The Agrarian Problem in India

I—Imperialism, the Oppression of the Landlords and Moneymakers and the Peasants

(1) The Indian villages suffer from the bitter oppression and exploitation of the British imperialists, from the rule and exploitation of the landlords and money-lenders, from the ruin and handicrafts of home industries by foreign capital, from the exactions of the merchants and traders, from the fact that their vitality is drained by the British invaders and their numerous assistants and auxiliaries. They suffer together with the whole country from national servitude and slavery. They are crushed and strangled by the iron hand of British capital, which mercilessly squeezes out ruinous taxes, transfers Indian raw material to England at a trifling price, which has fixed its greedy claws into the whole of India and in every way hinders its industrial development.

Britain, while at the same time, owing to this, the power of the upper feudalists and landlords and merchant capital was increased, as the supporters and servants of the British invaders. In the districts of ryotwar, where the primary peasants to a great extent had access to the land, there has also arisen a landlord class which has seized the greater part of the land by violence, usury and chicanery. On the other hand, the ruin of the peasants in these districts by taxation also helped to deprive them of land and ruin them.

British imperialism keeps the chief banks in its own hands. It dictates the exchange rate of the rupee, compelling the population of India to sell at a small price and to buy at high prices. It sells all the raw materials of India, twelve times as great as the foreign trade, the whole commercial system, consisting of innumerable middlemen and agents of British capital, from the foreign banks to the village aratdars, mahojahs, marwaris, etc., are constantly and untiringly working to deprive India of necessities and reduce the price of its products. Along these commercial channels, millions of yards of foreign textiles, masses of consumer goods, are constantly moving into India, while the Indian peasant has to pay for them and for his own home industries and ruin the small handicraft men. British imperialism has established a monopoly on salt, spirit, etc. It takes its levy on every pinch of salt. British capital stands fiercely on guard so that India cannot become a developed industrial country. It owns the mines, the big factories, which produce equipment, etc. It tries to leave India without big industry which could supply its own needs and struggle its own machines, and struggles for small industry so that the greater part of India will remain a big village working to enrich the British bourgeoisie, its banks, factories and mines over the sea. In India a slow growth is taking place in light industry, chiefly the textile industry, giving work only to a small portion of those who cannot maintain themselves on the land in a state of semi-starvation.

The British raj means the constant, organised and merciless robbing of the Indian villages and their barbarous oppression. The unseen hand of the British invaders penetrates everywhere, into the most distant and isolated corners of the country, because British capital has violently taken possession of the chief sources of existence of hundreds of millions of Indians. It has possession of the minerals, the forests and the chief irrigation enterprises of the country. The best land has been taken for its plantations and estates, not for the power of the British invaders, the power of their instruments of oppression and plunder. The British raj means the constant, organised and merciless robbing and exploitation of the peasants—the rentiers, the usurers, the creditors, the moneylenders, the rich merchants, the imperialists themselves, thelords. It has possession of the millions of toilers of India is converted by British capital into super-profits. With their aid it maintains its domination over the defenceless and ruined country.

British imperialism works hand in hand with the worst oppressors and exploiters of the Indian villages, strengthening, inspiring and utilising them for the further enslavement of India. Its direct support consists of the landlords, money-lenders and intermediary merchant capital, which helps it to exploit the country. If the Indian peasant could freely cultivate his land and not be slave on a pitiful plot of land rented from the landlord, if he were not strangled with debts and taxes, British imperialism would be unable to keep this enormous country with 300,000,000 inhabitants, one of the poorest and most backward in the world, under its rule and exploitation. It has partly submitted to itself the old rulers, the native rajahs and feudalists, and has partly replaced them by zamindars and its own officials. In some provinces the British conquerors have established the zamindar system, making the ownership of land depend on the payment of a tax depending on the harvest. This unevenness of the land system was exaggerated even further by the conquest of India in order to plunder its land and forest wealth, to seize the irrigation system and carry on the most shameless taxation plunder. Secondly, the British conquerors have tried to remove the part of the upper Indian feudalists who offered some resistance, not wishing to give up their previous power and income. Thirdly, they aimed at strengthening their own power, acting as the supreme judge in conflicts between isolated groups of feudalists and landlords and in conflicts between the peasants and the feudalists and landlords who were not sufficiently yielding to the British. Finally, in this sphere also the British conquerors tried to carry out their fundamental rule, "divide and conquer," setting the local rank, caste, religious and tribal interests against each other, putting some in an unprivileged situation compared with others. Further changes took place in these land systems under the influence of the fact that British capital more and more converted India into a supplier of raw material and food for Great Britain.

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families and handicrafts, while the weak industry of the towns, crushed by British capital, cannot provide work for tens of millions of people who are unable to feed themselves in the country. Every year the Indian peasants on the average earn less than the British government spends to keep a prisoner in jail. All India forms a big British prison, but the Indian villages are the worst dungeons of this prison, where the convicts work for their jailors.

At least two-thirds of the land suitable for cultivation is owned by the imperialists and landlords, while more than ninetens of the village population of India own one-third of the land. In some districts, especially in Bengal and Madras (North Madras, the Central and United Provinces), big landed estates occupy a still larger area and still more drive the peasant masses into the impasse of starvation. The distinction between districts of zamindars and ryotwars is more and more being erased. During the time of British rule, there has been a steady growth in the ladder of intermediate rent receivers who rent out land which they themselves rent from others. A herd of parasites of various degrees on the backs of the Indian peasantry, a free-farm labourer takes because he is landless. This is because the peasants are crushed down by the rule of the imperialists, big land ownership and usury. They cannot find free land for cultivation or find any other source of income. As a rule the peasants receive land from the landlords on share-cropping conditions (batal) and hand over to the landlords at least one-half of their harvest, but more frequently two-thirds or more. Sometimes the landlord lends money to the peasants for the purchase of seed, but the peasants, instead of being tenants of the land, are without land, and take a larger proportion of the harvest. Sometimes the sowing and cultivation take place entirely at the cost of the peasants. However this may be, the whole existence of the landless peasants or those with little land depends on the whim of the landlord, usurer and tax collector. The fact that the peasant land is split into small plots widely separated from each other, then the tenant, who has no rights, no security for the future, who is always on the brink of bankruptcy, who has no place because the landlord has the right, without payment and whenever he thinks fit, to use the labour, oxen, plough and cart of “his” tenant peasant.

The landlord forces from the peasants “salaam,” “hatiana,” “motorana,” etc., whenever he needs money. The landlord’s personal estate (“seer”) is usually cultivated by unfree tenants who have no rights except to cultivate the land which he rents and to live in the house which he has rented or built. The parasite landlord owns the grass and the wild honey in the forests, the skins of all animals which die on his land, the brushwood. Especially in the native States, the landlords make all kinds of exactions on the peasants. The situation of the peasants without land and implements borders on slavery. The “Kamia” in Behar and Orissa receives in kind one-third of the value of what he has received from the landlord in the form of produce or helped to make his family work for the lord, he never sees money, and can never pay his debt throughout his whole life. A number of the native tribes supply farm labourers to the landlords, and these labourers are in the position of slaves without the right freely to dispose of themselves or their property.

The toiling peasants, plundered by the landlords, moneylenders and imperialism, are also compelled to carry out many services for the landlords. The landlord and the British officials compel the miserable, oppressed peasants to make new roads and repair old ones, to build and repair bridges, to clean water-pools and dig canals. The peasants do not receive anything whatever for their labour, for the work of their oxen or for their tools. The peasants are forced to supply transport free of charge for officials, olders, cowkidars and other lords. All this is an additional load on the shoulders of the peasants. If the ruined peasant cannot carry out the labour and transport obligations, he is heavily fined and sometimes is beaten up and flogged.

The peasants not only hand over to the landlords a large part of their harvest, but imperialism has given to the landlords the right to make all kinds of collections from the peasants.

If there is a birth, death, or marriage in the family of a landlord, the surrounding peasants have to pay from their harvest for the expensive ceremony which usually accompanies such happenings. The landlord takes advantage of every such case to fleece the peasants still more.

When selling or mortgaging his tiny rented plot of land, the ruined peasant is sometimes compelled to pay 25 per cent. of the sale price or the mortgage to the landlord. As a result of all these additional exactions, not to mention labour and transport obligations, he frequently has to pay out half of the part of the harvest which he received from his landlord for the previous trip. Under the limited and extensive exactions are additional and open plunder.

The priests and churches of all religions are also big landowners. The Hindu temples, their tremendous wealth and land, are the private property of the descendants of the founders of the temple. The incomes of the Musulman “Wakfs” and the Sikh “Gurdwars” should be used for charitable purposes and education, but in reality they go into the pockets of the mullahs and mahants. The peasants live still worse on church land than on the land of the landlords. They have to supply vegetable oil, food and their own labour for the temple services. They have not even such limited rights as are given by “permanent” tenancy on landlords’ land. Imperialism is the defender and patron of temple and priest landownership. Increasing the land tax on the peasants, imperialism reduces the tax on the land of the temples, monasteries, mosques, and turns it altogether. Under the protection of the British plunderers, church landownership flourishes greatly. In Punjab one-tenth of the land tax is paid by temples and altars. Temple land reaches a great size in the south of India (Madras and the native States). Inam land in Bombay and Madras is also a means of enslaving the peasants.

The British invaders have deprived India of freedom and independence, and at the same time have ruined home industries and handicrafts, taking away the gainful occupations of the villages. The destruction of the specialized home industries and the neglect of the existing means of production, has reduced the Indians to a position of servile existence, with the British and the native landlords. The British and the native landlords have made use of the peasants’ poverty and want, and the result is that the poverty of the peasants’ common land on which they formerly fed their cattle has been plundered by the imperialists, the landlords and the moneylenders. In Bengal it was needed to sow jute which was necessary for the British factories, and the landlords soon seized it. Only a minority of the Indian villages can keep cattle for cultivating the fields. If a farm has less than 20 to 30 acres, the owner cannot rear a single bull. The starving and dying cattle cannot give milk to the sick and the children. Therefore in India death carries off twice as many people as in England. Child mortality is three times as great.

The peasant has nothing with which to repair his plough or door or to warm his family. The forests are owned by the British invaders and the zamindar landlords, who do not even allow cattle to graze in the forests.

The British rulers in India are building enormous dams and other structures for artificial irrigation, so that the Indian land will not cease to grow raw material for their factories—cotton, jute, oil seeds, etc., but the water has been seized by the strong of the world. The landlords, zamindars and landgrabbers are the owners of the streams and springs, while the water, without which the land will die, is more and more leaving the drying peasant pools.

But it is worst of all with the land. The village land is tilled everywhere in petty little strips scattered in ten to thirty different places. The peasants only exhaust their strength and exhaust the land for which they have no fertiliser. In some of the strips it is not even possible to turn a plough. The plots are so close together, so intertwined with each other, that the land which should feed the peasant becomes a trap for him. Even on these pitiful plots of land, mostly rented, he is squeezed by the hand of the landlord for himself and for his pigs. The pigs do not allow a peasant to dig a small water-pool without the permission of the landowner. He cannot put up the necessary buildings. He seeks for water and separates himself from his neighbour by thick walls, goes to law for every inch of ground, and rushes from side to side, unable to find his rights anywhere.

The greater part of his harvest goes to the landlord and
moneymender. He must pay his rent either by selling or giving up the harvest. He sells his harvest at a time when the market is full of agricultural products and when prices are low, because the landlord, the moneymender and the tax collectors stretch out their hands towards the peasant harvest. The peasant is underweighted and plundered, and from this his exploiters forge out new wealth for themselves. The peasant gets ever deeper into debt service, and in any manner, on his farm, a bad harvest, the death of his cattle, a sickness in the family, the death of relatives or the marriage of a daughter drags him into the net of the moneymender.

His farm is ruined more and more. He cannot buy agricultural implements. He has neither land nor seed nor water to carry on a profitable rotation of crops, while, as a rule, the Indian peasant and his family are starving and without work for nearly half the year. He grows grain to feed himself, but, instead of feeding him, his labour supports and nourishes his ruin and servitude. After the landlord and tax collector, a ravenous horde of baki, mahajans, marwaris, etc., rush on his harvest, which has been produced by the hands of farm labourers and peasants, and they take the fruits of his unbearably hard labour to the enslavers of the country, to the British imperialists. The Indian soil is becoming less and less fertile from this ruin of the peasants. The rich harvests of the 1890s, as much as in India. The harvest of wheat in America is higher by one-third. The administration of the Indian villages is in the hands of the British invaders, appointed or hereditary pattels, police and the panchayats who help them, consisting of representatives of the highest castes, office holders and landgrubbers. The village masses have nowhere to turn for help and protection.

II.—The Class Differentiation of the Villages

The Indian villages are no longer the previous villages which lived isolated to themselves, divided into castes and not knowing what took place around them. From behind the back of the foreign enslavers of India there has arisen a new power, the power of moneylenders. The rich and well-off, the good old landlord ranks were unable to combine the power of the fist with the power of the purse, and they went under. While in their place there arose rich moneymenders, city capitalists, prosperous landowners, etc. Many brahmans, who previously lived on the backs of others by the right of their blood, now stretch out their hands for alms, while the moneymenders, merchants, or new landlords from Sudra squeeze profits out of the toilers who are in their power. The old castes are beginning to lose their old power as a source of division of the toilers and exploited. However, the division into higher and lower castes and untouchables is supported by the imperialists, landlords, moneymenders and the representatives of the highest castes who live by renting out land, usury and the exploitation of the labour of others. The shameful division of Hindu society is not only a characteristic of the caste system, but also the apparent irreconcilable division of Hindus and Musulmen into “higher” and “lower” tribes, etc., no longer has the same influence on people as previously. Though in one part of the country the blood of the Hindu peasants is sucked by the Musulman spider—the landlord or moneymender—in another part the blood of the Musulman peasant is sucked by the Hindu spider—the moneymender. Capital has invaded the country and sorted out people in a new manner. It is not the former castes and ranks, the division according to religion or tribal origin, but classes, which have begun to unite people in their life and struggle for their national rights, for their burning class interests and demands. In places where private property is growing and multiplying in the means of production, where there is an increase in the number of people who hire working hands so that these hands work on their land with the help of their machines for their advantage and enrichment, in such places society inevitably splits into two camps, into two divisions. One division consists of those who, having nothing to work with, are compelled to sell their labour power for work on means of production belonging to others. The other division consists of those who exploit the labour power of others owing to their wealth. Capital and wealth are the incubable camps of every bourgeois society. In India this division is becoming stronger and stronger, simultaneously with the growth and deepening of the gulf between British imperialism and the Indian people. British capital rules and dominates in India. But in India there are the Indian city bourgeoisie, Hindus and Musulmen, who own factories in Bombay, Ahmedabad and other places, who have their banks and commercial offices, their steamers, shops and warehouses. In India there is a numerous factory proletariat working in the factories of British and Indian capital. The Indian exploiters try in every way to keep the Indian villages back from the class struggle, and, with this deceitful aim, they claim that there is no class struggle in India. They try to maintain peace between the landlords and the peasants whom they exploit, between the village rich and the farm labourers. In reality, the development of capital has turned the entire old system of village relations upside down. The exploitation and oppressions of the foreign invaders, the servitude and oppression of the landlords and moneymenders are becoming more and more unbearable because it is already impossible to live in the old manner, while imperialism and its hangers-on are trying to maintain and preserve the rule of the old servitude in the form of bondage and combine it with the new hired slavery.

Capitalism is the system of hired slavery, while feudalism is the supreme power of landlord servitude and the stick. India is at the crossroads. It has moved from its previous place in the direction of capitalism, but cannot reorganize itself from top to bottom on capitalist lines because imperialism inspires the old servitude and prolongs it by renewing it. Nevertheless the power of capitalism has already entered into the Indian village, and in place of the old self-contained village there has arisen the new village, not living to feed itself but working for the market. The village community is more and more falling to pieces owing to the growth of property inequality and the exploitation of one member of the community by another. The community rights in the panchayats and in everyday life are more and more being seized by rich land grabbers from the highest castes, moneymenders, merchants and kulaks. The village is passing through the same stage when the price of jute rises and cut down on the sowing of cotton when the price of cotton falls. The power of capitalism manifests itself in the fact that in addition to the vast majority of the landlords who rent out nearly all their land and get rich by enslaving the tenants, there is growing a new strata of landlord employers who are beginning to run their own farms, using more modern imple-ments, seed, fertilizers and hired labour. On the other hand it is manifested in the fact that the once united peasants are becoming differentiated, and kulaks or village bourgeoisie are being formed from the richer strata who have some surplus in the means of production (land, cattle, implements, seed, etc.) compared with the number of working hands in the family. They cultivate the land by means of constant hired labour. In addition to the kulaks at the top, there is growing up at the bottom a numerous class of constantly hired agricultural workers and day labourers, who possess nothing but their labour power. The village poor, who form the majority of the Indian peasants, do not possess the necessary means of production to carry on their own farming. They have to sell their labour power to keep alive. However, the greater part of them are deprived of this possibility because they cannot find work either in the town, because of the insufficient development of industry or in the village which is suffering from the decline of agriculture. Thus deprived of land, become paupers and starve. The intermediate position between the kulaks and the village poor is occupied by the middle peasants who do not constantly use hired labour, who suffer from insufficient land and the oppression of the landlords and moneymenders, but who sell part of their products on the market and can only make ends meet in the most favourable years.

In India a number of districts of commercial agriculture have already been formed, where special crops for the market are mostly grown and cultivated. These are the cotton districts of the Deccan, the jute districts in Bengal, wheat in Punjab, rice in Burma, sugar cane in the United Provinces, ground nuts in Madras, Bombay, Orissa, the Central Provinces, tobacco in Bombay and Madras. Along with these there are the British tea plantations in Assam. Dependence on the market is greatest in these very districts. Here the enrichment of a small group of landlords, moneymenders, merchants and kulaks who own large land and live on the crops, is going on most rapidly. Here the toilers without land or with very little land are most rapidly being converted into the agricultural proletariat. Here hired labour is mostly squeezing out the usual landlord and moneymender servitude. Here capital subordinates all the conditions of production to itself more than anywhere else. The capitalist development in agriculture is carried out here not suddenly, not en-
tirely, but in a partial manner, paying great tribute to the accustomed servitude. Before starting a big capitalist farm, the landlord forces the tenant to sow on the rented land the crops which are most profitable to him. He begins to give out improved seed and lends cattle and implements so as to assure the most profitable harvest. He introduces capitalist farming with strong animals, machines and workers, first of all, and then gradually adds to these "seeds." Thus he becomes a big supplier of wheat, cotton jute, sugar cane. He changes from a landlord enslaving the tenants by means of land rent into a manufacturer of wheat, cotton and jute, exploiting hired workers.

The kulak most frequently starts by obtaining working hands, lording out part of his productive surplus and fodder to the poor and middle peasants at hard times and afterwards compelling them to work off their debt. In addition to this, in view of the great shortage of land, especially in India, the vast majority of the peasants, there is a flourishing system of hiring out cattle and implements. In reality the peasant who works on his own bit of land to pay for hired cattle or implements is not working for himself but for the person who receives profit from the surplus of cattle, implements or seed. Often the kulak is a small village shopkeeper. He gives out goods on credit and takes the harvest of the debtors as half-payment.

As to the rural population in India use hired strips of land to provide the most miserable income, it is not surprising that the kulak very often gets rich by moneylending. He makes people work for him not as hired workers but as debt slaves. He contrives to jump on the peasant's back like a new landlord enslaving tenants. The very air in the Indian villages is infected with shameful slavery, and the people are so crushed and downtrodden that there is not sufficient time to produce even the food, bulls, a surplus of seed, fodder or food, to have a little extra money or commodities, in order to become not only the master but the lord whom all must bow. Surplus land gives almost unlimited power over the tenants. In India there are no free peasant farms on free land. The land and water are in servitude. The farm labourers and the tolling and exploited peasants are in servitude. The kulaks gather scattered plots of land into one unit, consolidate themselves on the best land, seize the use of water. The kulaks rent land on better conditions than the poor and middle peasants. For them the land is not a source of food, but a means of growing rich. The kulaks sell their commodities at higher prices than the exploited masses of the villages. They can wait for a good buyer and higher prices. They are nearer to the town market and are not so much short-weighted. For great masses of the peasants it is a laborer, and not a landlord, who enjoys servitude and work for a single landlord and moneylender, from whom it is impossible to escape. The statement of the imperialists, landlords and capitalists that co-operative societies will set them free from the net of the moneylender is false and deceitful throughout. Most of them give loans only to the landlords, moneylenders and kulaks, and serve as an instrument for enriching and helping them.

But along with this mass in India there is a numerous agrarian proletariat. Year after year hundreds of thousands of workers come from Madras, Bengal, the United Provinces, Behar and Orissa, to the tea plantations in Assam, from the North of Behar and Orissa to gather the jute and cotton in Bengal, from the upper parts of Madras to the delta districts. Hundreds of thousands of coolies go to work in the tea plantations in Ceylon, South Africa and other places. For the farm labourer, a nameless many thousands of persons, the rural existence—in the place, to-morrow in another—is more profitable than a parasite which sucks out the whole life of its victim and never releases it.

The village poor are also drawn into seasonal work for wages. They themselves partly lead the existence of hired workers. Frequently the poor peasant is a farm labourer with a plot of land, working his whole life to pay rent to the landowner. However, in view of the great shortage of work and the tremendous shortage of land the poor peasants are tied down to their poverty-stricken life in the place where their fathers lived previously. It is their lot to carry the chief burden of the landlords' exactions, servitude, usury, debt slavery and caste oppression. If the agricultural worker comes from the ranks of the poor and is unable to break away from his accustomed place, he suffers especially from the savage system of servitude and slavery. According to the 1931 census in British India (without the native States), 22 per cent. of the 75 million village population were reckoned as farm labourers and village servants. In the plantations of the imperialists there is semi-forced labour. The recruiters bring in workers like cattle, compelling them to submit to the despotism of the planters. Coolies and plantation workers are recruited by special recruiters and sirdars who rob them. In some places the planters give them plots of land, reducing them to servitude and reducing them to the charge of the sirdars. At the same time, feudal servitude in many places keeps the farm labourers in the position of debt slaves or household servants, enslaved together with their families.

If the agricultural workers come from the so-called lower tribes—i.e., those without any rights—or out of the ranks of the lower castes or outcast, they are mercilessly exploited and reduced to the level of cattle. A tremendous proportion of agricultural proletariat consists of debt slaves, absolutely impoverished and starving peasants, coolies without rights, along with farm workers labouring for wages. It is precisely this which prevents the agricultural proletariat from uniting into an independent class force. However, it is more and more being forced to such an independent situation by the conditions of its life. The pressure of the market, the power of money and the new capitalist order compel the farm labourers and peasants to seek new places, to leave the districts where the power of the landlord, the moneylender and the tax collector is maintained most strongly, to places where this power is less, where there is more free undivided land, where there are greater possibilities freely to apply labour to the land. In these places kulaks farms grow up most quickly and there is most need for hired labour power, but even there the impecunious landlord pays no wages, nor even the semi-servile peasants, coolies, and the kulaks, moneylenders and merchants. The uncultivated land and partly cultivated land at the edge of the jungle is a safety valve from the old servitude which has existed for centuries in the old populated places. However, even here there is little space. Millions of acres of land in India lie uncultivated because the peasants are tied hand and foot by unpaid taxes, labour obligations and unpaid debts. In freedom, the live at least in that they have no strong caste and no implements to cultivate new land. They are chained down to exhausted plots of land which can hardly provide a starvation existence because they are kept back by the chain of British imperialism, the chain of the slavery of the landlords and moneylenders.

The capitalist development in agriculture in India is taking place slowly, with difficulty and delays. It is accompanied by the dying out of millions who cannot get a handful of rice for their labour, worn out by starvation, malaria and epidemics. In sweat and torment, Indian agriculture is locked up in the chains of the British capitalists. It is a market for their goods. It is a milch cow for capitalist robbers who seek fabulous super-profits in the conquered country. India exports a large proportion of its produce over the seas as tribute. The Indian peasant cannot always cover his expenses, but simultaneously the country is dying from industrial backwardness. The imperialist town plungers the colonial village for every spool of cotton, for every piece of iron. The majority of the population of India are without work for months, but at the same time they suffer a shortage of everything, while the number of workers in subsidiary branches of industry connected with agriculture is very small. The industry of India, squeezed in the vice of imperialism, is kept undeveloped. At the same time, hundreds of millions of rupees of the "educated" Indian lawyers, capitalists, and merchants are buried in the ground, forming a new burden, a new tax, on the whole population of the Indian villages, only 10 per cent. are literate. There are no hospitals, no doctors, and over two-thirds of the taxes which are squeezed out of the peasants are expended on the suppression of India, for the support of the British army, the police and officials, grafters and robbers.

British capital keeps India in savagery, slavery and oppression, but again it is the toiling population of India which has to pay for this humiliation and backwardness. Various districts of India which produce jute, cotton, ground nuts, rice, wool are kept in the home market but for export, and above all for the payment of colonial tribute. But precisely because the Indian villages work like convicts chained to a cart, the products of their fields and orchards are being forced out from the markets of Europe, Asia and Africa, by the competition of countries whose land has not been exhausted by barbarous servitude and who utilise modern machine technique. Indian wheat has been killed for ever as a marketable
labourers, have greatly increased the indebtedness of the peasant masses to the imperialists, landlords and moneymakers, increased the dependence of the peasants on them, enriching the British financial sharks with hundreds of millions, giving great millions of acres of peasant land to the landlords, moneymakers and kulaks, bringing about the rapid enrichment of a small "selected" upper group of kulak land-grabbers. Lies and deceit are spread by the pretended friends of the people, who claim that all suffer equally from the fall of prices, the stoppage of industry and unemployment. No. Four years of ruin have shown that the strong and rich always get richer and stronger at the expense of the toilers and the exploited, at the expense of their poverty and humility. They are even now seeking this way out of the situation—the imperialists in the further enslavement of India, the Indian parasites in the further ruin of the majority of the people. The crisis teaches the toilers of India one thing—salvation lies through struggle, through a conscious, organised and irreconcilable struggle against the oppressors and exploiters, and not through peace with them. Peace with them means reconciliation with our own slavery and ruin.

(To be continued.)

The Labour Movement

The Strike of the Greek Seamen

By Kostas Grypos

Reports are coming in from various parts of Europe, Africa and America regarding the last outbreaks of the strike of the Greek merchant seamen, which commenced in some English ports at the beginning of March and then spread to all the Greek ships coming into harbour.

The Greek mercantile fleet is one of the most important branches of Greek industry. The fact that it was capable, under the severe conditions of the economic crisis, of standing the competition of English and Norwegian shipping is solely owing to the circumstance that the Soviet Union has chartered the larger part of the Greek ships and because the exploitation of the crews is monstrous. The pay, the food and the living quarters provided the Greek seamen are the worst in the world. No medical attention is provided. If a seaman falls sick whilst on a voyage he must simply wait till the ship puts into port. The position of the Greek seaman is so indescribably bad that some months ago the London "Times" strongly criticised the inhumane conditions in the Greek mercantile marine. This was, of course, not out of sympathy for the Greek proletarians, but in order to show by what means the Greek shipowners are able to compete with their English rivals.

In the most remote parts of the world there are unemloyed Greek seamen who are handed over wretched and despair. The unemployable seamen have been living in the Greek government who have almost the same conditions of the seamen and are prepared to commit any base treachery at any time. A year ago the result of this co-operation between the shipowners and the reformists was a regulation of wages which legalised the misery of the seamen. But this degree of exploitation of one of the oldest and best developed sections of the Greek proletariat would be impossible if not for the active co-operation of the reformists and reactionary leaders of the Seamen's union. The striking seamen have only the support of the seamen and are prepared to commit any base treachery. It was precisely against this regulation that the present strike, which is now approaching its end, broke out—of course against the will of the reformists and mainly under the leadership of the Red Seamen's Union. The striking seamen have almost the same demands as the seamen and are prepared to commit any base treachery at any time. A year ago the result of this co-operation between the shipowners and the reformists was a regulation of wages which legalised the misery of the seamen.

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