The situation in India

By V. Basak

II.—What is the Struggle of the Communists for the Hegemony of the Proletariat?

(Continued.)

The platform of action of the C.P. of India gave a correct Bolshevik analysis of the character and the driving forces of the Indian revolution and the leading role of the proletariat.

However, the working class led by the Communist Party can only win and carry out its leadership by participating in the struggle, showing to the masses in practice that the Communists are the only force capable of leading the revolutionary people to victory.

The attention of the toiling masses at present is focused on the solution of revolutionary democratic tasks. The workers, peasants and petty bourgeoisie must join hands and vanquish these imperialists. They come into conflict with the reactionary forces of the old semi-feudal caste society. In conflict with the officials, police, government, landlords, and usurers while defending their own everyday interests, the consciousness of the workers and toilers and their determination to organise themselves and to struggle is being roused. In the struggle for democratic demands the mass revolutionary movement is growing, the class consciousness of the workers is increasing and the proletariat is becoming more and more an independent class force. Here in the struggle for their interests, the toiling masses see in practice the treacherous policy of the national reformists. They see themselves that in order to obtain independence, land, bread and power it is necessary to throw overboard the Gandhian policy of non-violence and passive resistance, the policy which meant to defend the interests of the exploiters.

Therefore the tasks of the Communists are to enter and take the lead in all these democratic movements, to lead every movement of dissatisfaction with the existing order, no matter what questions brought them into being, and to go everywhere with Communist agitation, putting forward proposals and slogans on every occasion, constantly explaining and showing in practice that the path of National Socialism is the path of defeat and slavery to these imperialists. The task of the Communists is not to identify themselves with the movement for independence, they do not understand the necessity to co-operate with such democratic strata which are able to march together with the working class, even for a portion of the path, in the struggle against the imperialists. At the same time they display a failure to understand the necessity to utilise legal and semi-legal forms of mass movement.

The second deviation is the very reverse. It is the failure to understand the task of immediate formation of an underground Communist Party. The comrades who fall into this mistake often work energetically in the trade unions, recognise the importance to participate in democratic movements, especially the independence movement, to attract the democratic strata of the petty-bourgeoisie, utilise the legal forms of the movement. However, their practical action can not be utilised in the fight for the refusal to separate the proletariat into an independent class force, nourishes the lack of faith in the working class, leads, as a matter of fact, to a repudiation of revolution. And this makes the struggle for the hegemony of the proletariat more difficult and leads in fact to a position when some Communists, not seeing the active workers, become frightened of the difficulties of the underground movement and begin to slow down the struggle against national-reformism, especially its "left" varieties, thus making it easier for the bourgeoisie to force the masses to keep their positions. Some Communists, instead of recognising their mistakes, begin to accuse the toiling masses of inconsistency, backwardness, of not wanting to fight, stating that the masses are responsible for the weakness of the Communists. These views are not correct and are an echo of Roy's propaganda which claims that "independence is an abstract conception" (Leaflet, 1932) to the masses, and that the time has not yet come for a revolutionary struggle. The views of the supporters of Roy represent treachery of the people and must be rejected. Every Communist must remember that at present it is the Communists and not the working masses who are to blame for the weakness of the Communist organisation, etc., as tendencies and influences of the ruined petty-bourgeoisie who put forward various "socialist" slogans, etc., and in practice take the position of capitalists and drag at the tail of the bourgeoisie. The growth of the Communist Party, the establishment of the hegemony of the proletariat can only be carried out when the Communists carry on a struggle against national reformism and its influence in the ranks of the working class, which is the influence of the treacherous bourgeoisie and when the Communists simultaneously expose the petty-bourgeois character of many of the petty-bourgeois parties, etc., as tendencies and influences of the ruined petty-bourgeoisie who put forward various "socialist" slogans, etc., and in practice take the position of capitalists and drag at the tail of the bourgeoisie.

Both of these deviations are extremely harmful and must be eliminated. Bolshevik policy demands exactly the combination of both tasks of the formation of an underground Communist Party and participation and leadership of the mass, revolutionary democratic movement; the failure to understand this explains the roots of the disagreements and personal disputes which take place in a number of Communist organisations.

We should remember that the formation of an independent C.P. and the establishment of the hegemony of the proletariat can only be carried out when the Communists carry on a struggle against national reformism and its influence in the ranks of the working class, which is the influence of the treacherous bourgeoisie and when the Communists simultaneously expose the petty-bourgeois character of many of the petty-bourgeois parties, etc., as tendencies and influences of the ruined petty-bourgeoisie who put forward various "socialist" slogans, etc., and take the position of capitalists and drag at the tail of the bourgeoisie. The growth of the Communist Party, the establishment of the hegemony of the proletariat and the preparation of the people's revolution demand a consistent struggle against these two trends, against the bourgeois and the totalitarian, etc., in order to lay the foundations for the future revolution. Only along this path, while exposing the confusion of petty bourgeois revolutionism it is possible to draw the petty bourgeoisie along with the proletariat. The struggle on two fronts, for the Marxist policy of the Communist Party is the chief guarantee for the victory of the revolution.

The existence of these two deviations, when the weakness of the
Communist Party is so great, and the workers' and peasants' movement so big, have led to the fact that some Communists have begun mechanically to separate the economic and political struggles and concentrate all their attention on the economic struggle and have forgotten to agrarian and independence movements. A theory has appeared even in the press that in view of the weakness of the Communist Party, the task of Communists is to concentrate all their attention on the economic class warfare and abandon the agrarian and in reality abandon for a time the independence movement. These comrades work only in trade unions. Such a point of view is not correct, especially at the present period of treachery of the National Congress and the growing discontent of the toiling masses with the existing situation. The task of strengthening the positions of the Communists in the working class is a hard and long-term problem. And instead of abandoning the trade unions and develop the economic strike struggle of the working class is at the present time a very important, if not the most important, link of all the mass work of the Communists, and very little has been done so far. However, the task of strengthening the contacts of Communists in the working class and converting the proletariat into the leading force cannot be solved if we do not participate in the political struggle, the anti-imperialist and agrarian movements, the struggle against the constitution, taxes and rent and if we do not put forward political slogans. Communists must come forward on these questions and not leave the monopoly to the disorganisers of the struggle, to the "left" Congressites. A correct Bolshevik understanding of the everyday trade union struggle of the Communist Party has nothing to do with the rejection of the political struggle, the struggle for independence, the formation of a mass underground Communist Party. Because this rejection is a relic of economism, as preached by Joshi, Giri, Ruikar and leads to the conversion of the proletariat into a spineless appendage of the bourgeois and helps to preserve the domination of imperialism. In order to ensure the unity of the proletariat and strengthen its ranks and in order to win the leadership, Communists must defeat both the economists Joshi, Giri and Co., the agents of British imperialism and the national reformists, and especially the "left" reformists who are trying to bring the proletariat to a position of a tool in the hands of the anti-revolutionary bourgeoisie.

The Present Situation and the Struggle of the Toiling Masses

During the last few months the factory owners have made a new attack on the wages of the workers. In the textile industry in Bombay the factory owners have increased the wages of 10-30 per cent, the workers have been put from two to three and four looms. On the railways, workers are still being dismissed, wages are being cut and the trade unions are still not recognised. The working class is developing its resistance. Strikes are increasing. The slogan of the general strike has become a slogan of action in Bombay. The national-reformists have been forced to recognise it.

The growing wave of the economic struggle requires that the Communists should rapidly correct their weaknesses and mistakes. The weakness of past strikes in 1932-33 shows that we Communists have not yet learned properly to build mass trade union organisations, we do not know how to work in the factories, we do not organise and attract active workers, we do not carry on everyday organised preparatory work, we do not take the initiative in the defence of the unity of the working class, we do not apply the tactic of the united front, we do not carry on work among the workers in the reformist trade unions.

It is not enough to publish a few leaflets and hold a number of meetings. We cannot limit ourselves to calls for a general strike. We cannot limit ourselves to calls for a general textile strike. The workers are serious about strikes and do not strike simply because we make a call. We must carry on careful everyday preparatory work and when the conditions are mature. We must remember that a slogan may pass through three stages of its development: first as a slogan of propaganda, then as a slogan of agitation, and finally as a slogan of action. This means that when the Party adopts the slogan of a strike as corresponding to the concrete conditions of the movement and begins to carry on wide agitational and organisational preparations, it then calls for the actual strike only when it thinks the moment is most suitable for the strike. This is the correct and serious line of the Communist Party. At the same time it must be explained to the workers that the accusation of the "left" national-reformists against the Communists of "ultra-radicalism" is nothing but an attempt to conceal the national-reformists' abandonment of general slogans, refusal to defend the interests of the workers, because they are conducting the policy of agents of the bourgeoisie who are trying to restrict, to limit the struggle of the toilers. Following the advice of the open letter of the three parties to the Indian Communists, the Communists must begin to form factory committees, trade union branches, start functioning elected trade union management committees and mass recruiting of workers, simultaneously forming Communist factions everywhere. On the basis of everyday work, adopting the tactic of the united front and avoiding as much as possible unprepared scattered action, it is necessary to carry on preparations for a general strike of textile workers, at the same time organising the workers of Ahmedabad, Sholapur and other centres, developing strikes in other branches of industry, and in this way preparing for the general strike. From general strikes in various industrial centres, in various industries to a general strike, that is our line.

In this connection we should realise that it was a mistake for some representatives of the revolutionary trade union movement to participate in negotiations with the Anglo-Indian government on the question of carrying out the present workers' strike. The illusion of reducing the mass struggle of the toilers means to fall into the trap of the reformists. A serious mistake of many Communists still remains the existence of confusion in regards to the role of the Party and the trade unions. This confusion leads to the inability to lead the struggle for the unity of the proletariat, to organise the masses, and hinders the exposure of the national-reformists.

(To be continued.)

Trade Union Movement

A Congress of Surrender to Fascism

By J. R. Campbell (London)

Two questions dominated the British Trades Union Congress at Brighton—the question of fascism and the question of war. There can be no reasonable doubt as to what the attitude of the bureaucracy was towards the advance of fascism. They see the crisis of capitalism deepening and are firmly convinced that unless this development of the crisis can be arrested a fascist victory in Britain is quite probable. As they say quite plainly in their report on dictatorship:

"The one factor common to these countries (where fascism is in power) and ourselves—is economic depression and unemployment. These no doubt tend to create a position favourable to fascism. If economic conditions were to deteriorate to a further great extent it is impossible to say what might happen."

Its (fascism's) only chance of success here is that people whose faith in parliamentary government has been weakened by the apparent inability to remove our economic ills, particularly if unemployment becomes much worse, may, in despair, be ready to accept desperate remedies."

We will find this idea expressed still more concretely in the speeches of Citrine. Its meaning is perfectly clear. It is that the more the capitalist crisis develops, the weaker the working-class movement becomes, the stronger the fascists become.

Therefore at Brighton the reformist leaders placed their hopes of successful defence against fascism not in the building of the united front of the working class, but in the coming of a trade revival.

That is why they hailed Roosevelt and hoped that his inflation and justification plan would succeed in giving a stimulus to "world recovery."

Of course in the Roosevelt resolution they made demagogic demands upon the British government:

"Congress further trusts that the present British government will pursue a similar policy by taking immediate steps to initiate useful schemes of public works, financed by the use of national credit; to enact a maximum working week of 40 hours without reductions of wages; to prohibit child labour under 16 years of age and to raise the school-leaving age to 16."

"Further, that the government will set an example to