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THE INDIAN REVOLUTION

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Revolution on the Indian Horizon.

India, a vast sub-continent of 350 million people, possesses many interesting problems. The main interest aroused by all these problems is that they are presenting themselves for immediate solution. Upon their solution depends the welfare not only of the millions of inhabitants of India, but 400 million more in China and scores of other millions in the near east as well as the Indies. And to the north of India the vast stretches of the USSR will also be shaken to their foundations by the Indian events. And India is on the verge of a revolutionary situation. Let us consider this from a purely scientific standpoint.

What are the marks of a revolutionary situation? All the revolutions of past history, commencing particularly with the bourgeois revolutions at the time of the reformation and coming down to most recent times have shown that three objective conditions are prerequisite to revolution.

Revolutionary Situation.

The first is an all embracing economic and political crisis affecting both the exploiters and the exploited. This is already seen, beyond any question of doubt, in India. Not only is there the general dislocation due to the war, but in addition, Japanese imperialists are at the very gates of India, or more properly within it, because Burma is really nothing but a geographical division of India. The first condition of a revolutionary situation is therefore present. Not only do the exploited not wish to continue with the old rule, but the exploiters are unable to continue ruling as before. There is political crisis everywhere. The British imperialists find themselves unable to continue with the old policies of Churchill and the Governor General Amery. They have been obliged to call in a "left" stooge, Stafford Cripps. Between Amery and Cripps a conflict arises as to the best method of keeping India in subjection. Lewis Johnson appears for American imperialism, and between Johnson and Cripps, despite all their honied words, another conflict rages under the surface. The would be "junior partner" of British imperialism, the Indian bourgeoisie, is in a state of crisis. This is expressed in a three sided conflict between Gandhi, Nehru, and Bose. The centrist and reformist supports of imperialism find themselves in a state of ideological crisis. Conflicts of policy arise within and between the Stalinists, the Royists, and the Trotskyites. This governmental crisis spreads itself to the Muslim League and the Mahasabha. Nowhere in any section of the ruling class or its hangers on, is there a sense of political security. Nowhere is there such a working unity as would permit the old rule to continue. The first objective precondition of revolution has matured in India.

The second prerequisite of a revolutionary situation is the more than usual increase in the needs and misery of the exploited masses. Even before the war this condition was growing. Even before the war the masses of

proletarians and peasants were experiencing the effects of the decay of capitalism upon their own bodies. And to this general and increasing misery has been super-added the dislocating effects of war economy, conscription, et cetera. Even before the war, and for a very long period, the artisan class formerly so important in Indian economy was being declassed and shoved back upon the already over-crowded agricultural economy. No positive figures are available on this phenomenon since the war, but it certainly may be taken to be true that this condition has been accelerated. And in addition to all this the toiling masses of India are confronted with military dictatorship within and military attack without. The second condition is therefore fully present.

The third prerequisite for a revolutionary situation is the more than usual increase in the activity of the masses as a result of the two foregoing conditions. This is already present, although not to the same extent as the two preceding conditions, and for reasons that we shall touch upon later in connection with another circumstance. However, three incidents may be mentioned to show the existence of this third precondition. First is the fact that, despite the Stalinists and Royists, the city proletariat particularly of Bombay, has conducted militant strike struggles since the beginning of the war. The second is the growing strength of the Kisan Sanghs (peasants' committees). The composition of these will be noticed later, but suffice it to say at the present moment these committees are growing both in number and in action. This is particularly true of the province of Bengal. The third, and one of the most important and symbolic features is the following: Chakravorti Rajagopalachariar is one of the leaders of the extreme right wing in the Indian National Congress. At a recent meeting of the working committee of that body he made a motion to accept the proposals of the Muslim League with regard to the partition of India. This was defeated, one of the main opponents being Nehru. When Rajagopalachariar got off the train at Bombay he was met by thousands staging a black flag demonstration against him. In other words it was a spontaneous expression of disapproval in the form of a demonstration by large city masses. It is further significant that Nehru, who was also present, became infuriated and tore some of the banners from the hands of the demonstrators. The third precondition of revolution is therefore rapidly maturing both in the cities and on the countryside.

A Marxian Party Needed.

But the history of all previous revolutionary situations shows that in addition to what may be called the objective preconditions, there must also be present what may be called for the purpose of this article, a subjective precondition. That is the existence of a revolutionary party with a scientific program and mass influence sufficient to unite the various revolutionary factors in an onslaught on the ruling classes. This does not yet exist in India. It will probably be more proper to say that the elements for it

undoubtedly exist in India in scattered form, but have not been united. And since a revolutionary will to power can only be expressed by a revolutionary political organization, it is true to say that this precondition does not exist. The creation of such an organization in the shortest possible time is the prime necessity for a successful Indian revolution. Before we consider the steps to be taken to form such a party it is necessary that we examine the broad social conditions existing in India. This must be done for two reasons. First to determine what would constitute a scientific program for the Indian revolution. Because merely to get together certain people who swear allegiance to the word "revolution" or even "proletarian revolution", without a definite and detailed program, means the formation of a swamp, and not a revolutionary political party. And secondly it is only in the consideration of the specific conditions of India that it is possible to gather together a unified proletarian political force, and to discern what obstacles, objective and subjective, there are in the way of such establishment. We therefore turn in the next paragraphs to a general analysis of Indian social forces, returning at the end to an evaluation of the potential forces for a revolutionary party of the Indian proletariat.

Classes in India.

The class structure of India is as follows: at the very top is to be found the English finance capitalists, ruling through their bureaucratic agents in India, centered at New Delhi. English capital, at the time of the East Indian Company, seized upon Indian economy and endeavored, from that time on to make Indian economy serve as a feeder of raw materials. It made use of its political power to disrupt any possibility of Indian competition. It destroyed Indian handi-crafts by factory competition, as so brilliantly described by Marx. In order to bring the products of the plantations to the sea, British capital, of course, had to develop railways. But it strove by all means, including primarily its tariff powers, and its control over native rulers, to prevent formation of Indian industries, and therefore of an Indian industrial bourgeoisie. It has succeeded in this fairly well. This is shown by the fact that in the whole vast country there is only one significant steel work, that of Tata Brothers at Jamshedpur and within the past few years Tata Brothers have also been compelled, by the economic crisis to permit the infiltration of English finance capital into their enterprise. The only other significant Indian bourgeoisie are to be found in the textile industry. The predominance of English capital is shown to some extent by the following: in Sir M. Visvesvaraya's work, entitled "Reconstructing India" he gives 60 million pounds as being registered as Indian capital and 411 million pounds registered as English capital. He also calls attention to the fact that much of the capital registered as Indian is only so in appearance, having been registered by English capitalists in India. But even taking the above figures as absolute, the proportion of English capital to Indian is seen to be 7 to 1.

Imperialism in India.

Recently English capital has been challenged by American finance capital. Significant in this connection is the invasion by Standard Oil Company of India some few years ago and its waging of a price war against Royal Dutch Shell right on Indian soil. Since the war and since the peril to British rule in India, American finance capital and its government have endeavored to take advantage of England's crisis. It has secretly encouraged the Nehru group in the Indian National Congress. Concrete evidence of this can be found in the pro-American orientation of the Indian Nationalists in this country, as for instance the publishers of Indian News on the west coast.

English imperialism has one single aim. That is to hold India as a colony, at all costs. Before the threatened invasion of India the policy of Churchill and Amery was dominant, that is a policy of brute force. But with the Japanese at the gates of India, and with Britain assailed on other fronts, this policy threatened to lead to the immediate triumph of Japan. Therefore, Cripps was trotted out. The policy of Cripps was to line up the Indian bourgeoisie for the "defense" of India against Japanese imperialism, and to promise them something after the war. It is significant that even in England's extremity he did not dare to even promise dominion status, much less independence. The promise was of dominion status if all the important sections of Indian life were in favor of this. Cripps, the lawyer for the labor bureaucrats, and therefore willing office boy for the imperialists, maneuvered so as to get support from the Indian bourgeoisie and at the same time declare no definite promise could be made because the Muslims and the princes would not agree to dominion status for India. He was not able to get a complete declaration of support. Nehru and his followers balked because they were to be excluded from any control over "defense", but at the same time Nehru declared that the Indian National Congress would go ahead with a fight against the Japanese imperialists. So that Cripps obtained much of what he went to India for. At the same time Nehru's refusal to completely capitulate was undoubtedly due to Lewis Johnson, special American envoy to India for USA. The object, of course, of this gentleman was to maneuver so as to save India from the Japanese and to permit such a form of Indian government as would break English political monopoly.

Immediately under the English finance capitalists come the Indian princes, the rulers of the so-called native states. For all purposes whatsoever these are nothing but viceroys for English imperialism. At the court of each one is a British resident whose word is law. Since 1857, the time of the Sepoy rebellion, there has not been a murmur from the princes. In return for their holding down the Indian masses under truly medieval conditions the English allow the princes a tremendous amount of luxury and the possession of enormous strips of land. They play no independent role in politics whatsoever.

The next class to be considered is the Indian Bourgeoisie. By some this class has been referred to as a comprador bourgeoisie. By others, particularly Roy and Dutt (1922) one would be led to think of it as an independent bourgeoisie. The truth is that it is neither. It has specific peculiarities all its own, which can only be understood by a brief survey of Indian economic and political history. When the English conquered India there were in existence what might be called the germs of Indian industrial capitalism, in the form of merchant capital and also possessors of great wealth derived from feudal sources, who possessed the potentiality of becoming the industrial capitalists. But the seizure by the East India Company, and later by general English capital, of the dominating positions in industry, compelled the Indian bourgeoisie to restrict themselves almost solely to the textile industry. Unable, for the abovementioned reasons, to re-invest their money in industrial undertakings, the Indian Bourgeoisie was compelled to invest it on the land, and mostly in usurious loans to the peasantry. These circumstances have molded the Indian bourgeoisie, and are the main factors giving rise to the peculiar phenomenon of Gandhism. Unable to expand, linked up with a backward, semi-feudal system of agriculture, the ideology of the Indian bourgeoisie has characteristically expressed itself in a most reactionary social philosophy. At every phase of revolutionary activity in Indian life Gandhism has shown itself to be an integral part of the British imperialist government. The only break in these two objective partners has come within the most recent past when the Indian bourgeoisie, fearing to see its possessions destroyed for the benefit of British imperialism, has come out through Gandhi against a scorched earth policy and against armed resistance to Japanese imperialism.

Gandhism.

Opposed to the backward expression of the ideology of the bourgeoisie by Gandhism there has come forward a representative of the same class, Jawaharlal Nehru. There is no essential class difference between Gandhi and Nehru. Gandhi represents the bourgeoisie more oriented upon the semi-feudal exploitation of the peasants. Nehru is a more cultured, more modernized expression of the interests of the urban bourgeoisie. Also Nehru has received the silent support of American imperialism, which would rather see an India independent of England and dependent upon American finance capital. But in all essentials Nehru and Gandhi are two fingers of the same hand. The very conditions of life of the Indian bourgeoisie make it nothing else than a tool of imperialism, and it is absolutely excluded from the leadership of any serious movement against imperialism.

This is conclusively shown in practice by the example of Bose. Representing the upper stratum of the Indian petty-bourgeoisie, Subhas Chandra Bose was for a long time the enfant terrible of the Indian National Congress. He was at odds not only with Gandhi but also with Nehru. But the ideology of Bose and the class that he represented was essentially that of Wang Chin Wei

in China, and the result has been the same. Nationalistic in the petty-bourgeois sense to the core, having no reliance upon any mass upheaval of the Indian people, Bose inevitably became the tool of Japanese imperialism with its demagogic slogan "Asia for the Asiatics". A triple example of Gandhi, Nehru and Bose conclusively demonstrates that the only role in any section of the colonial bourgeoisie can be to support one or another imperialism, but never to act as an independent force.

Before leaving the subject of the Indian bourgeoisie a short word as to the role of the Liberal Federation and its best known representative, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru. This gentleman broke into print most brilliantly just before Cripps went to India. His Federation is the product of a split from the Indian National Congress about 1929. A section of the Indian bourgeoisie found even Gandhi too strong for their Anglicism and formed the Liberal Federation. When these veritable lickspittles of British imperialism have to address Churchill with a request that something be done one can understand the pressure brought to bear upon them and the forces that are boiling beneath the Indian bourgeoisie.

The Peasantry.

The peasantry forms the vast majority of the Indian population. In 1922, it comprised 287 million out of 319 million population. In order to understand the peculiar problems in India it is necessary to know the land system of India. Inherited from the feudal past, British imperialism, for reasons of its own, retained the system of governmental ownership of land. There are two forms of payment of taxes, which roughly is the same as rent. In one form, and the most predominant, the land is leased to large landlords known as zamindars, who, in turn, lease and sub-lease it to the actual peasants known as ryotwars. In another form the land is leased directly to the ryotwars by the state. In either instance the burden upon the ultimate tiller of the soil is tremendously heavy. The break up of the artisan class, which has been forced upon the land, has added to the pressure upon the poorer peasantry. In addition, the development of capitalism in agriculture, and the break up of the former natural economy in favor of a market economy, has resulted in pauperization of the vast masses of the peasantry. Contrary to bourgeois writers, the poverty of the Indian masses is not due to natural, but to social conditions. In 1911 the density per square mile of the population of the various countries was as follows: India 177, England 650, Germany 332, France 184, Belgium 666, Japan 400. It can thus be seen that the so-called "over population" of India is a relative and social rather than an absolute and natural condition. Dr. H. H. Mann, director of agriculture in Bombay made a study of the average holdings of peasant families in two representative Poona villages, "Over a long period I have found the following trend: In 1771 the average holding was 40 acres; 1818, 17 1/2 acres; 1820-1840 14 acres; 1915, 7 acres. Other studies show that this trend is characteristic for Indian agriculture. In Bengal the cultivated area works out at 2.2 acres per agricultural worker. It is not surprising that Bengal has been the most

rebellious against imperialism of any section of India. The stratification of the Indian peasantry shows the following: approximately 10 million landlords, including feudal lords, princes, bourgeois landlords and the upper stratum of the peasantry. 38 million landless agricultural workers; 173 million poor peasants. These figures are only approximate but are substantiated by the figures of Dr. Mann who in his examination of the Poona peasantry found that there were eight well to do families out of 103; 28 families maintained themselves by working their own land and working outside and 67 families who were in an unsound economic condition, below even the very minimum standard of living, even though they worked their own land and worked outside as well. In India a handful of princes and capitalist landlords own millions of acres of the best land; millions of Indian peasantry own or work anywhere from 2 to 7 acres, and are constantly in debt to village usurers, agents of the city capitalists, paying interest sometimes as high as 120% per year. One cannot fail but to be reminded of the classic words of Robert Clive when he said: "When I think of the marvelous riches of that country and the comparatively small part which I took away, I am astonished at my own moderation". This peasantry, exploited even worse in many instances than the city workers is scattered into 650 thousand villages. This latter figure in itself shows that the peasantry is incapable of acting as an independent force. It must follow some class in the cities. Since we have seen that the Indian bourgeoisie is tied up with imperialism, and is furthermore tied up with the usurious exploitation of the peasantry itself, it is palpable that the Indian bourgeoisie cannot lead an agrarian revolution. And yet solution of the agrarian problem is absolutely essential to the problem of India.

THE WORKING CLASS

We thus come to the final question: is there an Indian proletariat, and can it rally behind itself the vast masses of the Indian countryside for a national revolution? In India there are approximately 20 million proletarians in industry. There are approximately 32 million to 38 million agricultural proletarians. A perusal of these figures demolishes the claim that there is no numerical foundation for the leadership by the proletariat of the Indian revolution. But there are other figures that are still more significant. As in every other country where capitalism has established a hold the trend is towards the massing of the workers in large enterprises. Unfortunately we do not have very extensive statistics on this but the census of 1911 shows that in that year there were 7,113 establishments employing over 20 workers each; 1921 there were 10,969. In the latter year 94% of the industrial and plantation workers worked in establishments employing over 50 workers. In these larger establishments there were many textile mills employing thousands of workers and the Tata Steel Works employing about 15,000 workers. Unfortunately all the statistics which we have at hand do not give any accurate figures other than for establishments employing over 20 or over 50 workers, although in many cases workers embraced in this category worked in very large, mechanized plants. On the plantations producing jute, tea, and rubber the general employment is very high.

What are the conditions of these workers? An inquiry was made by the Bombay labor office in the first quarter of the century into the budgets of 2743 working class families in Bombay. This inquiry revealed the following interesting facts: 1. 56% of the income went for food. 2. Even so "the general condition is that of the maximum of cereals allowed by the famine code, but less than the diet prescribed in the Bombay Gaol Manual". It is very significant that the Indian proletariat is worse off than the inhabitant of the gaol and just the same in standard of living as a famine stricken person. 3. 97% of these families were found living in overcrowded single rooms, in many cases there being more than one family to a room. The existence of corners of rooms for families is a well established fact. 4. It was also found that 47% were in debt.

In the same period the profits of the Bombay mill owners, English and Indian, amounted to 153 million rupees as compared with total salaries and wages of 78 million. When one takes into consideration the large salaries allowed to English and Indian managers, the rate of exploitation of the Indian proletariat is seen to be staggering.

A large proportion of this proletariat is concentrated in Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, and other cities. It has a militant tradition, and has engaged many times in violent conflict both with the bourgeoisie and the government.

STALINISM

The forces endeavoring to lead the proletariat are as follows: The Stalinists, known as the Communist Party of India. This party formed in 1928 deserves no special mention. It has followed every turn of the Stalinist bureaucracy, and, although still influential, is rapidly losing the support of the disillusioned Indian proletariat. Particularly is this the case since its volte face after the Nazi invasion of the 7#4. Formerly it had proclaimed the fight of Britain to be an imperialist conflict; since June 22, 1941, the imperialist conflict has become a progressive war, not only with regard to the Soviet Union, but with regard to English imperialism. Such startling changes have been a little too much for the "naive" Indian worker.

Expelled from the Stalinists because of his belief in the revolutionary potentialities of the Indian bourgeoisie, M.N. Roy has gone more and more steadily to the right until now he has formed an Indian Peoples' Party, which endeavors to base itself upon the Indian Labor bureaucracy, and is more pro-war and more toadyish to English imperialism than even the Indian bourgeoisie. This group has connections with the labor bureaucracy, but no mass roots.

THE TRCTSKYITES

One of the main obstacles to the formation of an Indian Marxist Party comes from the centrists, the so-called Bolshevik-Leninist Party. But their programmatic documents as published in the American "4th International",

organ of the Canonites and the "New International" organ of the Schachtmannites reveal the centrist nature of the party. In the first place they do not clearly bring out the necessity of the immediate seizure of the land by the peasantry. In this connection they pose as their main slogan for India -- a constituent assembly. By this they now play into the hands of Nehru and the American imperialists. The slogan of immediate action must be the formation of workers' soviets and peasants' committees and the immediate steps toward the establishment of a proletarian dictatorship. These errors are rooted in the international attitude of this centrist group. One section apparently is with the Cannonites in holding to the erroneous view that Stalinism as such should be supported until victory against the Nazis is assured. Another section is apparently with Schachtmann in being for revolutionary defeatism in the Soviet Union as well as elsewhere. When either or both of these theories are transplanted to Indian soil they must result in centrism in India as well. One cannot be a centrist internationally and a revolutionist nationally.

NEED A NEW PARTY

Scattered in all the organizations mentioned above, as well as isolated and unconnected, are the elements of a real Marxist Party in India. The logic of events drives towards the unification of these elements, but a principle of clarification, not reform, is essential. There can be a successful Indian revolution if there is a party. There must be a party if there is to be an Indian revolution. In the complicated situation which we have described in the foregoing pages a telling blow has been dealt to the ultra lefts who deny the necessity of a party. The will to power of the Indian proletariat cannot succeed by being expressed spontaneously. Particularly is this true in the welter of conflicting classes, ideologies, and parties in India. Only a peasant war combined with a city war can lead to a successful Indian revolution. Such a revolution, a social revolution with an agrarian first phase, can only be led by the proletariat. The proletariat can only express its revolutionary will through an organization which has a real revolutionary program and is disciplined. This can only be a party, a Marxist Party.

Only two questions remain. The first is, given a party, can there be a successful Indian revolution? One realized, of course, that Marxism is not an insurance policy and that no one can guarantee the success of revolution in India at any particular time. But the objective preconditions are there and these objective preconditions cry out that if the English and princes and bourgeoisie are driven into the sea, and the Japanese imperialists kept out, the Indian revolution can be established and extended. This can only be done through a proletarian dictatorship. The reason for this is that an agrarian phase of the social revolution will inevitably meet the resistance of the Indian bourgeoisie, whose money is directly tied up in the exploitation of the peasantry. To crush this resistance the political and economic power of the Indian bourgeoisie must be smashed. Whatever name it is called by this means the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The only other question is the practical question - how is an Indian Marxist Party to be formed? It must be formed from the elements present in India, but it must also have the assistance of the international revolutionary proletariat. This will be done. When this question is answered in the affirmative the means for its solution can be worked out comparatively easily even under the difficult conditions of war time.

THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

Many readers of Living Marxism will, of course, question the two main theses of this article. Can India proceed to the proletarian revolution based on its present economic levels? The Revolutionary Workers League answers this question in the affirmative. The Indian revolution will go through a "nationalist" phase but there will be only one revolution, a social (proletarian) revolution. If the revolution is arrested at the nationalist (bourgeois) phase, then it can only retrogress, it can not solve even one of the problems of the bourgeois revolution.

Whatever "independent" action a country like India can take in present times is conditioned only by the struggle amongst the imperialists. Shrewd colonial politicians can achieve a SEMBLANCE of independent action by utilizing this friction amongst the great powers. But under modern Imperialism the colonial nations, in the last analysis, can be and must be only puppets for the imperialists. Any thought of developing an independent and modern home economy is a pure daydream. Imperialism will develop the colonial areas but only up to a point. In other words, it is IMPOSSIBLE for colonial areas - such as India - to progress under capitalist relations even one step further today. A political revolution in India will change not one whit the deciding factor of imperialist domination regardless of which imperialist will dominate and Imperialism will never permit any further development (to any large degree) of the potentialities of Indian economy. Only a proletarian revolution - world wide in content, although it is national in the sense that it must often occur in one national area at a time - only a social revolution that destroys capitalism will change all this.

This question will no doubt be argued. Can such an undeveloped country, with such a small "Army" fight imperialism? No - not as an isolated unit. The Soviet Union maintained itself, after the October Revolution, despite the onslaught of world imperialism. With the aid of the workers of all countries a proletarian revolution even in the most backward country is assured of success, provided it has a Marxian leadership.

Finally the question of the Party. This point has been discussed by the ultra-lefts for years. The bourgeois apparatus is tremendously well-knit. Besides its army it has a raft of trained professional politicians, millions of propagandists who go by the names of school-teachers, newspaper editors, priests, rabbis, radio announcers, and so forth. It has thousands of professional clubs - American Legion, Daughters of the American Revolution,

fighting the revolution. And worse than all it has thousands of "labor lieutenants of capital" within labor's ranks - the Greens, Lewis', Browders, Thomas' - who confuse and demoralize labor at every step. To think that untrained novices can give effective leadership against a movement of this scope is a sheer piepdream. Trained workers, versed in the science of Marxism, fighting daily the class enemy and learning all its principles and tactics - only such a well-knit revolutionary party, a new Revolutionary Marxian International (the Fourth Communist International) can supply such a leadership, for the mass upsurge that will wipe out exploitation of mankind.