THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

THE CONSTITUTION FOR THE ENSLAVEMENT OF THE INDIAN PEOPLE AND THE POLICY OF THE INDIAN BOURGEOISIE

By VALIA

THE draft constitution for India is now published. After five years of work, carried out through the medium of the Labour and Conservative Governments, British imperialism has elaborated a constitution for enslaving, oppressing and barbarously exploiting the Indian people. The whole essence of the constitution is precisely that British imperialism will strengthen its domination over the enslaved country by other methods in the new conditions. British imperialism does not deny this. Baldwin, in a speech published in the "Times" on May 13th, shows once again that power will remain entirely in the hands of the Viceroy and the British Parliament, etc. According to him, the task is to take account of the changed conditions and the awakening of the masses of India, and to try to "build an edifice which will stand against time and weather, irrespective of changes of government in the House." It is possible to construct such an edifice, he continued, if some "Indian elements" are brought in. Such elements are the feudallandlord, usurious groups. "The collaboration of the Indian princes in the administration of the new India has always been our ideal." "A federation in which the princes participate would without doubt bring in the element of stability, since there are no more loyal supporters of the British throne than the Indian princes" (Baldwin). Thus British imperialism sees the salvation of its power in India in the formation of a federation with the participation of the princes in the Government and the inclusion of the feudal elements. But even this task it undertakes with great reluctance (revolt of Churchill), understanding that with the present relationship of class forces "everyone must admit that the British Government cannot do anything" (Baldwin).

All the practical measures in the constitution are based on this principle : the strengthening of the feudal imperialist bloc. Some of the concessions to the Indian bourgeoisie are founded on this. British imperialism is striving to strengthen its basis in the country and reach agreement with the Indian bourgeoisie for jointly warding off and suppressing the approaching revolution, and obtaining support in case of a new world war or intervention in the U.S.S.R. The special difficulty in the situation of British imperialism is that all these concessions, "reforms" and negotiations have to be carried out in the conditions of deepening crisis, which nullifies the significance of all concessions (the temporary reduction of taxes on the peasants in the United Provinces and a few other districts, etc.) and which assists the growth of the revolutionary awakening of new strata of the masses of the people. The period of "reforms" in 1933 differs radically from that of 1922, when the country had begun to emerge from the crisis.

A review of 1932, and the beginning of 1933, shows how the crisis is developing and, furthermore, how it has now strongly hit the cotton industry, which in 1930-32 was working at full capacity.

By way of illustration we first give a few characteristic figures.

	Fall of Prices (1924=100)						
					,	Average	е
				Raw		for all	
		Grain	Tea.	Jute.	Cotton.	goods.	
1929	• •	119	101	140		134	
1930	• •	84	102	99		100	
1931	••	73	63	78	97	96	
19 <u>32</u>		64	57	. 7 ¹ .	, ⁸ 7 ,	86	

The fall of prices continued right through **F**932 and is continuing in 1933, testifying to the ruin of the peasants, the growth of hunger and starvation, accompanied by a growth in the reserves of finished goods, food products, etc. The home market has narrowed down and difficulties are increasing for the whole economic life of the country.

The fall of prices is accompanied by a destruction of productive forces and a fall in production. The following figures on the sown area and the output of iron confirm this.

Reduction of the Sown Area.

(in 1,000 acres)

		Jute.	Cotton.		
1929-30	••	3,317	25,922	31,654	31,131
1930-32		1,862	23,522	33,745	
1932-33		1,899	22,350	31,829	30,655
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In 1930-31 under the influence of the crisis, the peasants began to change over from industrial raw material to wheat, from high grade cultures to low grade. This caused a growth in the grain crops. In 1932 the crisis undermined even this attempt of the peasants to offer resistance. The degradation of agriculture which is the result of feudal landlord and moneylenders' oppression and imperialist superexploitation in the conditions of the crisis, leaves no way out for the peasants except the path of the agrarian and anti-imperialist revolution.

During the last ten years, the harvest of wheat per acre has fallen from 760 lbs. to 600 lbs., rice in 1932 from 877 lbs. to 837 lbs. per acre (Mukerji, "Bombay Chronicle," Jan. 10th, 1933). And while the average

385

area under wheat throughout India in 1932 fell by 4 per cent., in the Punjab, the basic wheat district, it fell by 15 per cent ("Capital," Feb 16th, 1933)

The figures for industry confirm the same conclusion, namely, that in 1932 the main factor was the crisis, which struck with special force at those branches in which the rate of fall in the first few years of the crisis was less than in the others

5				 Coal
	Pig-	Cast	Finished	(average
	iron	steel	steel.	monthly)
1930	714	624	431	1,927,000 tons
1931	804	602	449	1,752,000 ,,
1932	650	500	400	1,580,000 ,,

The crisis affected the cotton industry at the end of 1932 still more severely. In Bombay alone over twenty-five factories closed. Enormous reserves of textile goods lie in the warehouses.

The outlook is not reassuring. The impoverishment of the masses, the fall in the personal and industrial consumption, the increasing competition of foreign capital, including Japanese, the structural crisis of the entire economics of the country as a whole, gasping under the burden of feudal relics and foreign oppression, etc., all in the conditions of a world crisis, show that the "reforms" and concessions of the British imperialists will not bring any improvement or quietness, but will lead to a further development of the revolutionary movement, for they give additional material for the exposure of national reformism, which is trying to disorganise the struggle of the masses of the people, and distract them from revolutionary methods of struggle.

The growing crisis is also portrayed in the fact that in 1932-33 India had an unfavourable trade balance for the first time during the years of the crisis.

	(in	million rupee	es).
	1930-31.	1931-32.	1932-33
Export	1,903.5	1,307.5	1,078.5
Re-export	43.1	40.2	27.0
Import	1,371.2	1,048.6	1,122.6
		<u></u>	
	+ 575.4	+ 299.1	- 17.1

It was mainly through the favourable balance that British imperialism was able to materialise the fruits of its plunder of the Indian people by exporting raw material, etc. In 1932, when raw material could not find such a ready sale on the world market, the British imperialists transferred the burdens of the crisis on to the shoulders of the toiling masses of India and took the path of pumping gold out of the country, using for this purpose the network of landlords and moneylenders and also the State apparatus (taxes, punitive expeditions, etc.). From September, 1931, to December, 1932, British imperialism pumped $111\frac{1}{2}$ crore* of roubles in gold out of the country.

* I crore equals 10 million rupees.

In the main, this shows the ruination of the peasants and the small toiling circles of the town. The British economic journal "Capital" (Calcutta, Feb. 2nd) was forced to admit that "the inflow of gold is greatest from the districts of the United Provinces, where the agrarian crisis is sharpest. It should be remembered that the inflow of gold began not long before the gold standard was abolished, and the price of gold was not too high." And this cannot be understood by some investigators who attribute the draining of gold out of the country to speculation and nothing else. However, this same paper "Capital," on December 8th, 1932, wrote :

"The fact that India, in spite of the fall in the exports of goods, was able to escape a terrible financial and commercial catastrophe, is to be explained first of all by the export of a tremendous amount of gold which the Minister of Finance correctly described as the 'decisive factor'... The only immediate and really effective method of avoiding an awful catastrophe is the continuation of the export of gold and consequently all other considerations must be subordinated to this aim."

British imperialism sees an "awful catastrophe" in the stoppage in the draining of profits and superprofits out of the country, part of which profits goes to support the apparatus of oppression in India. The Provincial Government of the United Provinces was forced to admit that the tenants "preferred to leave the land and abandon their rights rather than pay the rent which the circumstances had made high."

As the result, in 1931 alone the number of such refusals increased from 26,860 to 71,430. The truth of this is shown by the fact that this same Provincial Government was forced to admit that the number of orders for the forced collection of the land tax was 256,284. The figures for 1932 and 1933 testify to the growing ruin of the masses, and the deepening of the crisis. The rebellion of 80,000 peasants in the principality of Alwar shows that the peasant masses are more and more beginning to spontaneously abandon the reformist methods of the national bourgeoisie.

The masses of the people are more and more losing hope in the methods and the leadership of the National Congress. The "concessions" of British imperialism, to the bourgeoisie, do not make things any easier for the toiling masses. Beneath outward quiet deep processes are taking place among the rank and file of the people ; the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois National Congress feel this, and fear it. And the concessions which British imperialism throws them are pitifully small. In the sphere of constitutional reform, it becomes possible for the bourgeoisie to participate in the administration of several secondary "ministries," but even this only within the limits set by the British Government. The bourgeoisie, together with, and under the command of, the imperialist feudalists, receive the possibility of participating in the distribution of about 20 per cent. of the State budget of India. A reserve bank is to be formed, subordinated to British capital. At the expense of competitors from Japan, Belgium, Java, etc., British imperialism agrees to give support to the cotton, sugar, paper and several other branches of industry, including the Tata enterprises, so that the national bourgeoisie will support the British Empire ("preferential tariffs,"etc.). In introducing "reforms" and proposing "concessions," British imperialism simultaneously threatens the bourgeoisie, repeating to them that only in alliance with Great Britain can they hope to avoid "anarchy" (i.e., revolution) in the country and not become the victims of the attacks of any other country (Japan, etc.) as are taking place with China.

All the facts show that the Indian bourgeoisie, while protesting and expressing dissatisfaction with the concessions and not abandoning the demand for further concessions in future, are nevertheless in accord with the idea of accepting an agreement with British imperialism. The national bourgeoisie, who, with the aid of the National Congress, have led the movement for the last few years, emasculating it of its revolutionary contents, have simultaneously conducted themselves loyally towards British imperialism. For instance, it is sufficient to mention that they subscribed a considerable sum in support of the internal loan issued by the British Government. During the last few years British imperialism has issued new loans and converted old ones to the sum of 800 million rupees. The Indian bourgeoisie, though howling about oppression and compulsion, nevertheless gave support to the Government of the enslavement of India, because they feared a popular revolution.

The bourgeois nationalist Press of India greeted the draft constitution with sharp criticism, cursing it with everything they could lay their tongues to, but nevertheless the main conclusion which it draws is about as follows : We must adapt ourselves, we must not boycott the elections to the legislative organs, but go to them and utilise the constitution for ourselves and fight from within for its alteration. To this should be added that the non-co-operation movement must be stopped, because we cannot always act with negative methods.

In acting against the national revolution, the Indian bourgeoisie link up their fate with the feudal landlord strata. While advocating merely a few reforms in the sphere of agrarian relationships, the elimination of the native princes, etc., the bourgeoisie willingly accepted the proposal of federation, hoping that they would be able to bring the feudal landlord circles over to their side in the future. The line now long operated by the Indian bourgeoisie is not the line of revolution, but the line of a bloc with the feudal landlord circles for bargaining and rebargaining with British imperialism, the line of a bloc acting by parliamentary (and economic) measures. Not the path of revolution but the path of a bloc with the imperialists against the revolutionary people and the international proletariat. This path is the path of national reformist counterrevolution, which does not augur any consderable successes even to the bourgeoisie, in their quarrels with British imperialism.

Lenin long since pointed out, and international experience has confirmed, that in the epoch of imperialism, monopoly capitalism strives to convert the semi-colonial countries (China, etc.) into colonial countries, and that the *only* path of the oppressed peoples to liberation is the revolutionary insurrection, the national revolutionary war against imperialism, in alliance with the international proletariat.

In carrying on a struggle against the revolutionary workers and peasants, the Indian bourgeoisie have taken part in the work of the "Round Table" Conference, and are adapting themselves to the constitution. In criticising it, they make a series of concrete demands which were openly stated in their declaration by Birla, Toakurda and Hirarchand, the most prominent leaders of the National Congress, and the closest associates of Gandhi. Among the most prominent concrete demands put forward by the bourgeoisie are the following : The rapid formation of a federation, and the formation of a reserve bank, the prohibition of the export of gold, the releasing of the rupee from fixed higher exchange with sterling, an increase in the part of the State budget in which they will participate by transferring some of the military expenses to the account of Great Britain, and some reductions by revising the National Debt, giving the bourgeoisie the right to regulate the railways, and also to adopt all kinds of laws against foreign competition.

The demands of the bourgeoisie deal only with the question of a new redistribution of the profits from the plundering of the masses of the people in their own favour. This programme of the bourgeoisie corresponds to the programme of the National Congress. The bourgeois National Congress is trying to divert the attention of the masses of the people from the question of the struggle for independence and the destruction of the feudal landlord system, to reformist activity, the rectifying of some of the forms of caste inequality. The bourgeois National Congress has sabotaged and disorganised the struggle of the peasant masses, being mortally afraid of the agrarian revolution. Recently the organ of the Congress, "Mahratta," on January 8th, had good reason to write against the rebellious Alwar peasants, that "Although it is correct for the Government not to interfere in the affairs of a native state, at the same time it is their duty to prevent provocators from

without causing disorder in a native state. The pan-Islam agitators have attained their ends in Kashmir, and now it is plain that they have chosen a new victim, the state of Alwar."

The organ of the National Congress called on British imperialism to send troops to crush the peasant revolt, which it actually did. For its treacherous, antipeasant, anti-revolutionary policy, the National Congress always used the cover of pretending falsely that the peasant revolt is a Hindu-Musselman dispute, that it is a reactionary religious quarrel. The bourgeois National Congress, under the leadership of Gandhi, is trying to carry out the old plan of 1922 once more, i.e., transfer the movement from the revolutionary objectives to the path of reform, using however, a different excuse, and acting as the protector (!) of the oppressed castes. But, even here, it does not advocate the abolition of castes but their democratisation and reform.

This leads us to one of the chief problems, on which a clear answer will have to be given—what is the class character of Gandhism and what is its evolution? This answer has a direct relation to preparation of a correct Bolshevik policy, the question of the hegemony of the proletariat, and the estimate of national reformism and its evolution.

In the speeches of Indian comrades (1931-32), the reply is given that Gandhism is now the theory of the bourgeoisie, but its origin, source and class nature were previously different. "The breakdown of the non-co-operation movement of 1919-22, and the defeat of the anti-imperialist forces caused a process of differentiation in the ranks of the Congress, which, at that time, was entirely guided by the pettybourgeois philosophy of Gandhi (Gandhism in its origin is a clear petty bourgeois philosophy with its emphasis on weaving, celibacy and anti-machine slogans). The revolt of Das and Nehru against the Gandhist tactics of boycott of the fiendish legislative chambers was the first manifestation of the open break of the class-conscious agents of the bourgeoisie with Gandhi's petty bourgeois spiritual philosophy. Here it should be remembered that the liberal bourgeois leaders were put aside on the eve of the non-co-operation movement and the Congress was captured by the supporters of Gandhi, who was greatly taken up with spiritual Tolstoyan philosophy. The non-co-operation movement could have been guided, and was destroyed owing to the vacillations of petty bourgeois philosophy," and further, "nonresistance changed from a doctrine of the helplessly fatalist petty bourgeois, impotently submitting to the terror, to the conscious strategy of the bourgeoisie." (From "Materials of a Group of Indian Communists.")

The reply is obviously incorrect. A supplementary feature of this answer is the following estimate of the workers' movement of 1919-22, which was given by the same group of Indian Communists : "Under the treacherous leadership of the agents of the bourgeoisie, the working class kept aside from the great mass struggle."

Thus, in the opinion of these comrades, Gandhism is the economic and political philosophy of the petty bourgeoisie who are involved in their incorrect Tolstoyan principles, and therefore it leads to defeat. The petty bourgeoisie in 1919-22 isolated the bourgeoisie and took away from the leadership of the National Congress. Non-resistance is a weapon of the petty bourgeoisie. The petty bourgeoisie brought defeat to the movement in 1919-22. And although the authors of this opinion recognise that the Gandhism of 1930 is bourgeois, they nevertheless maintain that the movement in 1930 was petty bourgeois, that the proletariat followed the petty bourgeoisie, and that, as the result of this, there was "reaction" in the ranks of the working class, etc., i.e., the petty bourgeoisie were once again in the leadership as in 1919-22. Hence a hand is proffered to the idea of Roy that the task was therefore to replace the old leaders of the National Congress by new ones, more "left." The bourgeoisie, the proletariat and the peasants thus disappear from the field of view. The Roy group wrote in 1932 that the whole difficulty is that "if any pressure is put on any leader of the Congress, he is driven into a corner where he sacrifices the political programme of full national freedom at the altar of the ethical teachings of non-violence," and in another leaflet, that "the defeat of the Gandhist leadership of the Congress took place, because it represented non-revolutionary ideology, utopian sentiment and political illusion."

Such an estimate of Gandhism as petty bourgeois philosophy leading to defeat, owing to its utopian ideals and incorrect ethical teachings, still finds support among some of the followers of the revolutionary movement and is extremely harmful, hindering the process of the development of revolutionary Marxism.

It is not correct to claim that in 1919-22 the petty bourgeoisie were at the head. In 1919-22 the leadership of the people's movement was in the hands of the bourgeoisie, who succeeded in getting the support of the petty bourgeois mass by means of slogans popular among the backward Indian masses, and the slogan of non-violence stood for the interests of the bloc of the bourgeoisie and the liberal landlords who feared the anti-imperialist and agrarian revolution. Gandhi and other leaders of the Congress have repeatedly stated this.

It is not true that the essence of Gandhism was the struggle for hand-looms against machines. To refute this, it is sufficient to quote the resolution of the session of the National Congress in 1920 (not to mention practice) where it says :

"In so fan as non-co-operation was introduced as a measure of discipline and self-sacrifice, without which the nation cannot attain real progress . . . the session of the National Congress advises that Swadesh* be adopted on a wide scale in respect to cotton goods, and as the existing factories of India with national capital and control do not produce sufficient yarn and cloth for the needs of the people, and will probably not be in a position to do so for a long time, the session of the National Congress advises that further production be stimulated on a large scale by increasing hand spinning in every house and hand-weaving by millions of weavers, who have given up work owing to lack of support."

The resolution was carried with the help of Gandhi. A study of the decisions of the National Congress of this period, including the resolution (Bardoli) on ceasing the non-co-operation campagn owing to the actions of the workers and peasants, all show that the National Congress, like Gandhism, represented the interests of the bourgeoisie and the liberal landlords. It puts in the first place, the interests of the capitalists.

The bourgeois National Congress wished to give support to home industries, which represent a fairly big economic force, not at the expense of the bourgeoisie, but at the expense of imperialism, and as a force which is not a serious opponent of industrial capital. Starting with the slogans and ending with the statement (Nagpur session, 1920) that "The ideal of the Indian National Congress is to establish Swaraj[†] for the Indian people by lawful and peaceful means," the National Congress and Gandhism have carried on a consistent policy of defence of the interests of the bourgeoisie and the landlord system.

The starting point in determining the class essence of Gandhism is the statement of Comrade Stalin in his report at the XVI. Congress of the C.P.S.U. :

"As for assistants (i.e., of imperialism) of the type of Gandhi, Tsarism had shoals of them in the form of liberal conciliators of every kind, from which, however, nothing but confusion arose."

Such a position is supported by the platform of action of the C.P. India, where it is said that :

"The policy of Gandhism on which the programme of the Congress is based, under the cover of vague phrases on love, peace, an unassuming and hardworking life, the easing of the lot of the peasant, national unity, the special historical mission of Hinduism, etc., propagates and defends the interests of the national bourgeoisie... advocates the interests of the capitalist development of India on the bodies and the oppression of the toiling masses of the country, in alliance with world imperialism."

The circumstances were such that in 1919-22 and later, Gandhism succeeded in carrying the masses with it. This is explained by the fact that Gandhism emerged on the arena at the time of the breaking

of social relations, the growth of native capitalism (during the war and later), the world war, which tore millions of peasants from the villages, the awakening of the peasants and the proletariat, the tremendous rise of hatred of British rule. Gandhism succeeded in utilising the influence of religion, patriarchalcaste traditions, the naïveness, "non-resistance to evil" of the enslaved masses, their lack of understanding that new social relations were growing up, interwoven with pre-capitalist forms of plunder and domination. Gandhism was able to utilise the growing protest of the masses of the people, their confused desire to change the existing conditions, a desire without a realisation that the exploited proletariat and the peasants form a revolutionary force, whose interests are opposed to those of the bourgeoisie. Classes began to separate only in the course of the struggle for independence, in the course of the class struggle. The working class began to take form as a separate class force, and the anti-revolutionary nature of the bourgeoisie became more and more clear and definite.

Gandhism is now again demonstrating its liberal anti-revolutionary nature. The working class and the peasants are moving to the left, and new fights are maturing, but the bourgeoisie are moving to the right, striving to demoralise the revolutionary forces.

British imperialism has issued its draft of the constitution, i.e., a new and more flexible form of strengthening its domination, while the bourgeois National Congress is preparing to take a direct part in carrying it out. The Congress organ "Mahratta" recognised as early as January 15th, 1933 :

"We must note the fact that, at the present time, the leaders of the Congress are directing the attention of the people to the problem of abolishing ' untouchability ' (i.e., pariahs) and thus distracting them from the questions which have direct political importance.

. . . It is not difficult to understand that the concentration of the attention of the people on the question of the untouchables, the right to enter the temple, is equivalent to repudiation of the movement for which the Congress leaders and their supporters are now in prison."

The Congress, hiding behind the "struggle" for the abolition of the pariah system, is preparing the ground for adopting the constitution worked out by British imperialism. Thus the National Congress is literally repeating the manœuvre which it carried out in 1922. But this time the bourgeoisie are making a miscalculation, because in contradistinction to 1922, the economic crisis is sharpening, the revolutionary movement is growing and the Communist movement is beginning to appear on to the scene.

Thus, Gandhism was, and is, the philosophy of the bourgeoisie and the landlords. It is not right to state that its drawback consisted and still consists in reactionary, utopian petty bourgeois principles, because it was

^{* &}quot;Swadesh": The movement in favour of national industry.

^{† &}quot;Swaraj": Self-government.

and is the teachings of the cowardly anti-revolutionary bourgeoisie, linked up with the landlord system and in deadly fear of a national revolution. This is the essence of the matter.

Gandhi and the National Congress are now trying to prepare the ground for carrying out the constitution and this shows that the process of the swing to the right on the part of the bourgeoisie is continuing. The cross-bred results of the Round Table Conference and the policy of the National Congress have undoubtedly called forth an increase in the ferment and discontent among the rank and file members of the National Congress, among the petty bourgeoisie, not to speak of the proletariat and the toiling peasants.

This will, without question, cause a growth of class differentiation, the rallying together of the revolutionary proletariat, possibly the appearance of revolutionary and also semi-radical petty bourgeois groups and organisations. The correctness of the policy, the slogans and the paths indicated by the Communists will become plainer and plainer to ever wider strata of the toiling masses and also to the members of the revolutionary organisations.

Among the leaders of the national movement, there will possibly begin a re-estimation of values, and some of them may fix their gaze on the other side of the Atlantic, on the American bourgeoisie. It is possible that some of them, at any rate for a time, will *come nearer to the international workers' movement*. However, the facts show that the fundamental organisations of the bourgeois nationalist movement will at present still orientate themselves on British imperialism.

The Indian bourgeoisie are now trying to build up a united front of all parties. They propose to call an all-Indian conference of all parties and mass organisations, and, hiding behind semi-oppositional gestures, will try to keep the leadership in their hands and prevent the proletariat becoming an independent leading force, the leader of the masses of the people.

However, with the present relationship of class forces and the home and international conditions, the bourgeoisie will not be able to stop the development of the revolutionary movement. And this means that the possibility of splits from the National Congress, the formation of new parties inside, or outside, the National Congress is very real. The bourgeoisie are trying to play an active antirevolutionary rôle, utilising the experience of the late League of Independence, an experience which is sufficiently rich and characteristic. The Indian Communists should study all this, for it depends on their correct policy at this time whether a decisive blow will be struck at national reformism or, in other words, how rapidly a mass Communist Party will be formed, the only leader of the masses of the people of India, capable of carrying the country along the path of liberation from imperialism and the oppression and slavery of the landlords and moneylenders. The tactics and tasks of the Indian Communists in these conditions will be dealt with separately.

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