

BRAILSFORD: "REBEL INDIA"

DURING the last few years the English Labour Party, the General Council of Trade Unions and the Independent Labour Party have been actively engaged in strengthening the domination of British Imperialism in India.

The English bourgeoisie made use of the Princes when it put forward the idea of a Federation; it is now organising the Hindu-Moslem "crisis," restoring the Khalifat and so on and so forth; and while continuing negotiations with the Indian bourgeoisie and the National Congress, it is strenuously preparing, by means of bloody terror and martial law, to attempt the destruction of the growing revolutionary struggle of the Indian workers and peasant masses.

The treacherous work of the national reformists, especially the "lefts," who are seeking to undermine and disorganise the revolutionary camp from within and thus help smash the Indian revolution, is part of the general mobilisation of counter-revolutionary forces.

The Independent Labour Party actively supports, and at times even organises, the treacherous work of the national reformists.

In 1930 and 1931, Brailsford and Fenner Brockway, leaders of the Independent Labour Party, made a tour of India. They made public their impressions and plans in a series of articles, published in India and America, which, with certain changes, have now been published in book form.

Brailsford's book, "Rebel India," is interesting in that it gives a very clear picture of the imperialist, counter-revolutionary character of the Independent Labour Party which is frequently not against declaring in words that it is in favour (!) of the "right to self-determination" of India.

The book, just as the whole of the activities of the Independent Labour Party, clearly shows that the I.L.P. is not only not in favour of self-determination for India, but is openly and actively helping to enslave India and does all it can to defend the policy and activities of British Imperialism, by advising the British bourgeoisie to hide up its exploitation of the Indian people behind cunning, tricky manœuvres.

Mr. Brailsford in his book tries to show the way out of the Indian crisis. Whole masses of the population, Brailsford tells us, are dissatisfied with the existing régime, and only the National Congress keeps them back from warfare and uprisings.

"Uncompromising the Congress may be, but to the 'left' of it there are groups of young men ready for terrorist action and guerilla warfare, which wait only for the acknowledged failure

of its non-violent tactics. A minority it certainly is not. In all the vast area north of Bombay (guerilla warfare—V.) it has the active support and allegiance of the mass of the Hindoo population, in the villages no less than the towns." (Page 3.)

About the "uncompromising" (?) attitude of the National Congress we shall speak a little later. For the time being it is sufficient to note that Brailsford understands that only the National Congress is at present holding back the masses from a revolutionary uprising. He sees the coming revolution and is seeking the way to fight against it.

In the first part of his book Mr. Brailsford, to express his "sympathy," sheds crocodile tears about the poverty and suffering of the toiling masses of India. In spite of all his efforts to gloss over the position inside the country, he is compelled to admit that hunger, poverty, sickness, backwardness and semi-slavery are typical of the land.

"I have heard an English officer say that the first thing one has to do with Indian recruits is to teach them to eat. The average 'coolie' lacks the physique which instinctively resists wrong by an impulsive movement of the fists." (Page 66.)

Mr. Brailsford writes of the Indian village as follows:—

"To it" (the village) "comes the bania for interest and the zemindar for rent, and behind them both looms the overshadowing bulk of Government, with its courts and its police." (Page 57.)

The result of feudal-imperialist exploitation is well known and Mr. Brailsford is compelled to admit that the peasantry can live no longer in this way.

"On an acre an Indian villager, who uses no manure, but waters well, raises six to eight maunds of wheat (the maund being 82lbs.), though I heard in the Punjab of a capable farmer who achieved twelve. With eight maunds at the price then quoted at Delhi in the daily paper, a peasant would make 16 rupees, with a trifle extra for the straw, but the usurer, who is also the local dealer, would give less. Prices this year are half of last year's figures, but rents do not stop with prices. The reader can do the sum in subtraction, which will show how much remains for the cultivator after he has paid a rent of 30 rupees out of a yield of 16 rupees. Even the favoured few who paid a rent of 10 rupees would have a negligible

trifle, when they had set aside seed (say, 3 rupees) and fed their bullocks . . .

"I might have distrusted them, had I not found confirmation in a cold official publication." (Pages 58, 59.) "Millet and gram (the grain used for horses in India) are its (the peasants!) daily diet, and it eats little else. The children . . . looked like shadows nourished on debts. Most of them had some disease . . . many had the swollen belly that indicates a spleen enlarged by malaria." (Pages 53, 54.)

The position of the workers is no better. In the towns tens of thousands of people sleep on the pavements, 97 per cent. of the workers of Bombay live in one room, with an average of six to nine persons to a room. In Ahmedabad 92 per cent. of the workers live in the same conditions.

"Resulting evils are physical deterioration, high infant mortality and a high general death rate." ("Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India," June, 1931.) (Page 277.)

The wage of the agricultural labourers is equal to ten shillings a month. As for the workers in tanneries, Mr. Brailsford is forced to admit that in Bombay their wages are 18 rupees a month and they work twelve hours a day. Among them are to be found ten-year-old children who also "work twelve hours a day, three hundred and sixty-five days in the year." (Page 78.) They live under roofs covered with galvanized iron—veritable ovens, the size of which dwellings are 23 by 18 feet, and in which thirty persons are housed. And for this five shillings a month is paid. There are only three faucets for about 400 persons. "Among the refuse heaps," writes the "impressive" Mr. Brailsford, "the great rats were already hurrying." (Page 79.) "Beside that faucet of hot water, under the three-foot shelter," writes Brailsford, defending the interests of imperialism in a more subtle form, "the virus of Bolshevism might flourish with the rats and mosquitoes." (Page 80.) . . . "I left the court trying to reckon out how many faucets one might erect with one thousand rupees a day" (the Crown prosecutor receives a thousand and twenty rupees—390 dollars—daily, working on the Meerut trial) "spread over two years. It might have been a cheaper method of assuring King George's sovereignty over India." (Pages 80, 85.)

Mr. Brailsford, though hiding the true picture of poverty and slavery which exists in India, nevertheless, was compelled to recognise a few facts. But when it comes to explaining the reasons, here the imperialist speaks out his mind. The Indian people, it seems, are responsible for

everything, and they cannot even appreciate the bountiful, civilising (!) rôle of British imperialism:

"This sketch has deliberately underlined the factors inherent in the social structure of India and in Hindoo belief which explain her poverty and militate against economic progress.

"In them, and not in the evils of foreign rule, lie the direct potent causes of poverty and over-population" (page 178).

Mr. Brailsford and the whole of the Independent Labour Party try to fool the English proletariat and depict the imperialists as the carriers of civilisation and well-being to the so-called savage Indian people. And yet at the same time it is a plain and obvious fact that British imperialism not only relentlessly robs, violates and enslaves the Indian people, but also that it maintains and supports all the feudal survivals to be found in India, artificially fans the flame of Hindu-Moslim enmity, supports the caste system and behind lying, pharisaical talk of its so-called "neutrality," upholds and cultivates bond-slavery throughout the land. Mr. Brailsford, by distorting the true state of affairs in India nevertheless has to introduce facts in various parts of his book which, despite all the assurances of the leaders of the Independent Labour Party, show that it is only the struggle for emancipation against British Imperialism which will finally destroy feudal survivals in India, and that *only the cleansing fire of the Indian anti-imperialist and agrarian revolution will sweep away bond slavery from the land.*

"Much more startling, however, was the sudden abandonment of purdah in the more backward North . . . But even in the North this year has opened the doors of countless purdah homes . . . The Congress movement beckoned the women to every form of national service, and with courage and devotion they answered its call. They spoke at its mass demonstrations. They did most of the picketing work. They went in thousands to prison . . . All this was interesting enough in Bombay, which has never had the purdah system for Hindoo women: *It was startling in the north.* In Meerut, which is far from being an advanced or exceptional town. . . the women met together to consider how they should protest against Gandhi's arrest. Nothing seemed adequate save a procession; but they had lived all their lives in purdah. Out of it they came without hesitation, and four or five thousand walked openly through the streets. *They never went back to their seclusion*" (page 96.)

And after Mr. Brailsford had been compelled to admit in despair that the complete liberation

of women in India, is possible only by means of the struggle against British imperialism, and its destruction, he has the audacity to declare that British imperialism plays a civilising rôle, and that the Indian people themselves are to blame, that "the responsibility lies with Indian customs and beliefs, etc. (Page 139.)

Mr. Brailsford praises the rule of the English bourgeoisie. It appears that the bourgeoisie has brought peace, the abolition of hunger, national health, railways, and so on and so forth, to India.

"The balance of benefit, social, political and economic, is overwhelming." (Page 169.) Of course, "agrees" Brailsford, there are defects, but for these the Indians are to blame.

Thus the imperialist Independent Labour Party supports British Imperialism and tries to educate the English workers, to uphold Imperialist traditions and viewpoints; it tries to demoralise the English workers and eternalise the capitalist system in England itself. In advocating the independence of the English workers from the Empire, the Independent Labour Party tries to convince the workers of the solidarity (?) of interests between the English proletariat and the bourgeoisie and thus keep the workers eternally under the yoke of capitalism — the British slave-owning Empire.

The whole of Brailsford's book is devoted to an open defence of Imperialism. The English bourgeoisie hopes with the aid of the National Congress, including its "lefts" to smash the revolutionary movement. The leaders of the Independent Labour Party are not satisfied with this, but themselves actively instruct the "left" national reformists and help them. Mr. Brailsford, during his sojourn in the Punjab, helped to form the Punjab Socialist Party. This is an anti-revolutionary, anti-Marxist, anti-national organisation, with the theory of non-violence as the basis of its programme, which tries to disorganise the agrarian revolution by promises of agrarian reform. The Independent Labour Party ardently assists the reformists in the labour movement. Mr. Brailsford considers the Ahmedabad Textile Workers' Union, led by Gandhi and Anusayaben Sarabhai, the sister of one of the largest factory-owners in Ahmedabad—a trade union which systematically betrays the workers and helped to bring about the defeat of the Bombay textile workers in 1929, to be a fine example of positive work in the trade union movement. (Page 116.)

The leaders of the Independent Labour Party hold out high hopes for the National Congress. The general programme of the Independent Labour Party is somewhat simple and "modest": to keep India in its place as a colony, to increase the size of the drain upon India's national income,

at the expense of further exploitation of the Indian people. Brailsford's mouth waters.

"Everyone has heard of her fabulous hoards of gold and jewels . . . and estimates which look fantastic, but may in fact be sober. . . . The one fact that is certainly known is that India annually imports as part payment for her exports, gold to the annual value (taking an average over the last five years) of 53 crores of rupees (198.7 millions)." (Page 164.)

This gold, Brailsford sadly informs us, cannot be obtained by the Anglo-Indian Government or the banks,

"but it is possible, however, that patriotism might conjure a part of it out of the ground. . . . I believe that a really dynamic party could achieve this miracle." . . . (Page 165.)

i.e., with the help and agreement of the bourgeois National Congress.

Mr. Brailsford draws up hopeful plans: to raise the productivity of labour by 20 per cent. and to send "missionaries" to drain the inner resources, etc., etc.

The Independent Labour Party is not against raising the productivity of labour of agriculture, but goes no further than committees of the Royal Agrarian Commission, and does not intend to encroach upon the rights of the landlords and moneylenders. The Independent Labour Party allows of the industrial development of India, within certain limits: the production of clothing, the building of houses and even "gramophones." While allowing partial concessions to India as regards the textile industry, the leaders of the Independent Labour Party, together with British imperialism, declare: "Not a step further; we shall give no more. India must remain the economic appendage of England. Consequently, those "Indian thinkers and politicians who rely upon a policy of high protection to foster their national industry, are ignoring the fundamentals of the problem. Tariffs may be a proper means to use . . . but they may impoverish the peasantry further." (Page 159.) British imperialists as the defenders of the peasantry—is that not an engaging spectacle?

Mr. Brailsford recommends in its place that the handicraft workers should be assisted. "Could one then move on to co-operative workshops? In that case why should not one call in electric power?" Mr. Brailsford tries to put India in its position as a semi-feudal country, kindly agreeing to provide it with electric light and gramophones. The Independent Labour Party, while against independence for India, advocates Dominion Status, but, of course, within the same framework as that which is offered by the English bourgeoisie. The Independent Labour Party

demands guarantees: first of all that the British Army remain in India as the "strategic reserve in the East" against China and Russia and against the Indian people. Gandhi demands the same. "It is, however, chiefly an insurance against various internal risks, ranging from communal riots, and the possibility of attacks on the European cantonments, up to the risk of another Mutiny. The grant of self-government is meaningless, unless it has diminished and, indeed, abolished this risk." (Page 221.)

Of course, Mr. Brailsford supports the deceitful game of a Federation and of making use of the Princes. If the Princes enter the Federation then "the Federation and the Paramount Power are bound to protect them, and to defend them against a menacing agitation by their subjects, even though it should be for the conquest of rights which obtain throughout British India." (235). See how categorically Mr. Brailsford writes in his rôle of defender of the oppressed. Discussing the question of how poorly the interests of the peasantry will be represented in the future "parliament," Mr. Brailsford agrees that there should be no universal adult suffrage, and comforts himself with the thought that a way out is possible, namely "by inviting the Co-operative Credit Societies to choose representatives of the peasants, as the Trade Unions may do for the workers." (Page 236).

Mr. Brailsford, of course, considers that Hindu-Moslem enmity is the main obstacle on the road of Indian development, and has the audacity to state that the Hindus and Moslems are themselves to blame in this. And here we find the finest piece of hypocrisy on the part of the Independent Labour Party, which "educates" the workers by order of the English bourgeoisie: "I am not sure that the British Government does right to preserve its *passive* attitude on this question." (Page 245).

British Imperialism actively organises Hindu-Moslem "strife," and the Independent Labour Party assures us that the imperialists adopt a "passive" attitude towards it, and that the workers and peasants of India are to blame. Perhaps Brailsford would kindly explain why it is that the English bourgeoisie introduced electorates on a religious basis, and who it was, for example, that arranged that "Care is taken in Bombay Presidency that precisely one-third of the veterinary surgeons shall pray with their faces to Mecca" (i.e., are Moslems . . .). (Page 250). True, in India it is a well-known fact that it is British imperialism that organises religious conflicts. "I am sure, it is a crude slander to say, as Indians usually do, that the bureaucracy con-

sciously stirs up strife between the two communities." (Page 251).

The leaders of the Independent Labour Party entirely support MacDonal's policy and advise that certain insignificant concessions should be made to lessen (!) the Indian national debt a little (at the same time not forgetting to point out that in artificially raising the exchange value of the rupee, British imperialism at one blow increased the Indian national debt by 11 per cent. (page 194) and that these debts consist of expenditure on all kinds of plunderous wars). The leaders of the Independent Labour Party demand the curtailment of expenditure on the army and the transference of a small section of this expenditure to the British Treasury. At the same time Brailsford stoutly defends the Budget policy of the Government. "It is a grave mistake to suppose that the Indian Government is extravagant. On the contrary it is excessively economical" (page 198). Yet this "economical" Government spends over 70 per cent. of the budget on the army, the police, the prisons and the payment of interest to England. Brailsford recommends a curtailment in army expenditure of 25 per cent. This heroic step can be explained quite simply, for since 1929 the cost of everything used by the army and the fleet has fallen by 36 per cent. Therefore it is possible to grant "concessions" to the Indian bourgeoisie and still lose nothing, explains Brailsford mockingly.

In his eagerness Mr. Brailsford is even prepared to talk about the abolition of private ownership of the land, but like Nehru he compels the peasantry to pay compensation (page 197), i.e., increases their poverty and hunger. But the Independent Labour Party and the English bourgeoisie, together with the National Congress, are not prepared to take this step, for they neither wish, nor dare, to undermine landlord ownership, which is an indispensable part of Imperialist domination. Mr. Brailsford is satisfied with the work of the Round Table Conference, but understands that in circumstances of deepening crisis and growing revolution among the workers and peasants, the rôle of the National Congress is a very subtle, "honourable" one, for it must help to disorganise the masses.

"My own belief," declares Brailsford on pages 254 and 255, "is that if this struggle should be resumed with a trade depression as its background, it will develop inevitably into an agrarian revolution, which will shake the structure of Indian society as well as the Imperial connection. The struggle will not for long remain non-violent; the next phase may be an attempt to use Sinn Fein tactics, and terrorism with its blundering cruelty will break out." This would be a mistake,

declares Brailsford, both for the English and for the National Congress.

Therefore Brailsford recommends two plans to the Indian bourgeoisie with which to smash the Indian revolution.

The first, which he considers is the best and "most probable," is that "the result of the Conference will seem to Congress neither good enough to accept, nor bad enough to resist" (page 255).*

In this case the National Congress will not resume "civil disobedience," nor boycott the elections, nor take office in the Government, but will remain as before "a critical, irresponsible Opposition." In this case the policy of Hindu-Moslem "strife" will continue, landlord ownership will remain, the peasantry will gain nothing, the workers and peasants will be exploited still more, but the "big modern capitalist interests will have their way" (page 257).

The National Congress will have to split and then "the Left Wing of Congress, meanwhile (especially if Mr. Gandhi should quit politics and retire to his ashram), will go its way as a party of peasants and workers, attempting to solve the problem of Indian poverty sometimes by efforts within the elected chambers, more often by rent-strikes and a resort to the tactics of civil disobedience" (page 258).

Mr. Brailsford foresees that there will be sporadic agrarian uprisings, against the Princes as well, which will "attract the sympathetic interest of Moscow" (page 259). Along this road of development, hand in hand with the Indian bourgeoisie, the leaders of the Independent Labour Party are hoping to maintain the domination of imperialism and the right to continue plundering the Indian people, and consequently at the same time the English proletariat as well.

The second prospect which Mr. Brailsford considers the best, but which he does not recommend at present, is that the National Congress having openly accepted the "Constitution" should enter the Government. Mr. Brailsford warns us in advance that the Constitution will be very dock-tailed, but the right will remain to introduce insignificant improvements, clearly with the consent of British imperialism, the Princes and the landlords.

Mr. Brailsford once more repeats the programme of action of a "National" Government (!) of this kind. "It might tap the hoards of buried gold for its constructive purposes. . . . It might launch on a wide front a campaign of en-

lightenment to bring intelligence into agriculture, to create village industries, and raise the standards of health and housing" (page 261.) The leaders of the Independent Labour Party are prepared to concede very little to the Indian bourgeoisie. In the second case as well, declares Brailsford, the National Congress will be unable to maintain unity. Differentiation is inevitable, hence the rôle of the "Lefts," and it is of extreme importance to make use of them (page 262.)

The result of the work of the Round Table Conference up to now, shows that the National Congress intends "neither to accept . . . nor to resist." The National Congress, and particularly its "left" wing, while not definitely refusing to present its "demands" to the imperialists, and making use of new "left" manoeuvres (boycott, the threat of civil disobedience), is mobilising all its forces to ensure for itself leadership of the national struggle and to prevent the growth of the Indian revolution. The counter-revolutionary camp is mobilising and the leaders of the Independent Labour Party are taking an active part. The special task of the Independent Labour Party is to unite with the "left" national reformists (Bose, Roy and others) for the purpose of preventing the creation of an Indian Communist Party and holding back the anti-imperialist and agrarian revolution in India.

A concrete examination of the trend of development once more confirms the fact that the victory of the anti-imperialist and agrarian revolution, the conquering of full State independence for India, the abolition of the landlord-feudal ownership of the land, and social reconstruction, can be achieved *only under the leadership of the Communist Party*, and in the struggle not only against imperialism and its usurious-feudal supporters, but also against its ally, the Indian bourgeoisie and the National Congress.

For this reason, the creation of an *all-Indian Communist Party* is the essential prerequisite for the victory of the agrarian and anti-imperialist revolution in India. A determined fight must therefore be waged against limiting the Party to circles of a provincial type. It is therefore essential that the workers and the Party should play a most energetic part in the anti-imperialist struggle, and support every kind of activity which is truly aimed against imperialism and its allies, at the same time mobilising all revolutionary elements around the Communist party, who are prepared to fight, and striving for the hegemony of the proletariat in the national movement.

The Independent Labour Party is a counter-revolutionary anti-working class party. It helps to enslave India, and at the same time disorgan-

*Brailsford's book was written before the conclusion of the Round Table Conference.

ises the English proletariat with its pseudo-Socialist phrases. The Independent Labour Party talks about the civilising rôle of the English bourgeoisie, it is against Indian independence, it supports and propagates imperialist traditions among the English workers with considerable artifice (not clumsily like the Conservatives).

By summoning the workers to support the usurious British Empire, it at one and the same

time calls upon them to support the capitalist system inside England.

The struggle for State independence for India is a necessary condition for the liberation of the English proletariat. This also demands the most determined, daily unmasking of the Independent Labour Party, a continuous struggle against it as the party of British Imperialism and the enslavement of colonial peoples.
