

AGAINST COLONIAL OPPRESSION

Organising the Betrayal in India.

By V. Chattopadhyaya.

“ Notwithstanding the fact that the Simon Commission was almost unanimously boycotted by all political parties and organisations in India, and that the Report issued by the Commission, which deliberately ignores the mass revolt in progress during the last few months, has been unanimously condemned, there can be no doubt that the publication of the Simon Report in June and the announcement that the Round Table Conference has been fixed for October 20th have been highly profitable steps from the imperialist point of view. They have transferred political initiative into the hands of the Government and forced bourgeois politicians to concentrate all their energies on discussing the conditions of participation in the Round Table Conference. As for the Congress leaders, they are faced with two alternatives—either to carry on the struggle to its logical consequences, that is, to revolutionary action by the workers and peasants and to the complete expropriation of the landowning class, or to make a compromise with the Government for the protection of their own class interests. It is obvious that they must adopt the latter course. The Government, too, is anxious to come to a compromise, not only because of the heavy decline in British trade that is being caused by the general “lawlessness” and by the boycott movement, but because they have good reason to expect a further intensification of the mass revolutionary movement in the autumn. It is obvious that both the imperialists and the Indian capitalist and landowning

class feel that no arrangement regarding the future of India can be satisfactory unless **Gandhi** and the two **Nehrus** participate in the Conference. Accordingly, while the masses are carrying on an active guerilla warfare, and the Government is still bombing the frontier tribes and using police terror throughout India, negotiations have been indirectly begun between the Viceroy and the Congress leaders.

The arrest of **Pandit Motilal Nehru** may be regarded as one of the moves in these negotiations. On June 19th, almost on the eve of his arrest, he made a speech in which he spoke about "continuing the Civil Disobedience movement until negotiations, if any, are complete". Commenting on this, Wilson, the well-informed editor of the "Indian Daily Mail", a Liberal organ of Indian textile capital, wrote: "The Pandit is an extremely clever man, who knows the meaning and use of words perfectly, and I attach great importance to the way in which he has phrased this sentence. I should not be at all surprised to learn that Motilal Nehru is prepared to accept a "completion of negotiations" privately, and thus be able to justify, at an early date, the calling off of active lawlessness."

Eleven days after this conciliatory speech he was arrested, but the facts that he was allowed to address mass meetings just after his arrest and also when he was brought to the prison, and that he is receiving every comfort and privilege in "gaol", show that the Government in arresting him wished to enhance his prestige when he recommends the calling off of the movement.

But Motilal is not likely to accept any such plan unless and until it has had the sanction of Gandhi. From all sides, both in India and in England, the necessity of bringing Gandhi to London is being urged. In order to attain this end, the Viceroy has taken two steps. Finding that no Indian politician would accept the Simon Report as a basis for the Round Table Conference, the Viceroy made a statement in the Legislative Assembly on July 9th to the effect that the door was still open for negotiations and that the Conference would not be bound by the Simon Report which was to be only one of the documents that would be submitted for the "free" deliberation of the Conference. As soon as this statement had produced the desired effect on the moderate politicians, a "peace move" was skilfully engineered by the Viceroy. Two Indian politicians, Sir Tej **Bahadur Sapru** and **M. Jayakar**, applied to the Viceroy for "permission" to interview Gandhi and the two Nehrus in gaol, and, in the event of this permission being granted, to be allowed to speak to the imprisoned leaders privately "without there being any officer of the Government present at the interview". In their letter to Lord Irwin they ostentatiously add that they "are going on their own behalf and do not profess to represent either the Government or any party". The absurdity of these words will be understood when it is remembered that Sapru is a well-known agent of the British Government, and that his letter asking for permission was merely a camouflage to conceal the fact that he was acting under the orders of the Viceroy.

Sapru and Jayakar have already had a four hours' interview with Gandhi in Yerawada Gaol, and it is reported that Gandhi has given them a message in writing to the two Nehrus. The Viceroy's agents have left for Allahabad to interview the other two distinguished members of the Congress Trinity. It is not likely that these will accept the Government's proposal, unless the Viceroy undertakes to grant Gandhi's 11 points which in his (Gandhi's) opinion constitute the "substance of independence", but which incorporate mainly the demands of the capitalists and landowners.

In the meantime, the preparations for the Round Table Conference are proceeding, and His Majesty the King-Emperor has kindly offered St. James' Palace for this purpose. All the three British imperialist Parties are likely to be represented at the Conference, for the Labour Government is anxious that the Tories and Liberals should give their assent and approbation to the coming "reforms", in order that it may satisfy the maximum demands of British imperialism while at the same time it will place before the Indian nationalists the excuse that its hands were tied by the "Die-Hards". The various Indian lackeys of imperialism are arriving in London in

hatches. The Hon. Srinivasa Sastri, the only Indian "Privy Councillor", who was Britain's Agent in South Africa and is a member of the Whitley Commission on Labour, has already come with N. M. Joshi, his colleague on the Commission, and with Mrs. Annie Besant, the well-known Theosophist who has a long record as a Government agent and whose special function is to win over bourgeois nationalists for "home rule" within the Empire and to fight against every form of the revolutionary movement. Her latest move is significant. She has been a bitter opponent of the Lahore resolution of the Indian National Congress and been carrying on violent propaganda against the idea of independence. But she has now applied to the Working Committee of the Congress to be admitted as a member on the alleged ground that her place is with the Congress, but really because she wishes to appear at the negotiations as a member of the Congress.

Indian Labour is to be represented by one single man, **N. M. Joshi**, as a reward for his unswerving devotion to Amsterdam and the I.L.O. and for the services rendered in splitting the Indian trade union movement. In India, the reformist labour leaders, finding that the workers are becoming more and more militant and that they are not amenable to Labour reformism, have begun systematically to bring them under the political influence of the Indian National Congress, in order to give them an outlet for their political enthusiasm and to prevent them from joining the revolutionary worker's movement.

The extent to which the workers are being mobilised for the Congress programme is seen from the following facts: On July 1st 100,000 workers downed tools as a protest against Motilal's arrest, and 55 mills had to be closed down. A strike was also observed among the textile workers of Ahmedabad, the headquarters of Gandhism. According to the "Bombay Chronicle", the tramway workers came out as soon as they heard of the arrest of Motilal and went in procession through the principal streets of Bombay. The paper reports that the workers marched with Red Flags and with Congress Flags and shouted slogans showing the need of a united front between the Congress and the working class. At the end of the procession, a meeting was held and a resolution passed to the effect that the workers must take a more active part in helping the cause of the Congress. Propaganda in this sense is also being carried on systematically among the railway workers by reformist trade union officials, in order to divert the growing revolutionary movement of the transport workers into safer "national" channels. This is very clearly shown by the accounts of the political demonstration of workers in Bombay on June 9th, which was led by **Rulkar**, President of the G.I.P. Railwaymen's Union, who had recently betrayed the G.I.P. Railway strike. The procession, after parading through the main streets, was led to the Congress Office, where Rulkar called upon the workers "to give the fullest support to the Congress which stood for their rights and interests"!

The direct subservience of labour leaders to the Government is shown by the report in the **Hindu** of Madras that the Collector of Madura, an important industrial centre in South India, sent for the President of the Madura Labour Union and asked him to see that the workers do not participate in the movement directed against "constituted authority". The President of the Union gave the Collector the assurance that "in view of the present exigencies he would act up to the instructions".

Similarly, the new Acting President of the Indian National Congress, **Vallabhai Patel**, is reported by the "Indian Daily Mail" of June 28th to have had a meeting with the Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent of Police in Gujerat, as a result of which Patel consented to call off "active picketing" by students and peasants. The police expressed satisfaction with this arrangement. Previous to this agreement with the police, peasants and students had been actively picketing the liquor shops and the imperialist schools and colleges by lying down in front of them and preventing entrance or exit except over their bodies.

From what has been stated above it is clear that the betrayal of the movement of independence is being organised jointly by the Government and by the Congress and Labour reformist leaders. But there are clear signs that the masses will give their answer during the next few months.