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The Fight For Indian Independence.

By R. Bishop (London).

The conclusion of the second Round Table Conference in London has been quickly followed by an intensification of the struggles of the workers and peasants of India against British Imperialism, its extortions and its exploitation. It has been as quickly followed by the British Government in India redoubling its repressive measures.

Within the last few weeks Ordinances have been issued in the United Provinces, Punjab, Bengal and the N.W. Frontier Province of the most drastic kind. Hundreds of arrests have taken place all over India, and in the N.W. Province over 1200 have been arrested for their connection with the Red Shirt movement.

In the N. W. Frontier, too, peaceful meetings have been fired on and peasants killed with a wanton brutality reminiscent of the days of Amritsar. And now Gandhi—delegate to the Round Table Conference, and Vallabhai Patel, the Congress President have been arrested, and four new general Ordinances promulgated. In addition the Indian National Congress has been suspended.

The arrest of Gandhi was the very thing that astute politician needed to rehabilitate him with the Indian masses who were naturally very suspicious of his consorting with the Imperialist enemy at the Round Table Conference.

It was precluded by the usual interchange of telegrams between Gandhi and the Viceroy, and when the police came to arrest him Gandhi was waiting for them with his luggage packed ready. He is now in Yevavda Prison, with his spinning wheel, his cooking vessels, a selected library and a personal attendant to attend him. His cell is a suite of three rooms—he has been placed under arrest "during His Majesty's pleasure". His treatment is very different from that meted out to the other prisoners or to any other of the innumerable prisoners who are being persecuted by Imperialism in India, but it is sufficient to create a deep impression once again amongst large masses whose faith in Gandhi was waning, that he is an enemy of Imperialism. On

May 5, 1930, Gandhi was arrested in a similar way—with every consideration for his comfort—but when his purpose had been served he was released in January and two months later signed the Delhi Pact with Lord Irwin, the then Viceroy.

The Gandhi-Irwin Pact aimed at bringing to an end the activities of the peasantry and stemming their rapidly-growing political consciousness. The rapid fall in the price of agricultural commodities, the extortions of the rent and tax collectors, however, proved more effective in their results than the signature of "martyr" Gandhi, and the flames of revolt broke out with redoubled vigour in all parts of India. Peasant organisations are to-day springing up with amazing rapidity in the rice fields of Madras and Bengal, among the jute cultivators of Bengal, Assam and Orissa, among the cotton growers of Bombay, Punjab and the Deccan, among the wheat growing areas of the Punjab and the United Provinces.

But the most complete revolt has been in the United Provinces—the heart of feudal India—and in the N. W. Frontier Province, where the sturdy Moslem tribesmen have been flocking to the banner of the Red Shirts who are now computed to number some 200,000. In industrial India too there has been a notable reawakening of activity. While little news comes through to Britain, there have been numerous strikes of textile workers, railwaymen etc. within the latest period. In the United Provinces the Ordinance was directed against the rapid development of the No-Rent and No-Taxes movement—that is directed equally against the Government and the zamindars, many of whom are pillars of the Congress.

The Ordinances vary from Province to Province. In Bengal special tribunals have been authorised with full power to impose death sentences and sentences of transportation for life to the fearful penal settlement of the Andaman Islands. These courts have been given power to hold their trials in secret and in the absence of the accused. There is no right of appeal against verdict or sentence. The magistrates have the widest powers under the Ordinance. They are empowered at their discretion to delegate their authority to military or

police officers. They have power to levy collective fines on whole districts.

In the **United Provinces** meetings and the publication of leaflets and pamphlets are prohibited, whilst the movements of agitators are strictly controlled.

Throughout India, the Imperialist Government is making an unprecedented show of its armed force. Special parades of troops, accompanied by armoured car columns, machine guns, artillery etc. have been organised in the most remote parts. This has been officially described as "showing the flag", and its purpose has been to intimidate the population into a belief that it is useless to oppose the might of the British Raj. In places targets have been placed in the sea and the village population lined up in the streets to witness the targets being blown to smithereens by artillery. In other places the troops have been accompanied by aeroplanes flying overhead, dropping leaflets which inform the inhabitants that they could as easily drop bombs and will do so if there is any trouble. In **Chittagong** and the neighbouring towns a state of virtual martial law has been reigning for some time. Armed troops make daily house to house searches, rounding up suspects and picketing the town.

Throughout India the toilers find their position, always a terrible one, getting steadily worse. They find that the Congress in which they have, to a large degree, trusted in the past, participating in a Conference with the Imperialist exploiters. They find that the demand for independence has been watered down to one for a constitution within the Empire.

In the light of these facts it is easy to understand the manoeuvres of the Viceroy with Gandhi and his fellows. Gandhi calls for a policy of non-violence, he repeats all the old gestures that he used after the war and again prior to the Delhi Pact, but he finds that he has lost much of his old magic, that the masses are distinctly sceptical. His utterances are in too flagrant contradiction to his utterances and actions in Europe, when he openly supported the retention of British troops in India, when he pledged himself to work for "an amicable settlement".

British imperialism tries two methods, and uses them as occasion demands. Bloody repression at one moment—the pushing to the forefront of individuals like Gandhi, with the object of diverting the real struggle. The Congress is declared illegal. The new Ordinances declare peaceful picketing to be an offence. The Ordinances applied to the United Provinces and the frontier districts are now applied to all India. Gandhi is arrested, Vallabhai Patel is arrested; Jawarhalal Nehru is arrested; the arrest of other Congress leaders is anticipated.

Gandhi's arrest was followed by the declaration of a hartal in Bombay which operated with thoroughness on the following day. The Congress has called for a resumption of civil disobedience—non violent of course.

The role of Gandhi is frankly acknowledged by a section of the British capitalist press, their only doubt is as to whether he has the power to fulfil that role.

Said the "News-Chronicle" on December 29:—

"A heavy responsibility rests, in the situation which has now arisen, upon Mr. Gandhi. What is unfortunately doubtful is whether he possesses the power to implement his own pledges. . . Mr. Gandhi's speech (on landing) stripped of his customary, cautious ambiguities, appears to be an offer to advise Congress to co-operate with the Round-Table Conference."

The fear here, expressed by the bourgeoisie is well-founded. It is extremely doubtful whether Gandhi and his lieutenants will once more be able to check the revolt of the toilers of India. The economic crisis is wreaking such havoc upon the lives of the masses, that Gandhi's non-violent humbug is likely to fall upon deaf ears.

The fight will develop, drawing into its stride ever wider and wider masses, including more and more Congress rank and filers who for long have been dissatisfied with the policy pursued. The issue daily becomes clearer. The Congress fights only for added influence for the Indian bourgeoisie: its leaders have shown on innumerable occasions that they are willing to make a bargain for the common exploitation of the Indian workers and peasants. The masses, on the other hand, are fighting, ever more and more consciously, for the overthrow of exploitation—whether, by British or Indian landlords and capitalists.

The fight is a fight for a free Workers and Peasants India, and in this fight the Gandhis are in the camp of the Imperialists. They realise that a Workers and Peasants India

would have no place for the rich mill-owners and zemindars who provide the Congress Party with its financial backing and determine its policy.

In this struggle against the domination of a foreign Imperialism and capitalist exploitation, the workers of Britain have got to play a more and more prominent role. Particularly amongst the troops has it got to be made clear why they are kept in India. Amongst the workers in Britain there is a growing realisation of the common nature of the struggle of themselves and the Indian toilers. But that realisation has to be spread further yet, until the broad masses of the British workers, in uniform and out, are prepared to unite with the Indian masses on the common demand for the complete independence of India and separation from Britain.

POLITICS

From Basle to Lausanne.

By Th. Neubauer (Berlin).

The International Conference on Reparations, to which the report of the Basle Special Advisory Committee under the Young Plan must be submitted, is to take place on January 2 at Lausanne on Lake Geneva. From there to Geneva, at which the "Disarmament Conference" is to commence a little later it will be only a short journey. Thus care has been taken that the debts from the past war and the armaments for the coming war shall appear in a very obvious connection.

The United States of America will not be officially represented at Lausanne. Nevertheless they will play a leading role there. At Geneva, which is not far distant, the U.S.A. delegation, headed by General Dawes, the American Ambassador in London and father of the Dawes Plan, and the former Under State Secretary Norman Davis, will be ready to hand, and there therefore exists every chance that between Lausanne and Geneva a game of diplomatic intrigue will develop such as the world has never seen.

The Basle negotiations were not yet ended and the German bourgeois press were still clinging firmly to their belief in the fidelity of the English partner in negotiations when the diplomatic manoeuvres preparatory to the reparations conference commenced. Sir Leith Ross, Under State Secretary in the British Treasury, went to Paris in order, in negotiations with the French Finance Minister M. Flandin, to seek a basis for a compromise, which of course could only be concluded at the expense of Germany. The London "Daily Telegraph" reported regarding these negotiations that, whilst complete agreement had not been reached, it had been agreed that a formula for compromise should be proposed by both sides, and that then the experts on each side would have the task of bringing the two formulae into harmony, when it would only remain for the two governments to express their approval of the same. This report throws an interesting light on the situation: France and England come to an agreement between themselves regarding what reparations Germany shall pay in future, without even asking the German government; as soon as the compromise, the formula has been found, then it will be submitted to the German government for acceptance.

The French press hastened to publish the main outline of the Franco-English compromise. Germany is to be granted a moratorium for three years (the English at first demanded five years), but only for the postponable part of the annuities, i.e., on a sum of 1100 to 1200 millions. On the other hand, Germany shall pay the unprotected annuities, amounting to about 700 million, to the Bank for International Settlements, which would then lend them back as private debts. In addition, Germany shall undertake to fulfil deliveries in kind to an extent not yet fixed. The payment back of the private debts would proceed concurrently with these tribute obligations. Finally, Germany's reparation creditors shall make common representation to the United States in order to induce the latter to grant a reduction of its war debts "in accordance with the sacrifice of the reparations Powers for the economic restoration of Europe".

This plan represents a large-scale manoeuvre on the part of French imperialism in order to sidetrack the whole question of the cancellation of reparations. It is known that the American Congress, at stormy sessions, has pronounced emphatically against any further reduction of war debts, and