

## Comrade BEN SAID (Algeria):

To give a good idea of the question of the colonial workers in France, one must get at the root of it.

The problem of colonial workers in France has already received the attention of our Party.

This labour power played a very important role during the war. Recruited by force for starvation pay it was used for the manufacture of war material and for military work. Only an infinitesimal section was specialised and received equal wages with French workers. This encouraged clandestine embarkations which assumed enormous proportions. In 1920 imperialism, seeing that it could not put a stop to them, gave freedom of passage.

But the main factor which determined imperialism to make this concession was the lack of labour power in the colonies.

Before the war French capitalism suffered from lack of labour power. The war aggravated this deficit and brought confusion into the economy of the country. In the post-war period the problem of the reconstruction of the devastated regions, the trend towards industrialisation stimulated by the annexation of Alsace Lorraine, compelled French capitalism to introduce foreign and colonial labour power.

Colonial labour power (unskilled workers) and foreign labour power (skilled) workers, introduced in France after the war by French capitalism made the law of supply and demand function in its favour. From its exploitation it derived a great deal of prosperity; moreover it enabled it to constitute its industrial reserve army.

The revolutionary situation which arose after the war brought capitalism face to face with a series of problems, among others the introduction on a large scale of labour power from technically backward countries which are under its yoke.

French capitalism imagined that this labour power would be in its hands a weapon which would crush all eventual movements of the working class for better conditions. It also hoped that the very low wages paid to the workers would create between it and the French workers continuous friction and antagonism and would be a means to reduce the wages of the latter.

Thus there were in France in 1924 about 300,000 North Africans including 70,000 in the Paris region. This number has been reduced to 100,000 including 40,000 in the Paris region. They are employed by various industries especially by the metallurgical industry. Their average pay is 20 francs. These workers returned and are still returning to France by various means — clandestine embarkments, industrial or collective contracts.

The objective and subjective reasons which are at the root of this exodus are the pauperisation of the peasantry, the accentuation of the process of the proletarianisation of the petty bourgeoisie and the artisans, the terrorist regime which has become the normal regime, the "high wages" earned by their compatriots who have already gone to France.

Collective recruitment through agencies has also played a certain role. Recruiters invaded the regions and dangled before the eyes of the natives enticing wages and wonderful conditions of labour. They frequently succeeded in making many recruits especially among the Khammes (landless peasants) who were atrociously duped in this manner. For when they arrived in France they found that their wages were 25 to 40% smaller than those paid to French workers; moreover travelling expenses were deducted from their wages although they had been told that they get a free passage. They are also made to pay for their lodgings (in insanitary barracks).

In 1926 a terrible tragedy took place in connection with clandestine embarkations. On a boat travelling from Algiers to Marseilles 25 natives were found dead in the ships hold, two years after the promulgation of the Chautemps-decree which suppressed freedom of passage.

In spite of the suppression of the freedom of passage the number of colonial workers did not decrease till the economic crisis of 1926—27. They were the first to be dismissed. By roundabout methods used in certain regions they were compelled to go back to their country, whereas in the Lyons region they were repatriated by force.

Did our Party work among these workers? The answer must be in the affirmative although the work was not very adequate. Nevertheless the organisation of many recruiting and agitational campaigns, especially in the Paris region, can be reckoned among the real successes of the Party.

The organisation of Congresses of North African workers in Paris, Douai, and Marseilles were the culminating point of the great work in these regions. The Congresses, which were attended by many delegates from these regions, discussed political and trade union Theses and adopted two resolutions dealing with their immediate political and trade union demands. One must admit that it was a great error not to keep up the connection with these delegates which would have enabled us to group them in trade unions and to form among them regional cadres.

During the Riff war work among these workers was utterly neglected. Instead of taking advantage of the presence of these elements in France in order to explain to them the position of the Party and to help to develop their class consciousness which they were beginning to acquire under the influence of the economic conditions, they were utterly neglected. During the general strike declared by the Committee of Action against the war in Morocco these workers did not respond to this slogan as was expected of them. The blame for this rests with the regions and districts which did not do their duty in this sphere.

This defect was remedied to a certain extent by the creation of the post of colonial organiser which was very serviceable

in the Paris region but had to be suppressed subsequently for certain reason.

Our comrades in the C. G. T. U. realised the importance of this question only much later. Till 1925 the Party alone carried on recruiting campaigns for the trade unions. At that date a part-time organiser was appointed but this did not have the desired results owing to the inertia of the Executive.

It was only in 1926 that the Colonial Bureau was reorganised and a permanent organiser was appointed.

We must admit that although at first this colonial bureau was fairly active and succeeded in grouping around itself energetic bona fide workers, this is no longer the case at present. The energy displayed at first has made room for complete inertia. For instance no preparatory work was done in this sphere for the last May Day. A few feeble efforts were made by the C. G. T. U. in regard to the colonial workers.

It should also be pointed out that even militant colonial workers are showing signs of inertia because they do not get the necessary encouragement and direction from the leading cadres of the Party. No work has been done at all among the Negroes and Indo-Chinese of whom there are 10,000 in France.

When the Party and the C. G. T. U. were embarking on energetic work among the colonial workers the C. G. T., through its Secretary **Jouhaux**, was demanding the complete repatriation of these workers on the plea "that these 300,000 colonial workers who have acquired certain professional skill can provide the technical cadres required for the further development of the French Colonies...."

Soon after Jouhaux brought forward another very edifying proposal in the National Labour Sub-Commission to the following effect:

"Considering that the requirements of the natives are very modest and that their production is one quarter of that of the French worker, their wages must be established on this basis...."

This slogan issued by Jouhaux from the platform of the National Labour Commission where he collaborates with the big industrialists is taken over from an Algerian deputy. This representative of the colonies, who is himself a colonist and a mine-owner, formulated his proposals as follows:

"In Algeria shortage of labour power is the most serious problem confronting the colonisers. It is absolutely necessary that North African workers who are in France should not get such high wages. Taking into consideration this smaller productivity they must receive the same pay as workers in Algeria."

Community of viewpoints between Jouhaux, the spokesman of the C. G. T., and the representative of the colonisers reveals the path traversed by the reformist organisation which has fallen into downright racial hostility and shows to these workers that it is the best supporter of the employers and colonisers.

It will be no news to you that the colonial workers will have nothing to do with it and that any attempt to form a reformist organisation is bound to fail ignominiously.

In this connection it should be pointed out that two police bureaux have been established in France, one in Paris for the Algerians and the other in Marseilles for the Indo-Chinese. These bureaux are above all to watch over revolutionary workers and to terrorise colonial workers who follow us.

By such means natives who are known to be active trade unionists or active Party members are dismissed from certain factories while others, in order to get employment, must produce a green card signed by this bureau to which employers apply for information about the workers they engage.

Our Party carried on an energetic campaign against the establishment of that detective institution which demonstrates the determination of French imperialism to apply to colonial workers the denizenship regime even in France. But this demonstrates also that imperialism is alarmed by the increasing sympathy of these masses for our Party.

It should also be stated that the desire to be organised is very strong among these masses. Thus many organisations have sprung up on the platform of national independence which advocate uncompromising direct struggle against imperialism.

The most characteristic of these organisations is certainly "L'Etoile Nord African" (the North African Star). This Association established by the North African workers in Paris is rather influential in North Africa. At one time it had as many as 2,000 members in the Paris region alone. But the economic crisis in 1926 reduced its membership considerably. This did not however prevent it taking up a definite attitude to the political, economic and social problems which arose in North Africa. Thus it published its programme for the three North African countries in its organ "Ikdam" which is very popular and has a big circulation among the populations of North Africa and was several times suppressed by the Minister of the Interior. The programme demands complete independence without neglecting at the same time to bring forward a programme of immediate demands for each of these countries concerning the peasantry, the working class, civil liberties, women, a programme from the cultural and constitutional viewpoint: demands against feudalism, big landowners and all the profiteers of the colonisation system.

"L'Etoile" denounces energetically the opportunist bourgeoisie, combats tendencies towards assimilation and exposes the attitude of the social-democrats which is described as follows in an article published in the "Ikdam":

"Its collaboration in the new military law and its adherence to the plan for the development of the colonies make this party one of the worst enemies of the colonial peoples, a particularly dangerous enemy because of its insinuating and perfidious policy."

This Association is by no means sectarian; its statutes show that it is open to all North Africans whatever be their creed as long as they accept its programme, defend it everywhere and at all times and submit to its discipline.

This Association carried on a big agitation in the Paris region: it held at one time 4 to 5 agitational meetings per week. But one must say that it has not yet extended in the Colonies proper where it has good connections, nor to regions in France where more African workers reside.

There are also three groups of Indo-Chinese workers in France (in Paris, Havre and Marseilles). These Associations embrace all the Indo-Chinese workers of these localities but they do not have any official and organisational connection between each other which would have enabled them to carry on a more effective struggle against imperialism. Nearly all the members of these Associations are seamen and foodworkers.

There are also Students Associations in every French university town, but they are merely mutual aid associations. There is also for instance, the Independence Party which has branches in Toulouse, Havre and Bordeaux. This Party and its organ "L'Avenir de L'Annam" (Annam's Future) advocate the independence of Indo-China but have no political platform.

There are many Negroes in Marseilles, Bordeaux and Paris. They have three organisations. One is a freemason organisation and the other two go by the name of "Defence Committee of the Negro Race". The two latter constituted at first one group which was founded by our much lamented comrade Sengnor Lamine.

I would like to say a few words on the North African Students Association which was founded a few months ago. This group seems to be a purely mutual aid and philanthropic society. It consists of young native bourgeois elements with a sprinkling of poor students who profess their national sentiment behind the scenes but are too timid to profess it publicly. Through their silence and political inertia they are objectively supporting the imperialist policy of expropriation, exploitation and terror of imperialism.

These students should learn a lesson from the native manual workers in the Paris region who, in spite of the obscurantism to which Imperialism condemns them, have been able to find the right path: the path of organisation which alone will lead to liberation.

The French proletariat is the only proletariat of the imperialist countries which has the great advantage of the presence of colonial elements in the mother country. This creates important duties for the French Party because these workers stay generally only one or two years in France. Therefore we must concentrate our efforts on these immigration channels and stations where the natives merge together from various North African regions and can be developed into future cadres for their own class organisations.

One must of course admit that progress has been made in this domain since the V. Congress, but one must also admit that the work done is inadequate. Among these elements we must not work sporadically but systematically and continuously, through our basic organisations which unfortunately do not yet fully realise the importance of this question.

Formation of militant colonial cadres, efforts on our part to group them in trade union organisations, developing their class consciousness and recruiting them for the Party, — such must be our tasks in France.

It is only by tackling these tasks resolutely, by establishing a united front of the oppressed of the colonies and the exploited of the mother countries, that we will be able to make a stride towards the preparation of the revolution.

#### Comrade SHAGRI (Persia):

Comrades, as pointed out in the theses, the immediate task of the Comintern after the Congress is — establishment of Communist Parties in countries where none as yet exist, and the consolidation of those which already exist.

But the question arises, what our Communist Parties in colonial and semi-colonial countries should be like. It is said in the theses that Communist Parties in colonial and semi-colonial countries must be genuine proletarian parties not only in regard to their aims and programmes but also in regard to their social composition. This is correct, but are our Parties in colonial and semi-colonial countries really genuine proletarian parties? I can boldly say, in regard to many parties, that they are not. Our colonial parties have been crowded with opportunist and petty-bourgeois elements. For instance, our Persian Party had in 1922 several thousand members, half of them being petty-bourgeois and opportunist elements. This applies also to other parties, for instance, the Turkish Party where a similar state of affairs prevails.

The experience of the colonial parties shows that parties must not aim at quantity but rather at the quality of their membership.

Colonial Communist Parties are confronted with three main tasks: 1. leadership in the class struggle, in the struggle of the working class of the respective country; 2. Development of the peasant struggle and the agrarian revolution; 3. Struggle against imperialism.

In regard to the first question, the Communist Party must of course come forward independently and with its own programme, it must not co-operate with other classes. But in regard to the second and third question, the Communist Party must of course make full use of the masses of these countries. To solve these tasks, the Communist Party must co-operate with and utilise the small and middle peasantry, the intelligentsia and small and middle traders.

Comrades, in many Eastern countries these classes (intelligentsia, small traders, merchants) have not yet fulfilled their historical role and have still a great deal to do in the struggle against imperialism and for liberation from the imperialist yoke. We must organise now these masses for the struggle against imperialism. I think that in colonial and semi-colonial countries where the peasant movement already exists and develops rapidly from year to year, the organisation of labour-peasant parties, as auxiliary organisations for the Communist Parties, is necessary. For instance, in India. These labour-peasant parties must control the struggle of the peasantry, must place themselves at the head of this struggle. I therefore disagree with that part of the theses where the necessity of organising labour-peasant parties is denied. It goes without saying that the or-