question by means of armored cars and bomb­
ing planes.

Every day brings fresh news of the devel­
opment of the revolt in India. In such cir­
cumstances it is impossible to overemphasize
the importance of active support of the Indian
fight for freedom by the European proletariat.
Proletarian solidarity in England and in the
other imperialist countries, proletarian mass
actions for India are the immediate duty of
the workers' organizations, and before all of
the Communist Parties. The Indian move­
ment is entering on an acute stage. Here it
no longer suffices to give good advice, but it
is necessary to prove the unity of the revolu­
tionary fight by deeds.

Defend the Meerut Prisoners!

By L. BURNS

On March 20, a year ago, the thirty-two
Indian proletarian revolutionaries, the
leaders of the revolutionary workers move­
ment of India, were arrested and imprisoned
in Meerut. They have been charged by the
Anglo-Indian authorities with conspiring "to
overthrow the sovereignty of His Majesty
the King in British India with a view to the
establishment of a Socialist State under the
dictatorship of the proletariat and the
supreme command of the Communist In­
ternational."

These men are charged with endeavoring
to achieve their aims by organizing a Com­
munist Party, Worker-Peasants Parties and
Revolutionary Trade Union Organizations
in India with a view to embittering relations
between labor and capital, by inciting them
to strikes and by publishing papers and using
every other means of propaganda and agit­
atation.

Although the Meerut Prisoners were ar­
rested a year ago, their case has only recently
been submitted to the High Court where it
is now being heard without jurors, despite
the continued protests of labor organizations
in every part of the world. A lot of "cooked
up" evidence is being used at this trial, about
400 witnesses, some coming even from Eu­
rope, having been called, among whom there
are many provocateurs and spies.

It would be hard to overestimate the sig­
ificance of the Meerut trial. Like a mirror
it reflects the whole political situation in India
today; the intensification of the class strug­
gle, the advance of Communist ideas, the
progress of the revolutionary workers' move­
ment, the growing role of the working class
in the national emancipatory movement, the
reactionary policy of MacDonald's imperial­
ist Government, the treachery of the native
bourgeoisie, the strengthening united front
between the workers of Great Britain and
India and many other developments.

The Meerut trial was "framed up" by
the British authorities to stem the remarkable
development of the labor movement which
started in India in 1927.

Ever since that year the whole of India
has been swept again and again by mass
strikes. During this struggle the Left Revo­
lutionary wing, which had been formed be­
fore this time, became crystallized, for the
working class trusted it with the leadership
of the struggle and it quickly extended its
influence among the workers at large. Power­
ful revolutionary trade unions were begin­
ning to be formed in the country. The work­
ing class was beginning to take active part in
political life, demanding not only complete
independence for India, but the establish­
ment of a Soviet Republic. The revolutionary
emancipatory movement, directly it was
headed by the workers, began to develop rap­
idly and become sharper. Brutally exploited
by imperialism and the feudal landowners,
the Indian peasantry slowly began to raise
their heads.
Alarmed at the growing threat of the revolution, the British imperialists mobilized all their forces to fight the revolutionary workers' movement. Their aim was to smash the workers' movement before help could arrive from the great reserves of the Indian peasantry. Their first move was therefore to "round up" the finest leaders of the workers and in this fashion "behead" the movement.

Among the arrested men—who belong for the most part to the Communist Party or the Worker-Peasant Parties—you will find such popular individuals, well-known to all workers, like Dange, one of the leaders of the Revolutionary Union of the Bombay Textile Workers, the leaders of several revolutionary Bombay unions, including the Girni Kamgar Union and the Great India Peninsula Railwaymen's Union; Joglekar, Nimbkar and Miradjkar; Muzaffar Ahmed, the Chairman of the Worker-Peasant Party of Bengal; Thengdi, Executive Committee member of the Trade Union Congress and many others.

Besides the Indian comrades charged in Meerut, there are several representatives of the revolutionary wing of the British Trade Union Movement—Bradley, Spratt and Hutchinson—who are also accused of conspire to "overthrow the sovereignty of the King Emperor in British India." This is a clear example of the growing ties of solidarity springing up between the workers in the imperialist countries and the oppressed colonies who are joining forces today to smash imperialism and capital, their common enemy.

All the men arrested on the Meerut charges were "rounded up" at the same time, with the exception of comrade Hutchinson, who was arrested later. On the night of March 20, when the arrests and searches were made in Bombay, Calcutta and the other towns, troops were moved into the factory districts for the authorities feared possible "disturbances." Searches were made everywhere, the comrades who had to be arrested being hunted down like beasts.

The Meerut trial, which began when Baldwin's Conservative Government was yet in power, is still continuing although you have a Labor Government, with MacDonald at its head, in office today. So far from any change in the Cabinet improving the situation, we find that two other comrades were arrested in connection with the Meerut Trial. The authorities bluntly refused to have the case tried by jury. The prisoners were put on a far severer regime than previously. While comrade Campbell, the representative of the Communist Party of Great Britain, who intended to be present at the trial as the political adviser of the arrested men, was refused a passport to India.

The Indian nationalist bourgeoisie, who fear the revolutionary working class movement far more than imperialism, completely support all the terrorist measures instituted by the Anglo-Indian Government and welcome the present Meerut trial. As a matter of fact it is the Indian bourgeoisie who are increasingly urging repressions against the working class movement.

Indeed, the responsibility for the Meerut trial must be laid wholly to the door of the reformists in the Labor Movement. Together with the imperialists and Indian bourgeoisie they have been shouting from the house-tops that the danger of Communism was threatening India, that Moscow was getting control of the T. U. movement, that insurgent elements in the country were receiving "Moscow Gold," etc. With their continued lies and misrepresentation the reformists prepared the ground for the terroristic measures instituted by the Government.

Having arrested all the leaders of the new Left wing unions in accordance with a carefully laid plan, the Government had hoped to disrupt the whole movement and leave the masses without a leadership when the struggle was at its height. But all these careful plans fell through, for the working class of India has reached a stage of development today when the arrest of a few individual leaders cannot stay the development of the movement as a whole.

Despite the outrageous attacks of rabid reaction, the masses did not lose their heads. A wave of protest strikes, mass demonstrations and meetings swept the country. This was the workers' reply to the Meerut "frame-up." New leaders, from the rank and file, steeled
in the struggle, were immediately put forward to take the place of the arrested leaders. Under their leadership the working class came out more determinedly and energetically against imperialism and "their own" bourgeoisie, and are continuing the fight at the present time.

This is amply borne out by the big strikes of 1929-30, the political significance of which can not be over-estimated. Indeed, they show that the working class struggle has been raised to a higher plane at the present time (witness the five-months' General Strike of the 100,000 Bombay textile workers in 1929, the General Strike of 240,000 Calcutta jute workers, the General Strike on the Great Indian Peninsula Railway and also the recent mass political movements of the working class, the First of May Demonstrations, the Lenin Memorial gatherings and the demonstrations on Independence Day, January 26, last, etc.).

Despite the extremely adverse conditions the working class of India is putting up a heroic fight. It is the obligation, indeed, the duty of the international working class movement to support the workers of India in every way.

Now that twelve months have passed and the Meerut prisoners are still detained, it is the revolutionary duty of the whole international working-class movement to start up a broad campaign of protest against the Meerut trial, against the interested parties who are engineering this frame up—British imperialism and in particular the British Labor Party, in office today. This campaign should not be confined as hitherto only to India and Great Britain, or be taken up in fits and starts as the months go by. This campaign must be pushed forward by all the workers in every part of the world. It must be continued until the Meerut prisoners are released from the jails of imperialism.

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Indian Labor in Malaya

The terrible conditions of Indian contract labor on the rubber plantations have become most appalling. During the last two years the greedy British plantation owners have gradually introduced new methods of exploitation. They have lowered even the so-called stipulated standard rate of wages, claiming depression of trade necessitates reductions in these already starvation wages.

They are also now forcing these indentured laborers to accept task (piece) work by forcing them to tap a certain amount of rubber trees before they are entitled to their daily wage; nor is there any uniformity, each British agent prescribes tasks according to his own ambitions, thus they vary extensively. Such a system ends up in each agent adding more and still more trees to tap until the tappers are not able to do the work unless they work exhaustively long hours. Every agent gives the same excuse one hears in every industrial concern, East or West: "We must compete with other plantations owned by Dutch, Chinese, etc."

The terrible poverty prevailing is indescribable, and together with bad sanitary conditions, lead to every form of tropical disease. Another feature of exploitation among the indentured labor is the system of slowly poisoning the Indians by selling a cheap intoxicant known as "toddy." This is drunk by the poverty stricken workers who are happy to relieve themselves temporarily from their terrible surroundings.

The PPTU Secretariat is once more drawing the attention of the officials of the Malayan Federation of Labor with headquarters at Singapore to the need for organizing these Indian workers. A recommendation is being made to give the question of Indian Labor a special place on the agenda at