fell most rapidly and swiftly before the Japanese advance.*

In the colonies of imperialism no freedom was granted the people; they remained as the victims of colonial slavery. No changes were made within the colony before or during the Japanese attack. The result was apparent and clear to all—the masses of people remained indifferent, if not openly hostile, to the British and Dutch ruling authorities. They refused to lift a finger to help their present masters and were forced

into accepting the new Japanese distatorship and rule. Not in a single case did they help the British!

Have the British learned anything from their fiascoes and failures in the Far East? Obviously not! Can they expect to win over the Indians to their side by butchery and jailings? Even a *pukka sahib* understands that a beaten, terrified and maligned people will not stand by his side against the Japanese. Then why do the British pursue a policy that plays into the hands of Japanese imperialist deception? Why do they give their opponent so much political ammunition to circulate and fire?

Because British imperialism, in reality, is *not* concerned about the defense, or the fate, of India. It is concerned *solely* with the defense and fate of *British* India; that is, a section of its empire which contains a colossal sum of English wealth and sources of profit. It is not interested in the Indian people *as such*; it is interested in seeing, however, that these people *remain* under its thumb and do not gain their self-rule or come under the Japanese flag. That is, *Britain's concern is to protect its imperialist holdings and interests in India!* That is what Churchill means when he talks about "securing India's defenses"! He "mistakes" his property in India for the Indian people.

What other conclusion can we draw from (1) the refusal of Britain to extend independence to India and (2) the refusal of Britain to arm and train the people to defend themselves? For, if the British were to withdraw from India and turn it over to the people, then 400,000,000 people who had gained their most sought-after desire—a country of their own, free and independent—would *defend* that gain to the death against any and all foreign invaders. Does anyone for a moment believe that an independent India would quietly submit to reconquest and a continuation of exploitation by Japan, or Germany, or any other imperialist power? The Axis, advancing against a Workers and Peasants India, would

break its head against a stone wall of the armed people. Only independence can arouse the people of India to fight in their defense; under Britain they have nothing to fight for. The defense of India in this sense means, first and foremost, the ousting of the English and the establishment of an independent republic. Only then will the people feel they have something to fight for.

Furthermore, we have already described the comparative defenselessness of the country, under British direction. A handful of white soldiers, mercenary Indian troops—all living in an unfriendly, hostile atmosphere. Lord Linlithgow calls upon the Indians to prepare to fight against the Japanese. Yet he steadfastly refuses to arm the people, to prepare them for warfare, to grant permission to train and organize workers' and peasants' defense and other groups! We have far more reason to believe that Linlithgow, the King-Emperor's representative dwelling in the \$10,000,000 palace of New Delhi (his home), is far more afraid of the armed workers and peasants of India than he is of Japan. In this way, he stands closest to those French reactionaries and capitalist politicians who feared their own people more than they feared Hitler! Imperialism stands in the way of India's defense; a people's defense calls for its removal!

CHAPTER VIII

A Letter to British and American Workers

The Indian people must divorce their fate from the very outset from that of British imperialism. The oppressors and the oppressed stand on opposite sides of the trenches. No aid whatsoever to the slave-owners! On the contrary, those immense difficulties which the war will bring in its wake must be utilized so as to deal a mortal blow to all the ruling classes. That is how the oppressed classes and peoples in all countries should act, irrespective of whether Messrs. Imperialists don democratic or fascist masks.

(Leon Trotsky—*"An Open Letter to the Workers of India."*
September, 1939.)

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If the workers and poor people of India, now in the midst of a struggle for independence, along with their revolutionary leaders, had the opportunity to speak freely to the English and American workers they would undoubtedly address them along the same lines that the Ceylon People's Socialist Party employed when it spoke to the English workers in soldiers' uniforms who had been sent to occupy their island.

Describing the conditions of the island's 6,000,000 people and an oppressive government that is a carbon duplicate of the Viceroy's dictatorship over India, the Ceylon socialists speak directly to the English soldiers. "Among you soldiers here are large numbers of trade unionists and politicals. We ask them: Can you, in the conditions of Ceylon, believe you are fighting for democracy? Can you believe that claim when our working class organizations are banned and our trade unions are smashed, when our leaders are imprisoned and our rank and file are prosecuted and persecuted, when we are de-

nied the right of free speech, publication and organization and when the very capitalist press is gagged and harnessed to the purposes of imperialist war and imperialist oppression? Can you not see that the British bosses have created in Ceylon only a bastion of fascism? Can you not see that only the workers, through revolutionary action, can convert it into a veritable bastion of freedom?" In this appeal by the workers and peasants of Ceylon, to their English working class brothers, we have an eloquent expression of how the Indian people would address themselves to England and America, if given the chance, if the white imperialists would stop hounding them for but one minute.

The workers of India are not fifth columnists. They are not pro-Japanese, *but anti-imperialist*, no matter which nation or country practices imperialism. They have had too much experience living under imperialism to be deceived for one moment by any other would-be master of their country. Promises and demagoguery have no effect upon them. They speak out openly to the workers and poor people of the entire world. The people of India, through their organizations (trade unions, Congress Party, political parties), were among the first to come to the support of the Chinese when Japan launched its war of conquest five years ago. They sided fully with the Chinese workers and peasants against the imperialism of Dai Nippon. The same was true during the Spanish Civil War, when money and material aid were sent to the Loyalist camp in the fight with fascist Franco.

But now the workers and peasants of India, 389,000,000 strong, have been dragged into an international war. They were not consulted, the war was imposed upon them and then began a process of mulcting and exploitation without parallel. When the people protested and said, if this is truly a war for democracy, then practice what you preach; free us first, they were informed by Ruler Churchill that "The provisions of the Atlantic Charter do not apply to the British

Empire." The pretenses and shallow phrases of the "democratic" leaders became, if it is possible, still more cynical and hypocritical, when this same Churchill launched a fascist-like terror against them, destroying close to 1,000 workers' and peasants' lives. "It is we who are fighting for the principles of democracy, the most elementary of which is the right to national independence. It is they who are fighting to retain a fascist hold upon our throats."

We in India, say the people particularly to American workers and supporters, are fighting in part at least for the principles for which you once fought in your Revolutionary War of 1776. It is true that we intend to go much further and establish a workers' and peasants' socialist form of government, based upon the rule of the great masses, but nevertheless, we are starting where you did. Is it not curious that we are, in reality, facing the *same opponent, the same enemy* of independence that you did? The English ruling class, no matter in what stage of its development, always sought to rule other peoples, to seize other lands, to carry out aggression in the four corners of the earth. This is the explanation of why we in 1942 are fighting the descendants of the same band of oligarchs, Tories and aristocrats that you fought. The proud ancestry of Sir Winston Churchill, including the Duke of Marlborough, likewise opposed freedom everywhere, likewise trampled on every nation. You in America made your first progressive revolution in 1776; you insured the free expansion and growth of an unfettered American capitalism and gained the democratic right of self-determination. We in India demand the selfsame right of self-determination without, however, putting into power a new, native capitalist class which could not fulfill the same job that it did in America one hundred and fifty years ago. But what is important is not the question of capitalism in our country; it is rather your giving us support in the achievement of the 1776 phase of our revolution, that is, the right to rule ourselves in our own way, as

we see fit! Just as you were forced to take up arms and drive out the British by violence, so are we.

Furthermore, for all but the blind there exists today a war within the context of the great, global Second World War. We do not refer to the struggle between the rival war camps as to who shall redivide the world and its colonial empires. We do not mean the war between Germany and England for mastery of Europe; nor the war between America and Japan for mastery of the Pacific; nor even the war between Germany and America for mastery of everything! These wars and battles are imperialistic in character and reactionary in content, they are futile slaughters of deceived workers and poor people who throw themselves to death so that the rulers of their respective countries may have more territory, greater riches and more people to exploit.

No, we speak not of this war. We speak of the war within the war; the progressive, uphill struggles of the oppressed peoples of Europe, Asia and South America. We mean the German soldiers who revolt against Hitler on the Norwegian and Russian fronts, refusing to march any further for that butcher; we mean the workers of France who refuse to leave their country and work in Hitler's munitions plants; and who strike out against the dictatorship of Laval and Pétain; we mean the workers of South America who protest against the encroachments of American rule over their continent; we mean the Chinese peasants and guerrilla fighters in the occupied sections of China who continue to fight the Mikado's troops; we mean the workers of England who resist Churchill's plans and demand to know *today* what the world will look like after the war; we mean the American workers who fight against Roosevelt's efforts to impose the restrictions of war economy and regimentation upon them "in the name of democracy"—*and above all*—we mean our struggle for national liberation, which we look upon as the largest, most important and biggest of all these world clashes to date. All of these

events added together represent something that the imperialists do not understand and never will.

They represent the great *class* war within the capitalist war; the inevitable struggle between workers and oppressed people on the one hand, and the spokesmen of imperialism and fascism on the other. This is the international front of workers and downtrodden people all over the world, trying to break out of the iron hoop of the World Imperialist War. It is our camp, as against the two imperialist war camps of the Axis and the United Nations. It is the third camp, the third front of labor and poor peoples everywhere. Thus we of India speak to the English and American workers in the name of *international solidarity*, internationalism. These struggles within the war must be linked up and brought together so that they merge into one great struggle directed against world imperialism as a whole. This is why we say that it is to your own interests that you support us; just as we, in our own way, are supporting the peoples of China, Europe and the Americas. "The main enemy of the workers," said a great German socialist, "is the capitalist and ruling class within your own country." Yes, and the main friend is the working class of every country throughout the world.

Finally, we in India shall continue this struggle, no matter what comes. Do not be taken in by the silence of the press, by its cries and shouts to the effect that "All is well in India; the situation is well in hand"; by the abuse and lies told about us. Remember how, one week before the great Russian Revolution began, the wife of the Czar wrote a letter to the Czar himself, urging him to hurry home from the front because the people were dying to see him. Yes, they wanted to see him—in the same way that we'd love to see Mr. Winston Churchill and another King! We may find ourselves temporarily put down, forced to retreat, go into hiding, bitterly made to accept foreign rule, but we have begun the march and nothing will stop us. The rest is just a temporary halt on

the road. Our great millions cannot and will not give up; they have too much to gain and the demands of their life push them forward. Therefore, all support to and sympathy with the workers and peasants of India in their revolutionary advance!

CHAPTER IX

What Next in India?

The Third Camp of Labor is not a myth. It exists, and its members are legion: the submerged, smoldering working masses of the world, those who do the working and starving in peacetime and the dying in wartime. It is our aim and our revolutionary duty to organize these, to make our press the voice of the Third Camp."

(Workers Party.)

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No one dare predict the speed at which the revolution in India will unfold itself, or the events and their order. Yet an understanding of the profound forces at work within the country, based upon what we have attempted to describe, should make one thing clear. These are not accidental, episodic events we are dealing with, but the fragments and parts of a social revolution in the making, largely hinting already at the same dramatic and stormy sequence that occurred during the Russian Revolution of 1917. What next in India? That depends upon many, many factors, including the ability of the imperialist English forces to strengthen their repressive and terrorist machinery; the ability or inability of the Japanese to invade the country from the Burmese borders and the Bay of Bengal; the self-confidence and experience gained by the workers, peasants and students during the early phases of the conflict; the success or failure of the conservative Congress Party and its leader, Gandhi, in calling a halt to the campaign; the factor of American intervention; the question of whether that indispensable arm of the working class, a revolutionary party which has gained the support of the people, is thrown up during the fight and, not least important by any means, whether the people of India will gain the help of workers in other lands, particularly England and America.

Let us consider but one of these factors, the question of a revolutionary party that will lead the people. This is the most important question for, no matter how favorably every other situation develops, no matter the number of people who are stirred into intensive action, nothing but ultimate failure and chaotic disorganization will come unless the proletariat of India creates its party and flocks to it with a socialist program of theory and action. Beginning with the collapse of the great Chinese Revolution and running down through an entire series of crises, ending with the Spanish Civil War of 1934-36, this lesson has been drilled into the heads of proletarian revolutionists. All the bloodshed, all the sacrifice, all the demonstrations and class actions of the Indian people will not succeed unless the newly-founded Indian section of the Fourth International succeeds in winning the confidence of the people and showing them, concretely, the road to power and victory.

This party, the Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India, has been in process of formation since the war began in 1939. The very fact of its creation, amidst the violent circumstances of war and terror, is a credit to the growth in class and political consciousness of the Indian proletariat. In May of 1942, at the formal launching of the party as an All-India organization, a transitional program for the revolutionary masses of India was adopted. The various workers' groups and organizations that attended the May conference and fused together to form the Bolshevik-Leninist Party came from the provinces of Bombay, Bengal, United Provinces and Bihar. Delegates from the great industrial centers were present, as well as from the island colony of Ceylon. It is worth our while to consider some of the more important aspects of the transitional program. It is the program they offer to the people; the program they carry to the workers in their daily work; the program their peasant agitators bring to the *kisans* in the rural areas. It is, in brief, the politics of revolutionary socialism. Here is the

contemporary program of India's leading revolutionary party:

1. "The strategic task of the Bolshevik-Leninists in the present period consists in overcoming the contradiction between the objective revolutionary conditions in India and the immaturity of the proletariat and its vanguard. The Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India stands in the forefront of all day-to-day struggles of the workers and lends its support to the struggles of the peasantry and other oppressed. . . . But it carries on this day-to-day work within the framework of the actual, that is, revolutionary perspective of the overthrow of imperialism. At the same time the party puts forward a program of transitional demands flowing from today's conditions and from today's consciousness of wide layers of the masses and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the overthrow of imperialism and the conquest of power by the proletariat."

2. *Independent participation of the workers in the nationwide political movement.* Encouraging the workers to "place no trust whatever in the Congress or its leaders," the party teaches them to support only those progressive *actions* of the Congress that advance the nationalist movement toward its goal. At the same time, the workers must depend only upon their own strength, gained through their own independent defense and labor organizations. The criteria by which every event is measured is—does this advance the liberation movement; does it help the Indian workers unify and organize their own power, free of capitalist and middle-class leadership?

3. *Workers' Committees of Defense in the factories and housing districts.* These democratic committees of action, elected by all the workers in a given plant or area, are to act as bodies of self-defense against the imperialist police and soldiery; to protect the workers' living conditions; to prevent carrying out of the threatened "scorched earth" policy in case of invasion; to act whenever the interests of workers are in-

volved. It is the most important slogan put forward by the party in the immediate situation.

4. *A Constituent Assembly of the People, elected by universal, free suffrage.* Although the Congress Party has long given lip service to this slogan, it has never put it forward in practice, or carried on a wide campaign for it. As recently as the negotiations with Cripps, Congress leaders (Nehru, the "leftist," in particular) opposed the idea of such an Assembly during the war. The Congressmen realize that this slogan can only be put into effect if accompanied by a sweeping mass movement which probably will, as in the case of Russia, pass far beyond the historic stage symbolized by the actual convocation of such an Assembly. While the Bolshevik-Leninists support this slogan as a means for further arousing the people, they do not guarantee its realization, nor what the political complexion of such an Assembly would be in the later stages of the revolution. But today—particularly in view of Congress opposition and sabotage—it has an explosive, energizing nature.

5. *Full democratic rights for all the people.* Immediate release of all political prisoners; freedom of speech, press and association; repeal of all repressive measures; abolition of curfew and martial law. Particularly in the native states where "the most elementary civil rights have always been openly denied to the masses of the people by the feudal despotism" the party puts forward the demand for "complete democratization of the native states."

6. *A sliding scale of wages and hours to give employment and decent living conditions to all.* Particularly in a country like India, where the greater bulk (close to 90 per cent) of a worker's wage goes to food and shelter, it is necessary to combat rising living costs and efforts of the imperialists to make the people pay for their war. The party advances these slogans in the workers' trade unions and their other mass organizations.

7. *Committees of factory workers, soldiers and peasants to prepare for seizing control over the nation's life.* The factory committees must plan workers' control and operation of the plants, once the native and British capitalist owners have been ousted; the tasks of the peasant committees have already been dealt with in the section on the Indian peasantry; the soldiers (peasants in uniform) must organize their committees to represent the rank and file native soldier in his demands and his struggles against the reactionary clique of British and Indian officers.

During the process of revolution itself, when "the unemployed will join the movement, when the peasant masses, the soldiers, the oppressed layers of the cities, the women workers, proletarianized layers of the intelligentsia—all of these will seek unity and leadership. As the struggle moves ever more openly in the direction of civil war, and as the fullest resources of the counter-revolutionary terror are mobilized by the government, the prime need will be for the coordination and centralization of the vast and increasing forces daily awakening to consciousness and struggle. The main form of mass organization for the concrete battles to smash British imperialism in India will be the *soviets*, revolutionary councils of workers', peasants' and soldiers' delegates, elected on the widest possible franchise of the exploited, subject to immediate recall. . . ." The triumph of the people's soviets means, of course, the establishment of an independent Workers' and Peasants' Republic throughout the land. This is the goal of the entire transitional program of the Bolshevik-Leninist Party.

8. Today, with the "entry of the struggle into the openly revolutionary stage, the Bolshevik-Leninist Party calls for:

- (a) The formation of Workers' Soviets.
- (b) The formation of a Workers' Militia.
- (c) The seizure by the workers of factories, banks, plantations, etc.
- (d) The direct seizure of the land by Peasant Committees.

- (e) The organization of the peasant poor into Peasant Soviets and of the soldiers into Soldiers' Soviets.
- (f) The overthrow of imperialist rule.

What is the guiding principle behind this program of the Indian Fourth Internationalists? It is the theory of the *permanent revolution*, the great contribution of Leon Trotsky to revolutionary thought and guidance. In the *Appendix* attached to this work we are printing in Trotsky's own words his sweeping outline of India's revolutionary road, based upon this conception. The decline and crisis of capitalism as an international system has fitted the Indian working class for its great task of leading the people out of the Egyptian bondage represented by imperialism.

The main tasks of the Indian Revolution now under way are: (1) The overthrow of British imperialism and the establishment of a democratic Workers and Peasants Republic that will stabilize the rule of the people and successfully oppose foreign intervention; (2) The liquidation of the semi-feudal land system by means of the agrarian revolution and the abolition of what remains of Indian feudalism by clearing away the Native States. The Indian capitalist class and the Congress Party cannot do this—as did the capitalist class of Europe in the last century—because it is a class *in decline*, the abortive product of a dying order. Much less can this class advance to the solution of the additional and more profound problems of India; problems that will arise the instant of the revolution's triumph. These problems, including the industrialization of the country, the raising of agricultural productivity by means of land and farm collectivization, defense of India by an armed people, these problems can only be solved by advanced measures of socialism, involving the expropriation of industries, capitalists, landlords, means of production. The native capitalist class, a propertied class in the same sense that the British are, would violently oppose such actions. Only the revolutionary workers can *continue* the revolution that

has begun, making inroads into every branch of Indian economy and life as they advance.

The fact that the industrial working class must, and is, taking over the leadership of the nationalist revolution also involves the question of what state shall be set up when political and economic power has been seized. Since the working class, at the head of the peasantry, must not only carry out and settle the *democratic* tasks, but also the *socialist* tasks of the revolution, it is clear it must also hold state power. That is, the Indian workers must establish a dictatorship of the proletariat as contrasted to the existing dictatorship of the imperialists. This is, of course, the supreme and most difficult of all the problems confronting the workers and their revolutionary leaders. But it is the only conceivable means known by which not only democratic measures but socialist measures as well can be put into effect. Not only is the proletariat the only consistent national and democratic class in India, it is the class which must accomplish the total transformation and rebuilding of Indian society from top to bottom! To do this it must have full political and economic power in its hands; it must possess its own revolutionary workers' state and administration.

In conclusion, we cannot emphasize too strongly the fact that India's *major* revolutionary struggles are yet to come. The August and September days of 1942 are the prelude to broader and more sweeping nationalist and class battles that will shake this sub-continent to its foundations. The great task in India is *fundamentally* the same task that faces the workers in every country. That is, the creation of a mass revolutionary party to lead the people. We have described the formation and program of the Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India. Its existence and its activity among the people, even though it does not yet influence broad masses of workers and peasants, is a proof of the growing maturity of the Indian working class. Now it seeks to solve the difficult task of find-

ing a way to the workers and peasants, based upon its powerful political program for the seizure of power and the creation of a People's India. This party represents the bright future of India and its 389,000,000 people. It will not flinch for a moment, but will prove resourceful and courageous under the fire of imperialism. It is determined that the Indian Revolution shall not be another "noble failure," as was the Spanish Revolution and other proletarian defeats. The Indian revolutionists, organized under the banner of the Fourth International, now in the midst of battle, will see to that! For they understand that, in their own words, "*The victorious revolution in India, dealing a mortal blow to the oldest and most widespread imperialism in the world, will on the one hand produce the most profound crisis in the entire capitalist world and shake world capitalism to its foundations. On the other hand, it will inspire and galvanize into action millions of proletarians and colonial slaves the world over and blaze the trail of world revolution.*"

APPENDIX

The Road for India

By LEON TROTSKY

Achievement of Workers' and Peasants' Democracy

When and under what conditions a colonial country becomes ripe for the real revolutionary solution of its agrarian and its national problems cannot be foretold. But in any case we can assert today with full certainty that not only China, but also India, will attain genuine popular democracy, that is, workers' and peasants' democracy, only through the dictatorship of the proletariat. On that road many stages, steps and phases can still arise. Under the pressure of the masses of the people the bourgeoisie will still take various steps to the Left in order then to turn all the more mercilessly against the people. Periods of dual power are possible and probable. But what there will not be, what there cannot be, is a genuine democratic dictatorship that is not the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Congress Bourgeoisie Is Counter-Revolutionary

Our liberal bourgeoisie comes forward as counter-revolutionary even before the revolutionary climax. In every critical moment, our intellectual democracy only demonstrates its impotence. The peasantry in its entirety represents an elementary rebellion. It can be put at the service of the revolution only by the force that takes over state power. The vanguard position of the working class in the revolution, the direct connection between it and the revolutionary village, the spell by which it conquers the army—all this pushes it inevita-

bly to power. The complete victory of the revolution means the victory of the proletariat.

The Working Class Leads the Nation

With regard to the countries with a belated bourgeois development, especially the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the theory of the permanent revolution signifies that the complete and genuine solution of their tasks, *democratic and national emancipation*, is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat as the leader of the subjugated nation, above all of its peasant masses.

Alliance of the Proletariat and the Peasantry

Not only the agrarian, but also the national question, assigns to the peasantry, the overwhelming majority of the population of the backward countries, an important place in the democratic revolution. Without an alliance of the proletariat with the peasantry, the tasks of the democratic revolution cannot be solved, nor even seriously posed. But the alliance of these two classes can be realized in no other way than through an intransigent struggle against the influence of the national liberal bourgeoisie.

Revolutionary Party is Fundamental Key

No matter how the first episodic stages of the revolution may be in the individual countries, the realization of the revolutionary alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry is conceivable only under the political direction of the proletarian vanguard, organized in the revolutionary party.

*From *The Permanent Revolution*.

GLOSSARY OF NAMES AND TERMS

- CONGRESS** (All-India National Congress)—The mass political party of the Indian capitalist class, composed mainly of small merchants, professionals, students and middle class elements. It is the party of Gandhi and is run politically and organizationally by the fifteen-man Working Committee (executive board).
- CONGRESS SOCIALIST PARTY**—Left wing party of India, led by middle-class radicals, similar to the British Independent Labor Party.
- CONGRESS WORKING COMMITTEE**—Political committee of the Congress Party, elected by the Congress Executive Committee with full powers between sessions. All fifteen Working Committee members are conservative Congress leaders; Gandhi, Nehru, Azad, etc., are members.
- DIWAN**—British-appointed adviser to the Rajahs and Feudal Princes.
- HARTAL**—A protest strike of Indian merchants and shopkeepers; the method of action usually favored by Gandhi.
- HINDUSTANI**—The principal and most widespread language of India; spoken by 125,000,000 people.
- HINDU MAHASABHA**—Organization of extreme reactionary Hindus, with an anti-Moslem communal program. The Hindu equivalent of the Moslem League.
- INQUILAB ZINDABAD!**—Long live the Revolution! (Hindustani).
- KISAN**—A small, land-owning peasant.
- KISAN SABHA**—Organization of the *kisans*, confined primarily to the provinces of Bihar and Orissa.
- MOSLEM LEAGUE**—The pro-British communal organization of landlord and middle-class Moslem reactionaries, headed by M. A. Jinnah.
- PURNA SWARAJ**—Complete national independence.
- RAJAH, MAHARAJAH**—Asiatic feudal prince, a despotic landlord with absolute power over his tenants and serfs.
- SAHIB**—Master, boss.
- SATYAGRAHA**—The Gandhi doctrine of non-violent, passive resistance.
- ZAMINDAR**—Landlord.

Facts on India

A Chart of the Exploitation of 389,000,000 People

"The history of British Imperialism is written in letters of blood from Congo to Canton."—Mahatma K. Gandhi.

The Facts:

- (a) India has a population of 389,000,000 people.
- (b) India is five-eighths the size of the United States.
- (c) The British have been in India for 250 years.
- (d) The British have been complete masters of India for 150 years.
- (e) There are approximately 300,000 Englishmen in India—one Englishman to 1,300 Indians!
- (f) The British-Indian Army has four English officers to each Indian officer.

The Government of India:

- (a) Wartime India is ruled by the British Viceroy; the Provincial Governors and British 'advisers' in the Native States.
- (b) Each Governor has full military and decree powers in his area, and is subject to removal by the Viceroy.
- (c) India is divided arbitrarily into:
 - (1) British India (eleven provinces)
 - (2) Native India (562 feudal states)
 - (3) "Independent" States (Nepal, Baluchistan, etc.)

The National Budget of India (1935-36):

	<i>Per Cent of Total</i>
Military Expenses	23.9
Interest of National Debt	22.5
Police and Jail Expenses	9.6
Civil Service Administration	8.7
Education	5.7
Medical and Public Health	2.6
Agriculture and Industry	2.1
Miscellaneous	24.9
Total	100.0

The Fruits of Lust for Profit:

- (a) (1800-1860)—1,000,000,000 pounds sterling in gold, jewels, silver, interest, etc., taken out of India.
- (b) Total British investment—approximately \$7,800,000,000.
- (c) Annual average profit on investment—\$900,000,000.
- (d) Annual interest on Indian National Debt—\$100,000,000.
- (e) "Rent *plus* dividends on investment *plus* railroad profits *plus* civil and military pensions *plus* taxes for England's wars *equals* annual wage-income of 60,000,000 Indian workers." (Karl Marx.)

The People of India:

THE PEASANTRY

- (a) There are 290,000,000 Indian farmers and peasants.
- (b) They live in 700,000 villages.
- (c) There are 40,000,000 unemployed agricultural laborers during each year.
- (d) Total annual taxation of Bengal peasants *equals* 40 per cent of total harvest value.
- (e) 50 per cent of Bombay peasant debts (1929-39) paid by seizure and sale of peasant lands.
- (f) Total agrarian debt—\$4,500,000,000.
- (g) Interest rates on loans: 25 per cent (minimum) to 200 per cent.
- (h) Land hunger: In Bengal (1931) there were 10,000,000 landless laborers (25 per cent of total Bengal peasantry). In Bombay, 1,128,732 families have under five acres of land; 2,047,986 families have one to twenty-five acres of land.
- (i) A peasant pays: rent to local landlord, land tax to province or native state government, land tax to British government, interest on loans from money lenders, taxes on water wells, streams, cattle, grazing lands, forests, license fees, wood-chopping, etc.; taxes on imported and exported agricultural products (salt).
- (j) A feudal peasant is obliged to: work at forced road labor; labor on buildings and irrigation works; pay marriage, birth and death taxes, religious dues, hunting taxes, etc., to his Maharajah; free plowing.

THE WORKERS

- (a) The 51,000,000 "Untouchables" (outcasts) form the bulk of the industrial and agricultural working class.
- (b) There are 5,000,000 industrial, transport and factory workers.
- (c) There are 300,000 workers employed in munition plants.
- (d) Average annual income (per individual):

<i>India</i>	<i>England</i>	<i>United States</i>
\$13.50	\$369.00	\$680.00
- (e) Bombay cotton mill wages: Men, 27 cents per day; women, 20 cents per day; children, 7 cents per day.
- (f) Coal miners' wages: Men (20 cents per day; women, 10 cents per day; children, 10 cents per day.
- (g) Plantation agricultural laborers: 6 to 10 cents per day.
- (h) Calcutta jute workers: \$1.50 to \$8.00 per month.
- (i) Average family annual income (five in family): \$100.

General Living Conditions:

- (a) Income: Percentage of population with annual income over \$300 7 per cent.
- (b) Illiteracy: 350,000,000 people cannot read or write any language.
- (c) Education: Two-thirds of India's 700,000 villages have no schools.
- (d) Life expectancy: India, 23.5 years; England, 55 years.
- (e) Death rate per thousand: India, 26.8; England, 12.
- (f) Infant mortality per thousand: India, 250; England, 51.
- (g) Deaths:
 - (1) Six million die annually in India.
 - (2) 44 per cent of all deaths are due to malaria.
 - (3) Bengal—750,000 under age of fifteen die annually.
- (h) Housing: An average of nine to ten people live in urban areas in rooms averaging in size six by eight feet.
- (i) Food (estimate of Sir John Megaw):
 - (1) 39 per cent well nourished.
 - (2) 41 per cent poorly nourished.
 - (3) 20 per cent starving (78,000,000 people).
- (j) Hospitals: There are 6,700 hospitals, one for each 163 square miles, or one per 58,000 people.
- (k) High schools: There is one high school for every 315 square miles.
- (l) Colleges: There is one college for every 4,000 square miles, or one per 865,000 population.