

Appendix (v)

The United National Front

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The people of India will be shortly called upon to take decisions of tremendous political importance decisions which will have a far reaching effect on the whole future of India's struggle for freedom. The fiftieth session of the Indian National Congress meets at Faizpur during December at a time when the Government is taking the final step to impose the new imperialist constitution upon India despite the overwhelming opposition of the people.

It is in these circumstances that the National Congress meets, with the heavy responsibility of preparing for the most critical period in the history of India's struggle. Every endeavour must be made to ensure that the conclusions of the Congress will give a powerful impetus to the movement for liberation. How can we assist in this direction? Our comrades of the Communist Party of India are facing great odds and working under enormous difficulties, but nevertheless playing a big part in helping to mould the great movement of workers, peasants and middle-class in such a manner that they will be able to deal a smashing blow to imperialism.

The question of establishing the United National Front in India is the most vital issue upon which the success of the future struggle will depend. The key need remains—the unity of all anti-imperialist forces in the common struggle.

At the Lucknow Session the question of Unity was concretely presented. The launching of this slogan of unity showed the tremendous feeling and support it was possible to rally behind

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this call. The discussion over the past nine months, and the efforts made by Congressmen, Congress Socialists and sections of the Labour movement on the question of the United Front has already produced a degree of success. We must endeavour to carry the question from the sphere of discussion to a complete crystallisation of a United National Front in India, but it is obvious from the discussions in the press and elsewhere that a number of questions have been raised which must be answered before the road is clear for the realisation of the united front.

The situation in India is particularly favourable for the organisation of a United Anti-Imperialist Front. There is not a conference called by the Congress Socialist Party, trade union, or peasant organisation without the demand being put forward for the formation of a common front against imperialism. Steadily the unification of radical groups is taking place; in the Punjab, unity between the Kirti Kisan Party, the Radical League and the Socialists; in Bengal, unity between the Labour Party and Socialists. This, coupled with a number of united front platforms on a number of particular questions, all show an intense desire to struggle for unity.

Jawaharlal Nehru's period of office as President of the Indian National Congress has been marked by his militant campaign throughout India, the central feature of which has been the call for the common front against imperialism. Nehru says:

“The essence of the joint Popular Front must be uncompromising opposition to Imperialism and the strength of it must inevitably come from the active participation of the peasantry and workers.”

It is important that we should support his call for the United Front. What is the main task confronting the Anti-imperialist Front?

The Task is the Liberation of the Indian People and the introduction of a Democratic Regime.

To achieve success in this task we must be prepared to collaborate with all possible allies of the revolutionary vanguard in the struggle for national liberation and for the democratic rights of the people. It must be possible for any one who hates foreign oppression, who sympathises with the suffering of the people, to find a place for himself in this struggle.

We welcome the call of our Indian comrades in their official organ of the C.P.I. where they say:

“It is the duty of Indian Communists today to come out as the organisers of the broadest possible Anti-imperialist United front.”

The unification of the anti-imperialist forces will obviously start from the organisations already existing the Indian National Congress, the Congress Socialist Party, the Communist Party, the two All India Trade Union Centres, Student and other radical organisations. The drawing together of these organisations and groups would give a tremendous impetus to the mass movement. The fact that the main task of the United Anti-Imperialist Front is the liberation of the country and the National regeneration of the great Indian people, would draw in with the Congress, the Indian middle classes alongside the great masses of workers and peasants. Thus creating a real mass United National Front against British Imperialism. ✎

Every endeavour must be made to make the Indian National Congress the pivot of the United National Front. We have not yet succeeded in winning collective affiliation of the anti-imperialist and mass organisations to the Congress. Nevertheless the National Congress is the principal existing mass organisation of elements seeking National liberation. It is in these circumstances that the National Congress can play a tremendous part in the realisation of the United Front.

We must be clear, however, in order to carry out the United Anti-Imperialist Front in practice that there must be no idea lurking in the minds of any of the participants that they have the right to exploit the United Front; or that one or other of the participants must win at the expense of the other. All participating in the United Front must accept the right of freedom of propaganda and the right of each to defend their own point of view. The Communists will be the first to enter into any agreement so long as it means strengthening the anti-imperialist struggle. The aim of the Communists in the United Anti-Imperialist Front will be success, not to one party, but to the millions of Indian people in their struggle for liberation.

What is the slogan which will generalise the struggle at the present stage? We are on the eve of the introduction of the New Constitution. For the past ten years the question of the Constitution has been continuously on the order of the day. From the period of the boycott of the Simon Commission in 1927, followed by the Civil Disobedience Movement, this struggle was conducted against the proposed slave Constitution. This Constitution is now being imposed. In the present stage therefore, the struggle against the Constitution imposed upon the people by British Imperialism, means a struggle for Democracy which does not exist in India and will not be given through the new Constitution. The main general slogan therefore for this National United Front should be for a Constituent Assembly.

Does this fight for the Constituent Assembly and for democracy mean, as has been suggested in some quarters, that the slogan for Soviets and for Socialism is reduced to mere words? On the contrary to suggest such an opposition is to fail to see the real development of the struggle. In the words of Jawaharlal Nehru "there can be no Socialism without National Liberation."

The first task that faces us all is this liberation of India from foreign imperialist domination and the establishment of elementary democracy. This task is expressed in the slogan of the Constituent Assembly. But precisely this fight draws the mass into political awakening and activity; it can only be won by the widest mobilisation of the workers and the peasants; and this development of the struggle opens the way for the further activity of the masses, for the advance to the higher form of democracy, or Soviet Democracy, and to Socialism.

But while this is the immediate question we must continue our unswerving loyalty to Socialism during this period, developing the struggle for Socialism, organising the struggles of the working-class in their daily economic and class interests. It is obligatory upon Communists and Socialists consistently to carry this task on during the struggle for freedom; it is in this way that the soil must be prepared for the ultimate struggle for the socialist order.

There can be no question of substituting the slogan of Constituent Assembly for the slogan of Soviet Power. It was Roy who advanced

the slogan of Constituent Assembly against Soviets, against revolution. From his many declarations, including the one to the Calcutta session of the T.U.C. in 1931, it is clear that he put forward the Constituent Assembly as an anti-revolutionary slogan. On the other hand during that period our comrades were unable to combine their agitation for Constituent Assembly with the agitation for Soviets. We would emphasise that there is no contradiction between the slogan for Constituent Assembly and the agitation for Soviets.

This is clearly appreciated by our comrades who have dealt with this question in issue 9 of "The Communist"—the organ of the C.P.I. in an article "Anti-Imperialist United Front is not Royism." They show how Roy counterposes the slogan of Constituent Assembly to Soviets instead of counterposing it to the present slave Constitution, raising the illusion that the Constituent Assembly can fulfil the tasks of the Soviets.

"Comrades Dutt and Bradley formulate the Constituent Assembly as the United Front slogan which can immediately unite all Progressive Political Forces in the country, on a common platform in the fight against the Constitution. This fight, they make quite clear must not be a mere verbal denunciation of the constitution in legislatures but simultaneous mass action outside the legislatures also. *They never raise the illusion that Constituent Assembly can fulfil the tasks of Soviets.*"

It is correct to say that the demand for a democratic system and a Constituent Assembly will remain a mere phrase if it is not closely linked up with the daily economic struggle of the masses and the struggle for democratic rights of the people. With the acceptance by the United National Front of a concrete and precise programme of demands for the broad mass of workers, peasants and middle class, a programme, upon which the strength of the United Front will be built, it is inevitable that the main strength of the United Front must come from the active participation of workers, peasants and middle class.

It will be possible to draw together the tremendous forces of the people for the great struggle for complete liberation if we are able to relate the daily struggle for democratic rights of the people. In a country where the people are under the arbitrary and coercive

suppression of a Government an important basis is provided for the movement to struggle to win one democratic right after another. If we are able to relate the small, separate struggles against all forms of imperialist oppression with the demands for the withdrawal of Criminal Law Amendment Act, against suppression of Press, Assembly and organisation, against the disfranchisement of 87 per cent of the population, then the question of the whole struggle for democratic regime, the Constituent Assembly and the withdrawal of the slave Constitution, will become clear to the great majority of the population.

The mass character of the movement is the chief basis for without the masses there cannot be victory. It will be necessary to place in the forefront a precise programme of immediate and vital demands of workers, peasants and middle classes.

The most urgent and vital need for India today is the establishment of the United National Front. We feel that the overwhelming majority of the people of India could agree to the outline we have given above, Congressmen, Congress socialists, trade unionists, and middle classes. Agreement on the basis of the United National Front in India and the slogan of the Constituent Assembly against the slave Constitution could sweep the Faizpur session of the National Congress making it the most momentous in the history of India's struggle for liberation. We are confident that our comrades in India with all genuine anti-imperialist sections, will strive to achieve this object at Faizpur.

The Faizpur session of the National Congress will have the task of finalising its preparations for the elections under the new Constitution. In August the Working Committee and the A.I.C.C. of the National Congress issued its Election Manifesto. It was hailed as an inspiring documents, while the Congress Socialists declared that the Election Manifesto was a "heartening call to action" and stated that it was a "bold and brilliant document." We feel that while the manifesto reiterates India's unconquerable desire for independence and reaffirms her determination to win it, while the manifesto calls for a clear rejection of the new Constitution, its opposition to war and the need for a vigorous campaign among the masses outside the Legislature nevertheless it still talks of

peaceful mass action and the encouragement of village industries. The manifesto would have done well clearly to formulate a precise programme of demands on behalf of the workers and peasants, and to have stated its position on the question of taking office under the new Constitution.

Our comrades can do much to strengthen the manifesto and obtain a clear announcement on these questions at Faizpur. On the question of the suggestion that freedom can be achieved by peaceful mass action we may have to reconsider our attitude. As Communists we can never agree to the preaching of Gandhism which seeks to restrict the struggle for freedom to non-violent passive resistance, and not, as Jawaharlal Nehru thinks, [see his autobiography, p.407] because the communists want to apply their philosophy blindfold and without due regard to facts and condition. On the contrary, adherence to Marxism-Leninism *obliges* us to take into account the concrete situation and *national peculiarities*. It is precisely the Bolsheviks, who for years carried on a struggle against the Russian Mensheviks and European Social Democrats, who wanted to make all revolutions to the same pattern. Lenin wrote:

“Our European philistines do not dream that the future revolution in the countries of the East, which are immeasurably more richly populated and which are immeasurably more outstanding for their varied social conditions, will undoubtedly be more original than the Russian Revolution.”

The opinion is usually current that it is either non-violent passive resistance or violence, no third way exists. It is thought that once the Communists are against limiting the peoples' struggle with non-violent resistance they are for these very reasons always and every where for the application of violence. There can be nothing further from the truth.

What is of utmost importance to us is that the struggle of the masses should not stop at passive resistance, that these struggles should pass over from lower forms to higher, more active and effective forms—from boycott to mass demonstrations, from demonstrations to strikes, from strikes to mass action, by the people. Whether these struggles of the masses of the people for

liberation will lead to a violent clash of the people with their oppressors—and where and when—*depends not so much upon us nor upon the masses of the people of India as upon the Imperialist Oppressors.*

The main features in the election Manifesto of the National Congress is that the Congress recognises “for the fight for independence a Joint front is necessary,” and that the slogan for a Constituent Assembly is concretely placed against the slave Constitution.

The task confronting us at Faizpur must be to lay the foundation of a United National Front for India taking the general rallying slogan of Constituent Assembly. To fight for the acceptance of a stronger Election Manifesto avoiding any tendency to split, stressing the urgency of the united National Front in India, at the same time clarifying the main issues, including a precise charter of fundamental demands for workers, peasants and middle-classes, keeping in the centre the struggle for the Constituent Assembly, a fighting manifesto around which mass support could be rallied because the masses would see clearly that issues vital to them were in the forefront. On the basis of such manifesto a country-wide campaign could be waged, mobilising mass forces to smash the slave constitution, for the ending of passivity, driving forward for the final offensive against British Imperialism and for the complete Independence of India.

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