India in Revolution

On the Significance of the Recent Indian National Congress

The political situation in India is developing towards a revolutionary crisis; the process, however, is very complicated. This is due to the extremely complicated character of class relations. A process of class differentiation is the characteristic feature of the present situation. The nationalist movement is splitting up into two distinct fractions—one advancing, still rather blindly, toward revolution, while the other is eager to make a united front with British imperialism in face of the danger of revolutionary development. As between native capitalism and the ruling masses, there is another factor in the Indian nationalist movement. Under the given conditions of the country, the urban petty bourgeoisie play a very important role. It is a fact that historically they have monopolized the leadership of the radical section of the entire movement, including the working class. There are numbers of examples of this.

In the earlier stages of the colonial revolution, the petty bourgeois nationalists are bound to move to the left, for the conditions of political oppression and economic bankruptcy, under which they live, cannot be appreciably improved through any possible compromise with foreign imperialism and native reaction. In the last few years the radicalization of the petty bourgeoisie (particularly intellectuals) has gone on simultaneously with the growing revolutionary activity of the ruling masses. The outcome of the latest annual session of the National Congress, held during the last week of December, shows that the leftward movement of the petty bourgeoisie has gone to the extent of an open revolt against the policy of Indian capitalism seeking a compromise with British imperialism. The inevitable consequence of this fateful step taken by the petty bourgeoisie will be that they will move close to the ruling masses—a revolutionary democratic alliance, which under present Indian conditions will embrace well over 80 percent of the population, will be formed. This very clearly is a perspective of a revolutionary crisis pregnant with the possibilities of further development. But the process must proceed in stages.

While the growing activity of the masses is undoubtedly the predominating factor of the situation, the intervention of British imperialism, operating thru the Labor Government, has been the immediate cause of sharpening the situation. Two years ago the British Parliament set up the so-called Simon Commission to examine and report on what “further measures of self-government might be granted to India.” The Commission was purely British, without a single Indian on it. On this ground it was boycotted not only by the petty bourgeoisie National Congress but also by a considerable section of the right wing (big bourgeoisie) nationalists. To insure the imposition of the Simon Report upon India in the teeth of the opposition of the National Congress it was necessary that the united front, founded on the slogan of boycotting the Simon Commission, be broken—that is, that the big bourgeoisie be won over to accept the recommendations of the Simon Commission. This was not difficult. A generous gesture on the part of imperialism was all that was necessary to detach the big bourgeoisie from the half-hearted alliance with forces liable to be inflamed at any moment. Acting under the instructions of the Labor Government, the Viceroy two months ago made an official declaration that the policy of the British government was to grant Indian Dominion Status (full “self-government” within the British Empire) and that, on the publication of the report of the Simon Commission, representatives of Indian nationalism would be invited to a Conference with the British government in London for definitely deciding the political future of India. The gesture was even more effective than British imperialism expected. Not only the right wing nationalist leaders, who had boycotted the Simon Commission, but even all the outstanding leaders of petty bourgeoisie National Congress enthusiastically welcomed the Viceroy’s de- clarations, and expressed their readiness to attend the promised conference. This precipitated a serious crisis inside the National Congress.

In 1927, in resolving to boycott the Simon Commission the National Congress had declared its goal to be the attainment of complete independence. Last year the right wing leaders induced the Congress to shelve the Independence Resolution of the year before, and agrees to accept Dominion Status. But Gandhi, who has always acted as the agent of the big bourgeoisie, could not retain his hold upon his petty bourgeoisie following only thru the demagogy of giving an “ultimatum” to the British govern-
The Congress resolved to "accept" Dominion Status, provided it would be granted before the end of 1929. The manifestos of the nationalist leaders in response to the Declaration of the Viceroy exposed this sham "ultimatum." The Viceroy did not satisfy any of the demands of the National Congress. The joint conference was fixed for the middle of 1930 but was only in session for two days, at which Dominion Status was granted. Still the leaders of the National Congress, including Gandhi, who the year before had received his "peasants' title" of "Mahatma," capitulated. This act of the leaders created consternation in the ranks of the National Congress, which repudiated the leaders and declared that the situation was a crisis. But the same sort of maneuverism was successful in placing the buffer section of the nationalist movement in a very delicate position. Leaders like Gandhi, and the elder Nehru, who for years kept the petty bourgeois nationalists away from the revolutionary path, were now lying on the fence. They had to fall one way or the other.

After making frantic efforts to secure some definite promise from imperialism at the eleventh hour, which might possibly enable them to keep the National Congress on the futile path of reformism, they decided that surface radicalism was the most convenient way out of the impasse. Reluctantly, they swam the rising tide of revolution hoping that, as long as they retained the leadership of the movement, they could again switch it off in the direction of reformism. And the situation in India provides a basis for their hope, although at the moment it appears forlorn. The development of the revolution will be greatly influenced, one way or the other, by the action of the proletariat—by the tactics of the Communist Party.

Neither the attitude of the leaders nor the resolution of the Congress, however, is the true standard for judging the potentialities of the situation. Judged simply by the resolution adopted by the Congress, it does not appear to be very encouraging. The main resolution sponsored by Gandhi contains four points:

1. Complete independence as definitely the object of the nationalist movement and its coming conference with the British government in London;
2. Boycott of the existing legislative bodies;
3. Organization of a buffer section of the nationalist movement in a very delicate situation, and there was no definite promise that even then Dominion Status would be granted before the end of the year 1929.

6. It is understood that the petty bourgeoisie has quickened the pace of class-differentiation. The Liberal Federation representing the big bourgeoisie, passed a resolution condemning the "revolutionary politics" of the Congress. Its president, a mill owner of Bombay, stated in his speech that it would be the duty of the government to suppress any attempt to put the resolution of the Congress into practice and that all having a "stake in the country" should support the government in maintaining law and order. On the other hand, the right wing of the National Congress, which opposed the resolution of Gandhi, has broken away. So, there has come into existence a solid bourgeois bloc with the declared object of joining hands with British imperialism against the radical nationalism of the Congress under the banner of which stand the big petty bourgeois masses.

Inside the Congress itself there are elements who strive to burst the bonds of the deceptive resolution of Gandhi. They appear to be strong numerically. The measures advocated by them—such as the "taxation of wealth and income," the immediate non-payment of taxes—are under given conditions somewhat romantic. To organize political mass strikes is, at the present time, an effective means for developing the struggle. But a real mass political general strike only comes as the prelude to an armed insurrection, for which political, organizational, and economic conditions are not as yet sufficiently developed. Moreover, it is a petty bourgeois illusion to talk of a parallel government before the armed insurrection. Nevertheless, the masses who support radical measures show their readiness for a revolutionary struggle. The necessity of the moment is to prepare them for a program of National Democratic Revolution and lead them by stages in the struggle for the realization of that program.

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G E T Y O U R T I C K E T E A R L Y !

"Prosperity" in Detroit
By William Miller

E VER since Henry Ford came to Detroit, the city has become a sort of show place for capitalism where innovations in the automobile industry might be tried out and experiments in living conducted. This is understandable in view of the central position of Detroit in the automobile industry, and its history of radical and mass movements.

One sign of the revolutionary potentialities of the movement is the increasing support for the Negro Folk Song projects in Detroit, which has been the most marked development of the Negro Folk Song movement in the country in the last year. The Negro folk-song movement is a part of the Negro revolution. It is a movement which has been developing for years, and is now gaining momentum. It is a movement which is gaining support from the working class, and is gradually becoming a part of the overall revolutionary movement.

This is not to say that the industry is completely out of depression. There are still many unemployed workers who are struggling to keep themselves alive. But what about the Ford wage increase as a sign of prosperity in the auto industry? This is the contrary but one of the many signs of the sharp competition in the coming year and the growing crisis in the industry. Says the Iron Trade Review of Dec. 12th, commenting on Ford's new model:

"Two important facts already have been fixed in the public relations—cost of production. The promise from the White House of the $1 per day increase in wages, the further maintenance of the actual schedules, again captured the headlines."

What is the Party doing about this situation? As usual in these cases, we have the following:

"The Party is working to develop the auto industry, and is going to force Ford to increase wages."

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