

**"MOSCOW"**

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**India's Political Situation.**

The political situation in India at the present moment is very revolutionary, and is becoming more so every day. During the last two years the movement in India has been developing two distinct characters, viz. 1. the nationalist revolutionary movement of the educated middle class, and 2. the economic struggle of the workers in the big industrial centres. Lately the Indian Movement has developed another phase, — the peasant revolt. All these three taken together embrace more than one half of the entire population.

The bourgeois nationalist movement is divided into two main camps, viz. the Constitutional Democrats and the Extremists. The constitutional democrats invariably belong to the upper middle class, including rich lawyers, doctors, a certain element of the native capitalists and the progressive landowners. Their program is rather modest; it advocates the continuation of British rule, but agitates for constitutional and administrative reform. The Extremist or Nationalist revolutionaries stand for the complete separation of India from the British Empire. The ranks of the Extremists are swelled by the lower middle class, students, and de-classed intelligentsia. These are undoubtedly the most numerous, powerful and influential element in the Indian bourgeois revolutionary movement. But the Extremists have two points of view in their ranks. One section thinks that Home Rule or Self-Government should be secured first in order to have a wider field of revolutionary activities; while the other maintains that Home Rule will never be granted to India and that there is only one remedy, — the overthrow of British Rule by an armed national uprising. The latest development of the bourgeois nationalist movement is the so called non-cooperation resolution. The idea behind this resolution is to make the administration of the country impossible by means of boycott. But the movement cannot succeed because it is expected to be carried out by the middle class. It calls upon the lawyers to boycott the British law-courts. It has declared that no Indian should run for election to the Legislative Councils. The result has been that all the seats in the Councils have been occupied by rank re-actionaries and the henchmen of the government, — thus making the councils exactly what the government wants it to be. The Councils will not stop passing repressive laws, because there is nobody there to raise a voice of protest. Another point of the non-cooperation resolution is the boycott of the schools, directed by the government and the establishment of national schools instead. This is a project that is bound to fail. First of all lack of funds will make the building of a national education apparatus impossible, secondly all the professions and government posts will be closed to the students educated in the national schools. The rich people who can provide funds for the creation of the National schools and can afford to send their children there simply to receive education for education's sake, are not revolutionary, therefore don't support the non co-operation resolution are: to induce the people from among whom the troops are recruited, not to volunteer for service in Mesopotamia; and to boycott British goods and encourage native industries by using indigenous articles. The last clause betrays the nature of the movement and its class inclination. In the name of national struggle it urges the poor masses to pay higher prices for their necessities, knowing perfectly well that these high prices will add to the riches of those who grow fat by the exploitation of the toilers. This boycott then cannot be carried through. It was tried and failed in 1905—6. For a short while the nationalist sentiment could infuse enthusiasm in the masses, but they could not afford to pay higher prices for indigenous articles while foreign goods of better quality are available at less cost. In short, the masses cannot be drawn into any kind of movement which does not take into consideration their

economic condition and interests. And the fallacy in the non-cooperation movement is that in spite of the revolutionary spirit behind it, it is based more on the bourgeois nationalists than on economic and social grounds.

In spite of all its defects, the non-cooperation movement within a few months' time, has spread all over the country and has affected to a certain extent, some classes, especially the students. The latter are striking and in several cases, are staying out of the schools for weeks at a time. The reason for this apparent success of the non-cooperation movement is the general discontent against British rule and the rebellious spirit which is growing among the workers and poor peasants against unbearable economic exploitation.

The absence of a strong, centralized, political party is the most remarkable feature of the Indian movement. Besides, the Nationalist Revolutionaries who, since 1905 carried on terroristic activities and advocated an armed uprising to overthrow British rule, none of the other political movements of India is expressed through the medium of an organized party. Even the Non-cooperation Resolution, which has undoubtedly assumed a temporary national significance, is not a party program. It is not the slogan with which a certain organized body intends to lead the whole people in a certain given direction. The Non-Cooperation resolution was adopted at a special session of the Indian National Congress. But the Indian National Congress is neither a permanent political organization nor does it reflect the views of a certain political party. It meets once a year to deliberate and pass resolutions on general national questions. Although delegates from the different parts of the country meet in the Congress, it cannot be called a representative body, since there is no organized apparatus through which the delegates are elected. Originally, thirty two years ago, the Indian National Congress was founded by those who today stand at the head of the constitutional democratic movement. Therefore, the idea with which the Congress was born was to bring about reforms and to introduce a democratic character in the administration of the country by means of constitutional agitation. Once a year a number of people would voluntarily meet together and criticize the government and pass resolutions in the name of the Nation. For three years now, the National Congress has been entirely captured by the Extremists, who came into existence as the Left Wing of the Constitutional Democratic movement. But although in the last three sessions, more revolutionary elements participated in and controlled the Congress, the institution as a whole has not changed its character. It has not developed into anything like a Party Congress. It still continues to be a body which thinks itself competent to decide the fate of the entire people from its own point of view, not taking into consideration what the people really need.

The Indian National Congress and its sister-organization, the All-India Muslim League, represent the sentiments and the aspirations of the middle-class. Although lately their leaders individually have been taking part in the growing working class movement, as collective bodies they do not stand at the head of the new mass movement of the workers and peasants, which is proving to be the powerful revolutionary force in India.

The Extremists constitute a great force as agitators, but as organizers they have not been able to do much since they have not adopted a program. The anxiety to preserve a united front against the British Government has prevented them from formulating a program. What they want is to inspire the whole country with anti-British feeling and in that they have succeeded admirably. Except the rich, land-owning class, big capitalists and high government officials, the entire people of India, irrespective of class, is in a decidedly rebellious mood against British rule. Now is the moment to organize these revolutionary forces into a powerful fighting apparatus in the shape of a centralized Party with a program which will include the overthrow of British rule, and advocate the economic betterment of the masses.

Another chapter in the history of the development of the Indian Revolutionary Movement has been the so-called Caliphate Immigration. This was organized as a protest against the peace-conditions imposed on Turkey by the Entente. Originally, this was a movement confined among the Mussulman population, but subsequently the Hindus also took part in it. The project was to induce the Mussulmans to leave India and go to Mussulman country where they could fight the English. The idea behind this project was that a great majority of the Mussulman population would leave India,

fired by religious enthusiasm, thus forcing the English to come to terms. But only about forty thousand people left India altogether. The first Mohammedan country they could come to was Afghanistan, which had promised free land to the Caliphate immigrants. But on reaching Afghanistan, the emigrants were very badly treated and a great majority of them eventually went back to India, where their properties were restored to them by the Government. This failure of the Caliphate emigration has produced a great effect on the Indian movement. It has proved that a revolutionary movement cannot be built on temporary enthusiasm and religious sentiment.

The real strength of the Indian Movement is the growth of revolutionary spirit among the masses. This has been achieved not so much by the propaganda of the bourgeois revolutionaries as by objective conditions. During the years of the European War, India has gone through a tremendous economic transformation. In the last four years, Capitalism has been developed with great rapidity. India today is no longer an exclusively agricultural country. Great industrial centres have sprung into existence creating a growing proletarian class. The Indian proletariat on account of its short life, has not been altogether separated from the villages wherefrom they originally came. A great number of the city workers still work partly in the city and partly in the villages. Thus they serve the purpose of transmitting the revolutionary spirit that they acquire in the industrial centres. In this way, the revolutionary propaganda which, till a few years ago, was mainly confined in the cities, is penetrating in the villages and disturbing the passive resignation of the peasantry.

The growth of the Indian proletarian class is indeed phenomenal. Before the European War, the number of city workers in India hardly exceeded 2,000,000. In 1918, it came up to 5,000,000. Since then, it has increased by fifty per cent. On the other hand, owing to the exorbitant rate of taxation, and chronic indebtedness, the poor petty-peasants are being rapidly deprived of their lands, thus creating a huge army of agricultural workers whose number has reached as high as 32,000,000. These thirty-nine millions of exploited workers, industrial and land-workers taken together, are being pushed into the revolutionary movement by force of economic necessity. And it is this background which has given such a powerful impetus to the revolutionary movement in general.

In short, in proportion as its class character is being defined, by force of economic pressure, the strength of the Indian Revolutionary Movement is increasing. Although there are very few leaders among the bourgeois nationalists who understand the real significance of the movement which is pushing them forward, the British Government, true to its capitalist traditions, has not failed to measure up the situation and adopt the proper methods. The British Government has found out that, owing to the industrial development, the class-division is sharpening in India. It also knows that the revolutionary spirit of the people will find its expression in the exploited class, which eventually will constitute the most powerful enemy of foreign Imperialism. Therefore, the Montague-Chelmsford Reform Scheme has been introduced in order to draw the propertied and capitalist class closer to the Government. According to this scheme, such reforms are introduced as are destined to protect the interests of the propertied class. Even the foundation stone of the future White Guards is laid. One of the main grievances which supplied great material for nationalist propaganda was the Arms Act, which disarmed the entire Indian population. The Nationalists from the Press as well as from the tribunal of the Congress, have agitated for the repeal of the Arms Act, at least partially if not completely. The signs of this much sought-for boon are at last in sight. According to the Reform Scheme, people possessing a certain amount of property are allowed to possess arms. Or in other words, the class which will stand by the British Government in order to defend the common interest, the interest of the rich to exploit the poor, in time of a revolution, is being taken into confidence.

While the propertied class is drawing closer to the British Government, the exploited workers, on the other hand, are also showing signs of solidarity. The growth of Trade Unionism is an indication of the fact that the spirit of class consciousness is developing in the Indian working-class. The first trade union was organized in 1916. Since then, the movement has grown rapidly. The first National Trade Union Congress, in which a hundred unions from different parts of the country were represented, was held in September, 1920. The Indian Trade

Unions are quite spontaneous in their growth. Most of them were born out of strikes. They were organized at the instance of nationalist revolutionaries whose motive was not so much to teach the workers how to defend their interests as to utilize the force of organized labor as a weapon against the Government. Thus we find a series of rather immature political strikes occurring in India, sometimes paralyzing a whole section of the country at one time. The movement has grown with great rapidity, and already leaders are developing out of it, some drawn from the middle-class, others from the masses, who are giving direction to the steadily increasing tendency to unite against both capitalists and the government. Such a fruitful field of trouble could not long lie neglected by the Government, and skilful agents have been sent among the working class to win their confidence and to assist in organizing them along the old conservative trade-union lines familiar to the English movement. These agents, winning the confidence of the masses by dint of advocating the organization of labor and the institution of friendly benefits in the new unions, have generally succeeded in having themselves elected to responsible positions within the trade-unions. The seed of a future Trade-Union Bureaucracy is already being sown by these men, who preach "loyalty to the Government and mutual cooperation between capitalist and worker". They are also instilling the idea of electing labor representatives to the new provincial councils instituted under the Reform Scheme, and they will doubtless get themselves elected thereto.

The latest accounts from India tell of the outbreaks of agrarian riots in different parts of the country, and the trouble seems to be spreading despite the use of police and soldiery to suppress it. These riots have a dual character. First, they are directed against the native landlords as a protest against paying high rents, and take the form of burning of houses, crops, etc. Secondly, they are directed against the Government, in the form of non-payment of taxes, resistance to the police and revenue collectors etc. and conflicts between the peasants and troops have resulted in the killing and wounding of many hundreds of the former. Like the early movement among the city workers, this agrarian unrest is of a spontaneous nature, due to the external conditions. So far, it lacks political consciousness but the National Revolutionaries are behind it and lead it. But the peasant movement naturally directed against the native landlords as it is cannot be satisfied with nationalist direction. It is inevitable that this movement will develop according to its own needs and its natural tendency will be to unite with the movement of the city proletariat in order to wage war against the common enemy, who is often the landowner and the capitalist combined.

The Nationalist revolutionary movement in India has developed a very strong press. There are more than fifty big daily and weekly papers, both in English and native languages, published in the different cities. These papers are published legally, though they are often suppressed and their printing apparatus confiscated. Besides, there are a number of illegal presses which produce revolutionary literature, mostly of nationalist character. The illegal press is mostly controlled by the nationalist revolutionaries who, coming from the lower middle class and de-classed intelligentsia, suffer from the lack of sufficient funds to intensify their activities.

Among the ranks of the nationalist revolutionaries, owing to their de-classed character, are to be found the elements which if given proper direction, would be quick to understand the real significance of the Indian Movement and would contribute the material for the formation of a political party which will lead the proletariat through the class-struggle to the ultimate goal. The Communist Party of India, which is very young, and which has to work illegally, expects to find footing in the ranks of the nationalist revolutionaries who, in their turn, are in touch with the mass movement and will represent the best intellectual leadership of the Indian Movement.

M. N. Roy

**Notice to Delegates.**

We beg to remind the delegates of the various countries of the arrangement by which the editor of "Moscow" was to receive a short article concerning the Communist movement in each country. It is requested that the manuscripts be sent in as soon as possible.