



# NEW AGE

No. 7

## DECEMBER

### Contents

1. Bombay Proletarians Praise Unity—Editorial. 247
2. The New World Situation—by R. Palme Dutt 252
3. What Really Happened in Czechoslovakia—  
by Frank Pitcairn ... 267
4. Kolkhoze : The Collective Farm—by Miss  
Melly Zollinger, and Dr. W. L. Rao, ... 270  
M.A., D.Sc.
5. Freedom Movement in Hyderabad—by  
Mahmud Zaffar Khan ... 273
6. The Indo-Purna Riots—Their Causes and  
Significance—by Maung Khwe Kala ... 277
7. The Ranigarje ... 280

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# THE NEW AGE



## BOMBAY PROLETARIANS RAISE UNITY

The protest strike of Bombay workers involving all the important industrial centres and more than two lacs of workers, epitomised the crestwave of the strike-struggles that are breaking throughout India. It epitomised a steep rise in proletarian consciousness and unity and what is more important in the political unification of the working class.

Last two years have seen the ever-growing revolt of the working-masses against conditions of economic slavery. Cawnpur, Calcutta, Ahmedabad, the coal-fields of Bihar and the Iron factories, of Jamshedpur and the territory covered by the Bengal Nagpur Railway—all one by one shot into prominence for the numerous battles of the working-class. Low wages, victimisation, non-recognition of unions, these formed the main charge-sheets against the employers. Through these struggles the workers in this or that industry forged their unity against the employer and tried to wrest economic concessions from them.

The protest action of Bombay, however was on a quite different level. It was no longer the struggle of workers in this or that industry against their employer. Grievances particular to this or that employer were not the central point of action. The workers participating were not confined to any one industry, nor was the struggle led by an industrial union.

The leadership was from the beginning, in the hands of the Bombay Provincial Trade Union Congress, the central Trade Union organisation representing all industrial workers. The workers fought *as a class* not as a section of a class against an act of the Government. It was common class-action on a political plane that was the keynote of the protest strike of 7th November and put it in a place by itself. Organisationally it was a centralised class-leadership that distinguished it from other actions.

"But on the other hand every movement in which the working-class, as a class, opposes the ruling classes and seeks to compel them by pressure from without" is a "political movement." For example, the attempt to obtain forcibly from individual capitalists a shortening of working hours in some industrial factory or some individual trade by means of a strike etc., is a purely economic movement. On the other hand, a movement forcibly to obtain an eight-hour law etc., is a political movement. And in this way a political movement grows everywhere out of the individual economic movement of the workers i.e., "a movement of the class to gain its ends in a general form..." Wrote Marx in 1871. By striking as a class against the Black Bill the Bombay working class fought as a unified political army to defend its rights and liberties. November 7th



therefore was the expression not merely of the economic unity but of the growing political unification of the working class. It was a historic step forward in the maturity of the working class as a political force and with it, the growing maturity of Indian masses for common political and national action. It showed how the same urge for unity which is seen in the day to day struggles can and is being transformed into a political lever, into political action.

### The Sweep of the Strike

More than two lacs of workers participated in this awakening. Two hundred thousand struck work in Bombay alone. They included thousands of textile workers who constitute the vanguard, shoe and leather workers, municipal and building workers and press workers and even the loosely scattered domestic servants. The emergence of the latter categories as strikers for common class-aim is extremely significant. For the domestic servants the building workers and others, this was the first class-action, not directly connected with their sectional grievances. Loosely connected with each other through lack of concentration of numbers, exploited in small numbers or singly by their employers even economic action is difficult for them. Yet they marched unitedly on 7th November and gave proof of their growing class-consciousness.

Hindu and Muslim workers, touchable and untouchable workers, all united in demonstrating their protest against the Black Bill. Even the suburbs where propaganda was weak, did not fail to respond to this call for unity. Kurla and Thana joined the protest with their complements. Outside Bombay the protest strike was celebrated with equally

overwhelming success. In Sholapur 17 out of 20 thousand textile workers struck work. The Bidi Workers numbering three thousand women unitedly stopped work and even scores of handloom workers joined the ranks of the united army.

In the Textile towns of Khandesh—Dhulia—Chalisgaon and Amalner the mills were completely closed. The strike was followed in Amalner by a citizen's hartal.

Between twelve to thirteen mills were closed in Ahmedabad, the seat of Gandhian class collaboration. Not less than 10,000 workers were affected,

### The Labour Bill—An Attack Against the T. U. Movement

*The sharp edge of this united action was directed against the Black Bill of the Congress Ministry. That Bill attacks the right to strike, the right of free Trade Union, encourages company unions and substitutes the Governmental Labour Officer for workers' free Trade Unions. It lays down barbarous punishments for so-called illegal strikes and penalises direct action. In short, it is a charter of workers' enslavement, which is intended to be copied in all the Congress provinces. It is the first step in the all-round offensive against the Trade Union Movement.*

The last ten years have witnessed an evergrowing attack on the rights of the working class. Fearful of the growing political consciousness of the Indian workers, the Central Government had started attacking them as early as 1929. That year was introduced the Trades Disputes Bill which rendered political strikes illegal. It also penalised lightning strikes on the Railways, even if



they had arisen out of economic grievances. The Payment of Wages Act of 1936 prohibiting strikes in every industry and the recent amendment to the Trade Disputes Act of the Central Government empowers the Government to ban any "big" strike. The Bombay Bill represents the crowning stroke of this anti-working class drive. Its practical effect is to ban every strike big or small which takes place before so-called conciliation.

It was against this onslaught on their rights that the working class unitedly protested. They protested against a Bill which sought to legalise their slavery by paralysing their unity and action. They expressed their indignation against a measure which took away their right to fight against economic oppression.

### **A Fight for General Democratic Liberties**

*In defending these rights the working class fought for general democratic liberties.* The right to have free Trade Unions is a fundamental question of the people's right to association. The right to strike is an integral part of the people's right to direct action. The ministry attacked this right. The working class fought for it.

The democratic impact of the working-class struggle for rights was expressed by Marx in 1861 in the following words, "the right of association is besides a breach in the domination of the police and the bureaucracy; it tears asunder the Farmhand Law and the economy of the nobility, in fact it is a measure for granting subjects their majority." Every step forward in winning basic rights for the working class is a shattering blow against the Imperialist autocracy, a victory against imperialist

economy and anti-national vested interest. Attack on working class rights therefore, constitute an attack on the unity of the nation. It is an attack on the unity of the anti-imperialist struggle. The working class fought against this disruption by delivering its protest on the 7th November.

This mighty protest of the working class in defence of democratic rights was delivered in isolation from other anti-imperialist classes. It was not an act of the Imperialist Government but of the Congress Ministry that had forced the working class on the streets. And just because it was a Congress Ministry the people allowed the working class to be isolated, failed to note that they were fighting for their and the people's rights, and allowed disruptors a free hand.

From the beginning, the Bombay Ministry belittled working class opposition and adopted a bureaucratic attitude towards working class protests. It defamed the labour movement, refused to reconsider the measure and paid no attention to the representations submitted by the Bombay Provincial Trade Union Congress. The Ministry resorted to distortion of facts and its supporters did not stop from raising the Moscow bogey. Finding that the ministry was bent on its relentless course the Bombay Trade Union Congress decided to launch a one-day protest-strike. The ministry paid no heed to the boiling discontent of the workers. Two years of office acceptance had rendered it impervious to every democratic protest, to consideration of national unity.

### **Bombay Congress Mobilises Against the Strike**

The warning of the growing rift was there. It was the duty of the Congress

to step in and check the disruptive policy of the ministry. Instead the Bombay Congress decided to identify itself with the measure and embarked upon anti-strike activities. It adopted the same hostile attitude towards labour representation and attempted to hold counter-meetings with the aid of notorious strike-breakers, jobbers, head-jobbers and other agents of the employers. The local Congress instead of healing the breach, widened it.

The Congress High Command was aware of the growing situation and yet it sanctioned this policy of crushing working class rights by creating public opinion against them. In the meanwhile the Ministry mobilised the whole of the nationalist press to create public opinion against the workers. False reports and stories were circulated. On the day of the strike the press was instructed to broadcast the "failure" of the strike when 2 lacs of workers were demonstrating on the streets of Bombay alone. Never was there such a complete regimentation of the press. Never before had the press sold its conscience in such a shameless manner. Never was there a greater conspiracy against the working class.

### The Path of Disruption

This campaign of slander, this insane rush towards disruption in people's unity for isolating the working class, found its culmination in the brutal firing in Bombay. Two shot dead, more than a dozen wounded. Sardar Vallabhai Patel justified police firing. Not one Congress Committee protested against this brutal attack. Not one committee mourned the dead and cared for the wounded. Disruption could not be more complete.

Besides this the bureaucracy launched a number of prosecutions. In Bombay more than fifty workers are undergoing trial, many of them from those who suffered bullet wounds. In Ahmedabad all prominent labour leaders are convicted for leading a procession despite police prohibitions. In Sholapur 35 workere are standing prosecution for attempting to come out of the mills on the 7th November.

What is people's unity—one may ask. Where is the united will to resist imperialism? Should Congressmen support brutal firing on people fighting for democratic rights? Does the path to national unity lie across the suppression of the working class? The answer lies with the people, with every Congressman.

The horrifying events in Bombay which have left such deep scars on national unity, are not the product of one day. They only put in a sharp form, the result of months of capitulatory policy followed by the Congress Ministries everywhere. The same policy which kow-tows to landlords in Behar, justifies Chirala firing in Madras, imprisons peasants in North Western Provinces, was seen in its hideous form on the streets of Bombay, when police revolvers and rifles flashed on the 7th November resulting in such frightfulness, without any compunction and protest. It opposed Congress to proletarian unity, police bayonets to democratic rights. It is turning the kisans away from the Congress and creating a breach between the Congress and the proletariat. The new constitution was denounced by the Nation as a dangerous device to divide the people. We are fast reaching the fulfilment of that prophecy, unless the

people decide to change the course of our downward trend.

Let it be clearly understood that any crippling of the working class rights is in the first place an attack on national integrity, on the democratic rights of the people, on the instruments through which our people are forging their unity. No Congress Ministry can be permitted to launch this attack. This policy merely helps Imperialism. The freedom of the working class for its day to day struggle is the lever of its political consciousness, the guarantee of its acting as a disciplined army in the national struggle. To attack this freedom in any form, is to do an anti-national act.

### **Crippling the Strategic Arm**

Besides the working class is the strategic arm of the national struggle. It holds the docks, railways, means of communications, the Iron and Coal factories in its hands. India's search for new weapons of political struggle is leading it accept the political General Strike of the workers as the biggest weapon of paralysing Imperialism. If a Congress Ministry attacks the working class, it acts in effect as the undertaker of the Indian struggle.

No honest Congressman can have any truck with this policy. The weapons of anti-imperialist struggle must be sharpened—this must be our demand, and if the Ministry or the High Command attempts to blunt them the process must be checked and effectively stopped.

To enforce this suicidal policy at the point of bayonet, to erect bayonet between the Congress and the people is the surest sign of decay. It points to an alarming situation in which the leadership is getting away from Congress ideals and the demand of national in-

terests. The people rallied round the Congress because of its fight against bayonet rule and repression. If the same Congress permits the use of bullets and bayonets people will lose no time in turning their backs on it. That will mean disruption and widespread demoralisation.

National Unity is endangered by the policy of the Congress ministries. The bullets that were fired in Bombay were directed against national unity. If the Trades Disputes Bill becomes a law it will only be a standing monument to the disruption of national unity.

### **Withdraw the Black Bill**

The interests of the anti-Federation struggle demand that Congressmen should demand the repeal of the black act and denounce police firing on workers fighting for their rights. The Congress must give these assurances to the people, to the workers, if the horrifying events of 7th November are not to be repeated elsewhere. Simultaneously there must be a universal demand for reversing the ministerial policy on all fronts. National unity cannot be protected in any other way.

The political unification of the Bombay working class on the 7th November is both a warning and a harbinger of great events in future. It demonstrates how the working-class could bring into action even backward sections in the fight for democratic rights. The united front with Dr. Ambedkar enabled the untouchable workers to come out of their narrow groove, fight for common aims and taught them where to concentrate the fire. They have tasted the vindictiveness of the police, learnt the role of the bureaucracy. It has brought them nearer to the



national struggle and the National Congress. Fighting in isolation the proletariat gave wonderful demonstration of its solidarity and evinced that nothing could stop its onward march. It foreshadowed what it could do on a gigantic struggle against Imperialism when it would be fighting together with the people with the Congress.

The warning comes from the isolation, from the failure of the people and the Congress to unite with the working class.

The price is national disruption, dead bodies of workers between the Congress and the proletariat. Let Bombay be the last of the disgraceful scenes in which one section of the people is pitted against another.

## THE NEW WORLD SITUATION

By R. Palme Dutt

[R. P. Dutt is a leading Communist writer and Editor of the Labour Monthly. The portion in italics is an extract from his speech at 15th Party Conference of the Communist Party of Great Britain on the 18th of September. His speech on 18-9-'38 has been prophetic, as the later event have shown.—Ed.]

*"No one who has followed the events of the past week can fail to see that the Government has been deliberately encouraging a certain war atmosphere, an atmosphere similar to that of 1914. The war crisis is real enough. But the Government is playing a double game in this. It is using the war crisis to stage a deception. They are spreading everywhere a picture that the issue of war is the issue, that to-morrow we may find Britain, France and the Soviet Union at war with Germany. That is the picture being put in the minds of the people. Speculation spreads as to what will we do then, and has also affected members of our Party.*

*Why is the Government concerned to spread this? Is it because they intend to make such a united stand? That is the last thing they mean to do if they can help it. It is the last thing Hitler wants to put himself up against. If there were such a united stand, it would mean, not war, but peace.*

*But their aim is on this basis to smash the idea of the Peace Front by associating it in the minds of the people with war. Their aim is on this basis to put across their policy of betraying the Peace Front, betraying Czechoslovakia, betraying peace, and to put it across in such a way that it is received as a triumph for peace, that Chamberlain is the saviour of peace.*

*If Chamberlain wins, if he succeeds in breaking the Peace Front by putting forward his policy as the triumph of peace, then, when the bells of peace are ringing over his victory, the real menace begins. If Chamberlain's policy, which will be celebrated as a policy of peace, goes through, then Fascism, enormously strengthened in Europe, will at last be able to turn its forces upon the democracies, and the British people will then have to fight all the same, but under immeasurably worse conditions.*

*These are the frank realities of the situation, as against all speculation."*

(R. PALME DUTT, at the Fifteenth Congress of the Communist Party in Birmingham.)

After the Munich Agreement we are faced with a new world situation of extreme gravity. The present is no time for laments or recriminations over the past, even though we have critically to draw the lessons for the future. What is now urgently necessary is to lose no time in rallying our forces and finding the way forward in the new international situation which is developing with breathless speed after the Chamberlain-Daladier surrender to the domination of fascism in Central Europe. Fascism is a ruthless and rapid enemy. The reactionary combination which imposed its will at Munich is seeking now to follow up its advantage, while the peace forces are thrown into temporary disarray, by striking new lightning blows, against Spanish Democracy, against French Democracy, against democratic rights in England, and to shift the whole balance in Europe. The greatest responsibility falls on all who hold any position of leadership in the working class, democratic and peace movements, to respond rapidly to the new situation and reorganise the front of struggle. On all sides questions are being asked: What next? Where will the next blow fall? What is the future of the Peace Front? Where will Hitler drive next? What of the future in Spain? Of the People's Front in France? What must we do in Britain? How should we regard the Conservative opposition? What must our attitude be now to rearmament and the new measures for defence? What should be the policy of the Labour Movement? We need to answer these questions plainly, so far as we are able, and to give the leadership which is now more than ever urgent. For this purpose we need to review completely and critically not only the lessons of the

events which have taken place, but the whole new situation arising and consequent new tasks and way forward for our fight in every sphere, in respect of the international situation, the future of the Peace Front, the British political situation and the next steps for the Labour Movement. The present situation requires a fresh survey, a united survey, a common facing of common problems, by all who care for the future of the working-class movement, of democracy and of peace. In the following pages we shall endeavour to suggest tentatively still,—for these problems still require to be fully thrashed out—the answers to these questions, and the practical conclusions which now need to be drawn.

The betrayal of Czechoslovakia to Hitler represents the heaviest blow to the working-class, to democracy and to peace since the coming to power of Hitler in 1933. The same conditions which within Germany made possible the coming of Hitler to power in 1933 are in danger of reproducing themselves on a European scale to-day—the demoralisation and division of the numerically and strategically superior working-class and democratic forces, the conscious corruption in the ruling positions on the democratic side opening the gates to the enemy, the trust of reformism in these corrupt upper-class elements as the supposed representatives of a united democratic front against fascism (Hindenburg then, Chamberlain now), the consequent advance of the initially inferior fascist forces through a chain of victories without a struggle, under a myth of apparent invincibility, until they reach a really powerful and dominating position. This process, which

ended in the subjection of the German people in 1933, has been carried a big stage forward for Europe by the surrender of Czechoslovakia with its consequences for all the smaller States of Europe. We are as a result now brought to a position in which for the first time the fascist forces, by reason of the handing over of the Czechoslovakian fortress, are able to confront the democratic forces (whose unity would nevertheless still represent indubitable superiority) with a real and formidable measure of strength, and not with mere bluff and blackmail, as was still essentially the case up to and including the Czechoslovakian issue. These are hard facts to have to face, and profoundly affect the outlook for the democratic peace front. To face them squarely and draw the necessary conclusions is the first condition for recovery.

In the history of the working-class movement every defeat has been followed by a new awakening leading to an eventual greater advance of the working class. The victory of Hitler in Germany in 1933 led to a profound awakening of the international working class, the armed struggle of the Austrian working class in 1934, the Asturian battles which laid the first foundations for the Spanish People's Front and victorious People's Armies, and the victory of the united working-class front and People's Front in France, repelling the assault of fascism. To-day the shame of the Munich Capitulation is leading already to a widespread awakening in Britain, France and throughout the world to the menace of Hitler and of the policies of capitulation, and the necessity of making a stand. It is for us to see that this awakening is carried to the point

of political consciousness, of consciousness of the fight against the capitulators and for a real democratic and peace policy, and leads to a still higher level of struggle than in 1934-36, to the realisation of international working-class unity, the re-affirmation and consolidation of the People's Front in France, the defeat of Chamberlain and return of a People's Government in Britain, and the welding of a World Front of the Peoples for peace against Hitler and fascism.

Nothing is to be gained by underestimating the menacing situation which the Munich Capitulation has created. The effects of the Munich Capitulation may be summarised as follows. First, a breach has been made in the defences of the Peace Front by the loss of Czechoslovakia and its strategic line, as well as its powerful army, and by the destruction of any confidence of the smaller States in the Western Democracies as at present led. Second, Hitler has been strengthened, both externally, strategically and economically by the opening of the path of domination of all Central and South-Eastern Europe, and internally, by increased prestige and the myth of the invincible chain of victories without war. Third, France has been isolated, deprived of its allies in Central Europe, and thrown into a position of weakness and danger, with accompanying intensification of the internal assault of reaction. Fourth, Chamberlain has been temporarily strengthened in his internal position in Britain, and is on this basis carrying forward still more energetically his policy of reaction at home and abroad. Fifth, a preliminary form of reactionary Four Power co-ope-



ration, under fascist domination, has been established in Europe, directed against democracy and peace and for the isolation of the Soviet Union. These are the immediate fruits of Munich.

That is one side of the medal. But is not the whole medal. While fully facing these realities of the situation, which raise sharp danger for the peoples of Europe, and directly for the peoples of Britain and France, we need to see no less clearly the deep contradictions underlying this victory of reaction, and therefore offering new opportunities for the advance of our struggle. The temporary victory of reaction in the partially realised Four Power combination is not stable, and conceals violent antagonisms between the partners, not only in respect of the position of France, but especially between Hitler and Britain, as well as between Mussolini and Britain. These antagonisms increase rather than diminish as a result of Munich. This in turn leads, not only to rising opposition on the side of France (revolt of his own party against Flandin) and gathering of forces for future struggle, but to intense division in the British ruling class on a scale far exceeding the Eden crisis. At the same time the sharpening of the danger awakens the masses in Britain and France. The open alliance of Chamberlain and Hitler increases this awakening and gives new and enlarged possibilities of sharpening the fight against Chamberlain's policy. In the United States, and also in the Dominions and India, the strongest feeling is expressed from the widest sections against Hitler and against Chamberlain's policy of capitulation. Despite the reserves given away by Chamberlain, equivalent to thirty

German divisions, the overwhelming superiority is still on the side of the democratic forces if we can organise their unity under democratic leadership, and especially if we can win the co-operation of the United States. These are the conditions that help to shape our perspective for the future struggle, and for the possibility of future victory even yet for peace, in spite of Munich.

How was the success of reaction and fascism at Munich possible, despite the overwhelming superiority of forces on the democratic side? This is the first question we have to answer, before we come to the problems of the new international situation, in order to ensure that such a success shall not be repeated. Basically, the answer lies in the main weakness of the democracies as they exist at present in the face of fascism—namely, that the democracies are not united, but divided, so long as their leadership rests in the hands of the representatives of the reactionary upper class which sides with fascism. This is most obvious in the case of Chamberlain, who acted as the ally of fascism within the democratic front in order to disrupt it. But it applies also to the role of Daladier and Bonnet who, in the moment of crisis, in fear of the people, based themselves on the support of reaction against the popular majority and acted as the servants of Chamberlain, accepting the Anglo-French Plan and Munich in violation of their own pledged word, destroying France's own defences and stabbing in the back France's loyal ally. It applies in the last resort also to Benes who, admittedly under the most violent pressure, and after holding out to the last, nevertheless in the final crisis, chose the side of the reactionary

upper class elements against the overwhelming demand of the mass of the people and of the Army, and refused to emulate the example of Spain in a resistance which would have inevitably rallied the support of the democratic peoples and defeated the plans of Chamberlain and Hitler.

Does this experience prove that the democracies, within the conditions of capitalism, rent by the class-divisions of capitalism (which in the fascist States are held in an iron grip of superficial mechanical uniformity until they explode), with the friends of fascism installed in the high places, are incapable of standing up to fascism; that, in the obituary verdict of Churchill, "the terrible words have for the time being been pronounced against the Western democracies: 'Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting'"; and that therefore the conception of the united democratic front for peace against fascist aggression, and of the people's front, is proved illusory? The practical lesson of these events proves the contrary. It was not the method of the people's front which broke down in France; this has held off fascism in France for four years; it was French Reformist Socialism which collapsed in an ignominious so-called "peace at any price" policy (in reality, surrender to fascism, therefore to inevitable war) behind Chamberlain, disrupted the working class and thereby disrupted the people's front. The fact that the only two democracies which stood the test and remained firm and unhesitating before fascism were the socialist democracy of the Soviet Union (which, freed from class divisions and expressing directly the will of the people, was alone free from nerves

throughout the crisis, stood calmly and foursquare by its obligations and pledged word for the maintenance of peace, and regarded with justified contempt the trembling and desertion of the Western democracies), and the People's Front Democracy of Spain, points the way for the future. *The example of Spain shows that, short of socialism, only a new type of democracy, a People's Front Democracy, led by a Government directly based on the masses of the people, is capable of standing up to Fascism. This is the lesson which has now to be learned in France and Britain.*

No less important are the methods by which Chamberlain was able to put across his basically unpopular policy of support of fascism and therefore of future war. These methods, closely linked with Nazi propaganda technique and indeed drawing their main content from the output of the Goebbels machine, well built around the central basis of the "Peace Lie." The central theme is not new and has been continuously employed for years ever since the beginning of the war offensive of fascism. Every surrender to fascism is presented as a policy of "peace," even though it is guaranteeing future war; every suggestion of a united stand is rejected as involving the risk of war. This method has been continuously employed to assist each extension of fascist power and attacks, from the Far East, to Abyssinia and to Spain. But this time the method was carried to a new height.

The example of May 21 had shown the power of the Peace Front to stop war without war. From this point Chamberlain and Hitler devoted all their efforts to the problem of how to break

the Peace Front. For if this held, if Czechoslovakia stood firm with the support of its allies, then there was an end of all the plans of fascist expansion, and the eventual death-knell of fascism. All Britain's labours for five years to build up the power of Hitler as its gunman of counter-revolution in Europe, with the ultimate hope of expansion against Soviet Union, as faithfully promised in "Mein Kampf," would have ended in dust. Czechoslovakia was the decisive bridge to cross. Each previous expansion had been against an unarmed and relatively helpless enemy. Now it was necessary to invade and conquer a powerfully armed and free people, buttressed behind fortifications which the German military experts (after they had been let in by Chamberlain) declared would have been "impregnable," and allied with the free peoples of Europe. Public opinion in Britain and France was awake and alive to the issue far more than had been the case over Abyssinia and Spain. How to get past? Last month we recorded the first stages of the offensive: the elaborate attempts at internal disruption through the Runciman Mission and Henlein, and their failure; the ostentatiously advertised military preparations of Hitler to break the nerves of the democratic peoples; the deadlock facing Hitler by September 13, and the flight of Chamberlain on September 15 to save Hitler.

But even this was not enough. The Anglo-French Plan (forced on the Czech Government by third degree methods) aroused widespread opposition in Britain and France; the Labour Party at last inaugurated a large-scale campaign of resistance; the reorganised Czech Government was preparing resistance

anew; Hitler's Godesberg Memorandum was designed to force the issue. Chamberlain found himself faced with a hardening hostile opinion. Something more was needed. The debating argument that a united stand for peace might mean war was not enough. An ocular demonstration was necessary to reach the widest masses. Elaborate military preparations of a highly theatrical character were staged in Britain and France. These military preparations bore a peculiar character which could not fail to strike a careful observer. There was no sign of serious military preparations for war; the first and obvious step in that case would have been military consultations between the staffs of Britain, France and the Soviet Union (similar military consultations had preceded the war of 1914 by years). But these military preparations were entirely concentrated on measures which would impress the civilian population: in France the calling up of reservists and measures of evacuation; in Britain, the free distribution of gas masks, the setting up of anti-aircraft guns in the most populous streets and centres, and the evacuation of school children. The purpose was obvious. *These military preparations were not intended for Hitler. They were intended for the civilian populations of Britain and France.* The Peace Front was to be identified in the popular mind with war, in order that the betrayal of Czechoslovakia, which meant the really serious menace of war, should be accepted, not as treason to the people's interests and to peace, but as the triumph of peace and a reprieve.

If a measure of the political immaturity of considerable sections of the left in Britain and France, even of



normally well-informed left opinion, and of their unfitness yet to lead the fight against the most unscrupulous and experienced ruling class in history, that this manoeuvre succeeded, 'not only with the non-political masses who were left without leadership, but with many who should have known better. It would be possible to fill an entire number of this journal with the speculations on imminent war, on the policy to be followed in the war, on the desirability or otherwise of fighting behind Chamberlain, and even on the future peace terms (not to mention that vocal section of the left which boldly proclaimed its determination not to be led by the nose by Chamberlain into war for democracy and Czechoslovakia, as in 1914, and thus performed exactly the role which Chamberlain wanted of them) which filled the journals of the liberal-labour left during these critical days. The leadership of the Communist Party Congress, held at Birmingham in mid-September, gave a very definite warning of the real situation; but this warning unfortunately went unheeded. The present writer gave an explicit warning at the Congress on September 18 of the whole "war-scare" manoeuvre (reproduced above), and of where it was intended to lead—a warning which was unfortunately only too exactly fulfilled. The lesson is important, not for any inquest over the past, for which the present is not the moment, but for the sharpening of the fight against Chamberlain with open eyes for the future.

There was in fact no excuse for failing to understand the political purpose of the Government. The openly pro-fascist Government Minister, Lennox-Boyd, had long ago made it clear in his famous "indiscretion" of last March:

I do not think that Mr. Chamberlain would make a movement to guarantee the frontiers of Czechoslovakia. I can contemplate nothing more ridiculous than a guarantee that the frontiers for Czechoslovakia are not to be violated.

This was castigated as an "indiscretion," not as an untruth. It had been made clear again in Chamberlain's famous interview to the American journalists:

Nothing seems clearer than that the British do not expect to fight for Czechoslovakia, and do not anticipate that France or Russia will either. That being so, the Czechs must accede to the German demands.

The interview went on to explain Chamberlain's aim of the Four Power Pact, excluding the Soviet Union.

Every British official declaration made clear that there was no question of defending Czechoslovakia, but that the only danger was that, if Czechoslovakia and France should fight, Britain might be dragged in. Chamberlain's problem, in short, was not, whether to betray Czechoslovakia, but *how* to betray Czechoslovakia, how to make sure that it should not be an isolated betrayal by Britain, but that Czechoslovakia and France should be dragged into the surrender, and Hitler should have free passage. Hence the elaborate ambiguity of British official statements. A clear declaration of support would have checked Hitler. A clear declaration of inaction and unconcern would have left Czechoslovakia and France making a stand alongside the Soviet Union, holding up Hitler, with Britain exposed and the strategic aim unattained. But the successive half-promises, extracting

each time bigger concessions under cover of uncertain promises of hypothetical support, succeeded in dragging France and Czechoslovakia to their ruin.

Chamberlain had no intention of fighting Hitler. Hitler had no intention of fighting a combination of Britain, France and the Soviet Union. It could have been only by the most incalculable accident if war had taken place in the face of these parallel aims. The manoeuvres and apparent ambiguity were intended to deceive democratic opinion in Britain and France, and to drag Czechoslovakia and France to their destruction. They were never intended to deceive Hitler, who was kept perfectly well posted, including by his highly placed friends in Britain, as to Britain's real intentions. Hitler did not risk all on a gambler's throw. He gambled with marked cards—and the world was led to heave a sigh of relief when he won, and the whole framework of democratic peace was brought tumbling down, as if a miracle had happened. "Just as though the finger of God had drawn a rainbow across the sky," as Baldwin said, while the Death's Head Squads of the Gestapo were rounding up their victims among the democratic Germans and Czechs of the Sudetenland. Baldwin might well judge so. But not the peoples.

We have now to face the new international situation consequent on these events. Three main questions have to be estimated in the new international situation. First, what is the prospect of the reactionary Four Power combination, of which a preliminary form was reached at Munich, and which British policy will certainly endeavour to develop? Will the imperialist contradic-

tions between the Powers concerned explode this attempted combination, or have we to face the prospect of an accentuation of the concerted reactionary offensive in new directions? Second, and closely associated with the first, what are the most probable next directions of Hitler's expansionist aims? Are they such as inevitably to sharpen the conflict with Britain, or do they still permit of adjustment for a period between the reactionary forces on both sides? Are the colonial questions primary or Western Europe (France), or Eastern Europe? In this connection, the problem of Mussolini and the Mediterranean, with the development of the struggles at both ends (Spain and Palestine); the role of Japan with its new offensive in the neighbourhood of Hong-Kong, and especially the role of the United States, with the rising fascist threat to Central and South America, are important elements in the picture.

Third, and consequent on the above, what are now the prospects for the Peace Front? The old partially realised Peace Front, based on France, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, has received a shattering blow through the action of France: in the words of the *Journal de Moscou*, "Out of the whole system of eastern pacts only the Franco-Soviet Pact remains to-day in existence; what will be its value, now that France has just torn up its pact of alliance with Czechoslovakia?" Through what lines of development must we work to build anew a real and effective Peace Front? The answers to these questions will bring us close to the immediate fronts of the struggle: first, the struggle in Spain; second, the political struggle in France; and third, the political struggle in

Britain and the future course of the British Labour Movement.

The beginning of a Four Power combination at Munich might appear on the surface a big step forward to the realisation of the continuous aim of British policy. Through the past thirteen years we have continuously traced this undeviating aim of British policy, from Locarno onwards, as the key underlying all the apparent vacillations—the aim of the reactionary *bloc* of Western European Imperialism under British hegemony, with the spear-point turned against the Soviet Union in the first place, and also against the United States. This was the keynote of the Locarno period, with the Anglo-German loving cup of the elder Chamberlain and Streseman, the toast to the "Fourth International," the accompanying indiscretions of subordinate British Ministers as to the real anti-Soviet aims of the combination, and the subsequent Birkenhead Mission to Berlin to draw Germany into the war-plans.

This first attempt broke down for two main reasons. First, so long as German democracy was unbroken, so long as the German working class was unbroken, it was impossible to draw Germany into the wake of the reactionary British war plans; the reservations on entering the League showed this; the Eastern orientation of Rapallo still held; the Birkenhead Mission met with a rebuff, and the German press unkindly published the propositions of Birkenhead, while the Groener Memorandum revealed the calculations of Germany to keep out of the anti-Soviet war. Second, France was still strong enough to pursue an independent line and checkmate Britain's plans, both by its independent approach

ches to Germany (Thoiry), the intrigues of Pan-Europe, and the beginnings of an approach from 1930 onwards to the Soviet Union. Therefore, British policy had to concentrate first on two aims: first, to smash the German working class and German democracy; second, to break the power of France in Europe.

The first aim was accomplished with the coming to power of Hitler (with close contact and support from British Conservatism from even before his accession to power) in Germany in 1933, and the subsequent building up of Hitler's power with British aid. The Rapallo bridges between Germany and the Soviet Union were broken. Immediately on Hitler's coming to power, MacDonald hastened to Geneva to demand that the German army should be doubled and the French army halved; and he then proceeded to Mussolini in Rome to put forward the proposition of the Four Power Pact. The Four Power Pact was signed, though never ratified; but French opposition paralysed it. As the inevitable consequence of the rise of Hitler's power in Germany, France moved to the opposite line of the Franco-Soviet Pact; Barthou rebuilt the chain of French alliances in Europe, until fascist bullets removed this last representative of the old France out of the way; the growth of the People's Front in France increased the separation of France from British Conservatism. The first half of the British aim, the German half, had been accomplished; but not the second half, the French half.

In consequence British policy in recent years concentrated on the aim to break the power of France in Europe and to break the People's Front in France. Under the transparent cover of alliance



every form of pressure and intimidation was brought to bear on France. The Spanish issue was used as the most powerful weapon, in order to hem France in on three sides and assist to paralyse France, while Hitler's power advanced and tore up the treaty system and the structure of French power in Europe. French reaction, concentrated on the supreme internal aim to break the feared and hated People's Front, and therefore now pursuing an anti-French policy, assisted in this process; while the feeble representatives of French moderate Radicalism and Right Socialism (Blum, Delbos, Daladier, Bonnet) were puppets in the hands of the British Foreign Office. This process reached its climax with the betrayal of Czechoslovakia. The French system of alliances in Europe was brought tumbling down; a heavy blow was delivered against the People's Front; France was isolated; the French bourgeoisie, to save their class power, had committed suicide as a Great Power. Britain, now under Chamberlain III, presses forward to the Four Power aim.

But the new attempted Four Power combination is still far from realised, and even the partial preliminary form reached, has been reached under conditions very different from those originally intended by Britain (balance of Germany and France under British hegemony, with stabilisation in Western and Central Europe, in order that the spear-point should be directed against the Soviet Union and the United States). In the process of attempting to reach it, the power of Hitler has been extended far beyond Britain's calculations, so that there can be no longer question of a subservient tool, but of a fully independent force; France has been weaken-

ed to a degree that destroys all balance in Europe; while the new feature has appeared as now the strongest element in any combination, the Berlin-Rome axis, which had no part in Britain's calculations and is extremely inconvenient to Britain by its power of parallel and alternating pressure. By the weakening of France, Britain is relatively isolated and weakened in relation to the Berlin-Rome axis. The effective domination and initiative is in the hands of Hitler.

It would be a mistake to underestimate the strength of the forces which drive to the reactionary Four Power combination. These forces are deeply rooted in the development and closer union of the ruling elements of finance-capital in Britain, France, Germany and Italy. This process is very exactly expressed in the European Chemical Alliance or Four Powers Pact of the great Chemical Armaments Trusts of Britain, France, Germany and Italy, represented by Imperial Chemical Industries, the German Dye Trust or I. G. Farbenindustrie, the Kuhlmann combine in France and Montecatini in Italy, fighting against the American chemical and arms trust of Du Pont. The close linking of finance-capital in the Western European grouping, and British hegemony, is shown in the fact that Imperial Chemical Industries holds a large controlling interest in the German Dye Trust to the extent of £9,540,000. Large shareholders in Imperial Chemical Industries, according to the last report in March, are Sir John Chamberlain (11,747 shares) and Sir John Simon (1,512 shares). The Chairman of Imperial Chemical Industries, Lord MacGowan, was one of the honoured guests at the

Nuremberg Congress. This combine links up with the international banking firm of Lazard Brothers, which controls the leading reactionary French pro-Hitler papers, *Le Matin* and *L'Information*; the editor of the latter, De Brinon, famous for his interviews with Hitler, was also one of the guests at the Nuremberg Congress. The chain of close connection can be further traced to the companies (nominally German-Italian, but with strong domination of British capital) interested in the victory of Franco in Spain, with the Deterding group of Royal Dutch Shell (strongly interested in the financial backing of the White Russian organisations and anti-Soviet activities), with Kreuger and Toll, and with the House of Morgan in New York, the adversaries of Roosevelt. We see here the present stage of the post-war drawing together of Western European finance-capital under the hegemony of the City of London, against the Soviet Union, against democracy in Europe and against the rival grouping of United States finance-capital. Despite the many cross-threads in the pattern (e.g., co-operation of I.C.I. and Du Pont in certain extra European spheres), these dominating tendencies become especially important in the present critical stage to which international capitalism is reaching.

But the forces of contradiction, especially in the sphere of imperialist interests outside Europe, disrupting the attempts at combination, are no less important. British reactionary calculations may look hopefully to the next stage of Hitler's drive, in alliance with Japan, against the Soviet Union; and they still hope that the extreme speeding up of British rearmament will prevent

Hitler expanding in the spheres of British interests and force his expansion elsewhere (in that sense British rearmament is "anti-Hitler," as Chamberlain repeatedly reassures the trade union leaders, even at the same time as his policy is one of alliance with Hitler; the two halves are not contradictory, but complementary halves of a single policy, to force Hitler's expansion eastwards). But the strengthening of Hitler through British aid has now reached such a point, with the surrender of Czechoslovakia and South Eastern Europe and the isolation of France, that the policy of Hitler can be no longer calculated in terms of British wishes, but develops as an independent force, capable of turning and leading a very powerful European combination against Britain. This possibility raises alarm and a now very sharp division of policy in the British ruling class. The majority still hope that, given sufficient rearmament, a basis of agreement can be found and the practical co-operation with Hitler maintained, even at the price of further concessions, possibly in the colonial field. But the question where Hitler will drive next is no longer regarded with quite the same equanimity as of old even among the most ardent pro-fascists.

Up to the present the programme of *Mein Kampf* has been faithfully and exactly carried out with the precision of a railway time-table. There is no reason to believe that it will not continue to be the directing line in the immediate next stages. This scientific thoroughness of execution of a pre-ordained programme has always been Germany's strength—and weakness. In one respect, however, a departure has taken place,

and one which it was possible to predict on a perusal of *Mein Kampf* before Hitler came to power, because it was the one respect in which he deviated from the requirements of finance-capital. Hitler poured scorn on the overseas colonial aims of pre-war Germany, and declared that in future German expansion must be entirely in the Continent of Europe. This restriction was obviously untenable after accession to power, since a colonial policy is essential to finance-capital. The overseas colonial demand has had to be voiced by Hitler, and now comes prominently to the front. Here the future conflict with Britain becomes unconcealed.

Nevertheless even here a temporary period of adjustment is still possible. Hitler's axiom remains that British friendship is the essential condition for the first period of Germany's advance, that the key to this lies in the principle that Britain must not be threatened as a World Power until Germany has established its unquestioned domination in the Continent of Europe, and that the cardinal error responsible for the down fall of pre-war Germany was the violation of this principle by the post-Bismarckian naval programme. Hence the stress on the Anglo-German Naval Agreement. For this reason the colonial demand, which is announced with increasing emphasis for the future, is still likely to be pressed as a bargaining counter; and Britain is still for a period likely to seek adjustment by concessions in the African sphere, preferably at the expense of other weaker countries, such as Belgium, Portugal and France.

But at the same time the expansion in Europe is pressed forward and brings new and sharper problems. The next

stage, according to the programme of *Mein Kampf*, after the achievement of "Greater Germany," is the annihilation of France. This precedes the offensive for the conquest of the Ukraine. The first steps to this through the raising of the demand for autonomy for Alsace Lorraine, with the usual subsidised movement inside, are already visible. Here the problem for Britain becomes already sharp. To sacrifice France is to bring Britain into the most direct danger. Nevertheless, there are signs that the logical pro-fascist ruling group in England, bent on the destruction of the People's Front, is beginning to consider this course. The Anglo-German Declaration of Munich, like the previous Anglo-Italian Pact, was reached to the exclusion of France. The first form of the struggle is likely to develop through the internal struggle in France, with the intensified assault of the pro-fascist reaction to break the People's Front and democracy in France, and establish some form of Emergency Government, which would in reality be a vassal of Chamberlain and Hitler. It is not impossible that the Chamberlain ruling group may, as in Spain, support this process, even at the risk to British strategic interests.

Hitler's expansion in Europe, however following the conquest of Czechoslovakia, has still more direct and immediate lines of easy and relatively unresisting advance. This applies especially to South Eastern Europe, to the Balkans and Turkey. Along this line Germany's economic empire is being built up; and the latest sign is the £12,000,000 loan to Turkey, answering the previous British loan. This is the old German line of expansion "Berlin, - Byzantium, - Baghdad." But the extension of

this line of conquest inevitably comes into conflict with the basic interests of British Imperialism in the Near and Middle East, in those regions of the former dissolving Turkish Empire and especially the rich territories and oilfields of Irak, the struggle over which underlay the war of 1914. Here there is no longer room for concession or adjustment from the standpoint of British Imperialism, but direct conflict. As these perspectives of Hitler's future expansion come more and more sharply into view, no longer merely in the directions of the Rhineland, Austria, Spain and Czechoslovakia, but in the directions of France, the colonies or the Near and Middle East, the ranks of the opposition to Chamberlain's policy of capitulation to Hitler swell and increase in the British ruling class. The deep division and dilemma of British policy reveals itself, which found expression in the parliamentary debate over Munich, and possibly prepares the way for a certain change in orientation, under different leadership than Chamberlain, in the future.

Of the greatest importance in this connection is the reaction in the United States to the new developing world situation. The aim of the Four Power combination would not only be directed against the Soviet Union, but also against the United States. After the first confusion during the crisis public expression in the United States has revealed an extremely widespread condemnation of Chamberlain's capitulation to fascism, and a wave of intense hostility to Chamberlain and British policy alongside intense hostility to fascism and the Triple Pact Powers. This is not only a reflection of the basic Anglo-American

antagonism, with the ever clearer ranging of the United States against fascism, in proportion as Britain is revealed as the ally of fascism; but is also a direct realisation of the menace of fascist aggression to North and South America, as shown most recently in the Brazil rising, which led to the necessity of showing out the Nazi Ambassador, and in the Nazi spy trial in the United States (why no similar Nazi spy trial in England, where their activities are far more widespread?). In the official statement of Bernard Baruch, Economic Adviser of the Roosevelt Administration:

Germany, Italy and Japan are thoroughly armed, or as well armed as their resources permit. They are looking around the world, and have been for some time, for new fields of resources to control. It is in the Americas—North and South—where the great future development of the world will take place. The natural course is for the aggressor nations to seek penetration into this hemisphere.

The United States, which has already established increasingly close and friendly relations with the Soviet Union, is thus seeking out the possibilities of an effective common front for peace against the aggressor fascist States.

These are the conditions of the new international situation which enable us to draw our orientation for the future of the fight for peace. At present no Peace Front exists of States ready and able to make a common stand for peace against the further advance of fascist war. To speak of the project of a Peace Front in general is to speak in the air, so long as the existing direction of policy is continued in Britain and France. *The first necessity is to change the situation in*



*Britain and France.* And it is here that we now face the immediate struggle. The Four Power combination may not yet exist as any definite or stable diplomatic combination. But what does exist is the common drive of the reactionary forces in all four countries—in the sense in which the Geneva correspondent of *Izvestia* defined the Munich Conference as “a committee for the or-ordination of fascist aggression”—to follow up the Munich victory with the most rapid further attack, against Spanish Democracy, against the People's Front and democracy in France, and also, in a more complicated and careful form at first, against democracy in Britain.

United resistance to this attack is not only the obvious immediate ground of the fight for all the democratic forces. It is also the present line of the fight for the future Peace Front, *The fight for peace now develops as the fight for democracy in Spain, in France and in Britain—this is the first immediate front of the fight.* In proportion as we carry through this fight, as we save Republican Spain, as we transform the political situation in France and Britain, we can then go forward to rebuilding the Peace Front, on the basis of the co-operation of British, French, Spanish, Soviet Union and American Democracy for the maintenance of peace. We have still overwhelming reserves on our side; we have still definite superiority of the democratic forces capable of rebuilding the front for peace and maintaining peace. But we must first win the fight for peace against the new assault of pro-fascist reaction in Western Europe.

The defence of Spain is now the centre of the fight. Chamberlain is working with Mussolini to carry through the

ratification of the Anglo-Italian Pact on the basis of Mussolini's farcical “withdrawal” of war-worn invalids, at the same time as he intensifies his military attack and has carried through the wholesale bombing of British ships since Munich. The fascist reactionary combination of Chamberlain, Mussolini and Franco have now despaired of the military defeat of the Spanish Republic. Their hopes are concentrated on the aim of starving the Spanish peoples into surrender. The ratification of the Anglo-Italian Pact means, by the according of belligerent rights to Franco, the legalisation of the blockade and consequent direct co-operation of the British Government in the blockade of Spanish Democracy. To defeat this conspiracy is the decisive blow we can now strike for democracy and peace. Material aid to Spain now takes on an overwhelming political significance. We need not only to develop this material aid from labour, democratic and humanitarian organisations to a new scale, but to fight for Government credits for food and necessary supplies for Spain, and for the sending of foodships under the protection of the Red Cross, and, if necessary, under the protection of the convoy system. Through Spain we can still fight back the advance which fascism has achieved at Munich.

The second immediate front is the fight for democracy in France. Fascism and reaction in France, under the protection of the Daladier Government, which now builds its majority on the Right and the Centre in defiance of the electoral will of the people, and has established its special powers to prevent the functioning of Parliament, now prepares its assault on democratic institutions in

France and on all the gains of the People's Front. What broke down and made possible this new assault was not the method of the People's Front; on the contrary, as the by-elections showed, the mass support of the People's Front has continued to grow right up to and through the crisis. The decisive breakdown lay in the collapse of the right wing Socialist leadership, which broke off working-class unity, fell behind Chamberlain and Daladier, sought to split the trade unions, and thus inevitably undermined the basis of the People's Front. But the awakening is spreading. The development of the attack on the economic and social gains of the People's Front, and on democratic rights, inevitably arouses the trade unions to united resistance, draws closer again Socialists and Communists, and thus by rebuilding working-class unity lays the basis for renewed cohesion and effectiveness of the People's Front. In this vital struggle in France the British Labour Movement can play a great part by establishing the closest direct relations with the united French Labour Movement and with the French People's Front.

Finally, the cardinal and decisive fight in Britain now plainly develops after the Munich surrender. Chamberlain and all the forces of united reaction concentrate their attack now on the internal situation in Britain in order to follow up their "victory" in the international sphere by utilising the very danger in which their policy has placed the people as the pretext for launching a corresponding process of development towards fascism in Britain. Under the slogans of "national unity," "preparedness," "a truce to party politics," "the nation in danger," "speeding up rearmament,"

"national service," etc., they prepare to launch their campaign to destroy the basis of democratic institutions in Britain. Here it is necessary to state plainly, as was already emphasised at the Fifteenth Congress of the Communist Party and as is beginning to become widely realised, that the course of Chamberlain in Britain, corresponding to his foreign policy of the alliance with fascism, is necessarily the course to fascism in Britain. If there were any doubt on this, the Nazi press, with its dictation already on internal politics in Britain, hastens to make plain the conditions of the alliance with fascism.

The defence of democracy cannot be undertaken by a Government which supports fascism. It is correct that, in consequence of the policy of Chamberlain, who has destroyed the foundations of peace, serious and at present increasing danger faces the people of Britain both externally and internally. But the defence against that danger cannot be undertaken by Chamberlain and the pro-fascist ruling group, because the heart of the danger consists in the policy of Chamberlain and the pro-fascist ruling group; and the danger will only increase, so long as that policy continues, whatever armed preparations are undertaken. The experience of all these years has shown that stronger armaments in the hands of Chamberlain do not give defence, but only strengthen the forces on the side of fascism; that to surrender liberties to Chamberlain in the name of defence is to surrender liberties to fascism. Only a democratic Government, based on the support of the masses of the people, based on the labour and democratic organisations, and carrying out a policy of democracy

and peace, and in the interests of the masses of the people, can undertake the defence of the people. The unity that is now required is not the false "national unity" behind Chamberlain, concealing the assault of reaction on the liberties of the people, but the unity of the people against Chamberlain in order to set up their own Government.

At the present moment, when the sharpening division and dilemma of the ruling class is an indication of the big issues opening in British politics, of the increased opportunities for the democratic forces, alongside the intensified dangers, it is more than ever urgent that the Labour movement should

actively take the leadership of the fight against Chamberlain on the basis of a positive democratic and peace programme which can alone rally the masses of the people. It is more than ever urgent that a fresh angle of vision should be brought to all problems in the present new and crucial situation, that an Emergency Labour Conference should be called to consider the new problems and hammer out the new programme, and it may be that such an Emergency Labour Conference should be followed by a wider conference of all labour and democratic organisations to rally the people for the fight for democracy and peace against Chamberlain and the course to fascism.

## WHAT REALLY HAPPENED IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

By Frank Pitcairn

What did Czechoslovakia die of? Murder, you say. True. But was there something in the health of the victim which prevented it resisting better the attack of the Munich Four bent on its destruction and Fascisation?

One day you saw a prosperous, magnificently armed, well-prepared little State, the masses of its people demanding to fight for their freedom as Spain is fighting. Next day there was nothing there.

What made possible a collapse more sudden and utter than anything of the kind seen in our times?

What prevented Czechoslovakia fighting and saving itself? Those are questions everyone is asking, and rightly. For they throw a sharp and alarming

light on our own situation. They underline in grim warning the urgency of the political struggle in Britain, particularly of the Council elections and the by-elections.

### Why They Surrendered

For if you want the thing in a nutshell, you can sum it up like this:—

1. The people wanted to fight for the defence of their country and their independence, as the people of Paris fought for France against the German invaders during the Commune, as the people of Spain fought and are fighting the invaders of Spain today. That is undeniable, and no one of any party has attempted to deny it.

2. Yet at the last moment the amount of political control over the crucial in-

struments of Government which the people was able to exercise was insufficient to impose the will of the people. The people's will to resist found, so to speak, no driving shaft through which to communicate its driving power to the wheels of the State machine.

3. The vast driving power that was present found no political driving shaft because the divided condition of the parties of the Left perpetually prevented their gaining political position and political power corresponding to the popular force which, together, they represented.

4. In that situation, the fortifications, the magnificent armaments, the Skoda works, the superb training of the Army, the years of compulsory service availed absolutely nothing. The whole thing came, cracked up, busted.

How long do you suppose the Cabinet which was in power in Spain in July, 1936, would have held out against the military revolt if it had not behind it the driving force of a People's Front majority, uniting in a political instrument the will of the masses of the people?

The best elements in Czechoslovakia understood and acted upon those facts: the enemy understood and acted upon them, too.

Immediately after the May crisis, when Czechoslovakia mobilised, and on May 21 stopped the German invasion, people all over the place threw their caps in the air and thought: "We're all right."

It was at that moment that the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, with the hearty support of the Catholic People's Party, redoubled its campaign

for the unification of the forces of democratic resistance in a People's Front.

Many may have thought the struggle was over, victoriously, on May 21. The intensified campaign for the People's Front was in itself an urgent warning that the enemy was planning a new attack, that looked, that if the new attack were to be resisted there must be a vast strengthening, by unification, of the political instruments of the forces of the people.

It is no accident that among the people who most vigorously registered the demand for unity then were many of those who after Munich were the very first to be seen hurrying off to Berlin to try to "make terms" with the Fascists.

### Runciman & Chamberlain

Runciman and Chamberlain understood the situation. One of Runciman's first acts—as was officially admitted later—was to demand the suppression of the Communist Party. And both the British Legation and the exceedingly able staff of the Runciman Mission devoted a very great deal of their time to "impressing" upon the Benes Government, and upon the reactionary leadership of organisations on the Left, the "undesirability" of "giving any encouragement to the Communists."

Those gentlemen knew their business: they usually do. They were smart. They saw that for their plans an absolute essential was to keep the people's forces divided and above all to "cut out" the most militant driving force of the people's will in the country: the Communist Party.

The splitting of the popular forces—and above all of the working-class forces—left the Government without resistance of driving power.



### Why Benes failed

Benes at the head of a real People's Government might have been a great national leader. Without such a force behind him, Benes was nothing bigger than a highly skilful, diplomat, juggling, finessing, forced to retreat under the relentless pressure of the Chamberlain-Hitler drive for the Fascistisation of Europe, aided and abetted by "Hitler's Fifth Column," within Czechoslovakia, led by Jaroslav Preiss of the Zivnobank and the Right Wing Agrarians.

They pushed him about. And because the disunity of the democratic forces prevented their full strength being felt, they succeeded even in preventing Benes making the appeal to the Soviet Union which the people wanted and which would have saved Czechoslovakia.

Note, too, these facts:—(1) When 150,000 Prague factory workers struck, and were joined in their demonstration by 150,000 other men and women of all parties and classes, the Government which capitulated to the Berchtesgaden terms was forced to resign.

But, owing to the political situation already described, there was no means of immediately translating that effort into terms of a genuine "Government of public safety" based on the people.

(2) At the moment of the formation of the Syrový Government, a Government of administrators dependent on Benes and not on the popular parties, there was throughout the Left organisations a sudden realisation of the need for unity even among those who had actively opposed it before.

In the moment of acute national peril they admitted it. The four trade union organisations achieved an unheard-of

degree of co-operation. The political Parties of the Left were closer to one another—in a practical and organisational sense—than had seemed possible a week before.

(3) Throughout the period from the formation of the Syrový Government to the Munich catastrophe, the demand of the people was for the calling of Parliament in order that the driving force of the people's will could be made effective through its representatives. Parliament was not called. Yet even the original Berchtesgaden terms had been accepted only with the reservation that they must be ratified by Parliament.

### Political Power in Wrong hand

The enemy, particularly the British and French Ministers, knew very well the facts of the position. They knew that if the people could make its voice heard, there was no chance of capitulation. They knew that—particularly after the fall of the Hodza Government—the unity of the popular parties, and hence their potential power was going ahead.

That—and in Prague they made no secret of it—was the basic reason for the rush with which the whole thing was done. That was why they would arrive with ultimatums at three in the morning. That was why they got Hitler to set October 1 as the ultimate date.

The people wanted to save itself. The people wanted to fight, along-side of the people of the Soviet Union. If they had been able to do so they would have saved Czechoslovakia—may be with sacrifices and horrors as great as Spain is suffering, and China, but still, saved it.

They were sold out before they could get their hands on the control levers.

Armaments, national training, military service, nothing was any good to them because the political power was in the wrong hands. It was in the hands partly of Hitler's Fifth Column, and partly of people whose attitude was characterised by their refusal to call upon Soviet aid.

In other words, it was in the hands of men who either actively hated their people and preferred to make compact with the foreign Fascist invader, or of men who in the last analysis preferred

surrender to the unloosing of the forces of the people.

*"Arms for defence," "service for defence," is all a fraud and a menace to the people, unless the people is in political control.*

Patriotism is a fine thing. But "patriotism" in the mouth of anyone who is not prepared to take all steps necessary for the unification and the advance to political power of the only patriotic forces there are in any country—namely the masses of the people—is a dangerous hoax, a treachery.

## KOLKHOSE: THE COLLECTIVE FARM

By Miss Melly Zollinger, and Dr W. L. Rao, M.A., D.Sc.

*(The authors of this article have recently returned after visiting the Soviet Union and the following notes were taken down during their visit to a Collective Farm outside Moscow during Autumn 1937—Ed.)*

This collective farm was started in 1929 with an original membership of 70 families. Today, owing to the successful working of collective farms throughout the Soviet, the membership of this particular farm, has increased to 140 families, totalling 500 people, all residents of the same village.

The capital invested by all the members—including cash, value of agricultural implements, machinery and cattle—which represents the capital of the undertaking, is 500,000 roubles, equivalent to Rs. 250,000.

The yearly proceeds of the farm are shared out in proportions to the hours of work put in by each individual member. Out of the gross proceeds, taxes to the state are paid as first

charges. A portion is set aside for next years's seed. An amount of money is set apart towards sickness insurance of the individual members and live stock; and also towards contingencies and unforeseens. The rest is available for distribution among the individual members.

The individual member of the collective farm has the right to dispose of his share in any manner he pleases. He can sell his whole portion or a part of it for cash in the open market, or he can sell to the collective farm itself.

The distribution of the yearly proceeds is both in cash and in kind.

Besides his share in the collective farm, each farmer has his own house, a kitchen, garden and cows.

This particular collective farm works a paint factory, which is its own property.

The whole labour force—men and women (for everyone is a worker)—is divided into 4 brigades. Two brigades are detailed for field work, one brigade for vegetable growing and the fourth for stock breeding.

There is a schedule of wages for the different kinds of work and each member is paid his wages accordingly at the end of each day.

This collective farm owns and farms 500 acres of land, of which 175 acres are used for potato growing, 100 acres under orchards, 175 acres grain crops and 50 acres fruit and vegetable-culture under hothouse. This is one of the smaller collectives, the bigger ones possessing 125,000 acres, with a total membership of 15,000.

In 1936 the average wages received by an individual worker each day, amounted to 15 roubles and 30 kilos of vegetables and fruit. In 1937 they are now paying to their members a daily wage of 20 roubles (Rs. 10-0-0) and 40 kilos of vegetables and fruit. A family with three adults can expect this year a total annual income of 15,000 roubles (Rs. 1,500) in cash and 30 tons vegetables. (The average wages of a skilled worker in Moscow is 600 roubles a month.)

The staple crop grown on this farm is potato. Each year the general body of members assembled in a meeting, elect from among themselves five members, who constitute the board of management. Two of these, the president and vice-president (or manager and assistant manager), receive a salary and do not work on the farm, as the other members. The board has engaged the services of two clerks for accounting and other office work. These are not members of the collective; they are outsiders and receive salaries current in their profession. The president worked formerly as salaried vice-president for four years and in recognition of his services has been elected to the salaried presidency of the board. Besides the clerks, this Kolkhoze has engaged the services of expert agronomists.

Out of its funds, and as a part of the duty prescribed by the state, this collective farm maintains a kindergarten (for children from 3 to 8 years), where they are taught the elements of hygiene, such as the value and the right way of cleaning the teeth and use of the tooth brush, the bath, washing clothes etc., the recognition of colors, the concept of numbers, drawing and music under trained instructors, maintained by the collective. The children are not taught reading or writing.

They have a cinema and a club. As their capital is increasing, new schemes of social welfare work are being undertaken.

The individual farmer who wishes to dispose of his share of the produce in the open market, can hire out the horse-vans or motor lorries belonging to the collective. This one possesses five motor lorries.

During time of intensive farming, or as in the case of this year, when extra hands were required to gather the bumper harvest, the Kolkhoze can engage outside labour on daily wages and according to the Soviet laws, these temporary hands must be paid the same wages as that paid by the Kolkhoze to its own members.

The Soviet state is encouraging the use of tractors in farming. We were told that in U. S. S. R. today nearly 500,000 tractors and 440,000 combines are now in use on the farms and fully half of these machines are used by the collective farms. If the collective farm is not rich enough to buy tractors, it need only apply to the nearest Tractor Station or to the government for assistance. A loan is then given which is to be repaid over a long term of years, at the low rate of 1% to 2% interest. Along with the taxes to be paid to the state, the liquidation of this loan ranks as a first charge on the the revenue of the farm. As the major source of income is derived from the sale of the crops, to secure the repayment of the loan, the collective is compelled to insure with the state against bad crops and against damage to the tractors.

After the harvest is gathered, it is divided amongst the members. The cash required towards the payment of the loan charges, tractor instalments, next year's seed, sickness and other insurance premia, welfare work and contingencies, is paid out of the profit from the industrial undertaking run by the kolkhozi—in this case from the profit of the paint factory. The State Bank is banker to the collective farm and controls all its cash and credit operations.

Question: "Is the collective farm economically sound?" Answer by the manager: "Yes, it is. Every worker-member, year by year, is becoming more and more skilled in his work and is earning more and more. The capital of the undertaking is increasing in terms of tractors, lorries, implements and stock. And its industrial undertaking is growing."

The distribution of the staple crops—grain and potatoes—takes place four times in the year, three times as advance and the fourth time after the final settlement of accounts.

The collective farm pays taxes according to the kinds of crops it farms, for example, usually about 2%-3% of the value of grain crops and 7%-8% on the value of potato crop. Under certain circumstances, the State also buys a portion of the crops from the collective farms. For instance, this year, it paid 50 roubles per ton for the last year's potatoes and 150 roubles per ton for this year's spring potatoes.

Besides collective farms, there are the state farms, which cover vast areas and on which farming is rationalised and completely mechanised and the whole farm run just as a factory. There are also individual private farms; the state, though tolerating these private undertakings, does not encourage them. For instance, they have to pay considerably higher taxes.

In Soviet today, agriculture, like every other industry and undertaking, is planned. The different crops to be sown, the rotation of these crops, their acreage, manuring,—the programme of the collective farm must fit in within the state plan. It must be approved by the district soviet. The details are worked out

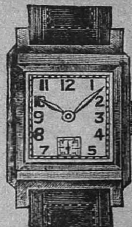
by the collective farm under the guidance and cooperation of the district soviet. The programme and details—are first voted upon in the general meeting and after approval by the appropriate soviet. The managing body takes full control and responsibility for the subsequent operations.

\* \* \*

Before we finished our visit, we wanted to have an idea of a Russian farmer's house. We pointed out a small modest looking house to our guide and asked him to obtain permission for us from the owner to have a look in. Permission was willingly given. The house was very clean—a thing which was a very pleasant surprise to us. The yard was full of chickens running in and out of the house. Inside there was the proverbial Russian stove in the parlour. The floor was plastered with earth but kept very clean. The house was owned by an old woman and her two sons. She looked past sixty and told us she was not working on the collective; of course, her two sons were members of the farm, she told us. She herself receives old age pension and medical help from the local soviet. She told us of the great changes she had witnessed in her own village and what a new world had been created for the peasants. She proudly pointed out to her house which was electrified. An electric iron was on the table, a radio was in a corner of the room and icon and busts of Lenin and Stalin were the only other ornaments in the room!

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# FREEDOM MOVEMENT IN HYDERABAD

By Mahmud Zaffar Khan

The political awakening that is sweeping over the Indian States has touched the Nizam's dominions also. This great Indian Principality, lying in the midst of the Deccan Plateau, has remained through all these centuries, one of the last refuges of feudalism in the country. Its Muslim rulers survived the Moghal Empire, and have maintained their sway by dint of shrewd diplomacy and the use of ruthless autocratic power. Treaties made with the British Government recognised the paramountcy of British Imperialism, but the Nizams have been the most stubborn of the Indian Princelings in resisting the encroachments of the British on their State. Thus, right up to the end of the XIX century the Dark Ages prevailed in Hyderabad, and even to-day the State is exceedingly backward in all spheres of life.

Hyderabad is the largest Indian State after Kashmir—as large, in fact, as Bengal Presidency. Its population of 14½ millions is divided linguistically into three main tongues, Marathi, Telugu and Kanarese, only a tiny minority speaking the official language, Urdu. The two chief religious communities are Hindus and Muslims, 85% of the former to 10% of the latter. There are five large cities, 118 small towns and 21,703 villages. 95% of the people live in the villages and agriculture is naturally the chief means of livelihood.

This briefly describes the geography and ethnology of Hyderabad. When against this background we find that a feudal minority of great landowners has everywhere the reins of power, the control of finance, education and administration, it is not hard to imagine the terrible plight of the mass of the people.

Modern civilisation has only provided new weapons of oppression for the ruling clique. Education has been used as an instrument to strengthen the ruling Muslim minority, at the expense of the masses, to create cultural barriers between the people, to suppress their

languages and best traditions. The result is that today, when a great wave of political consciousness is rising, it is to some extent becoming a movement against a certain community, against a certain culture—a movement against the Muslims and the Urdu language.

This communal tendency has been cleverly exploited by the autocratic rulers, to cover up the cracks in their administration, to canalise unrest into these vicious channels, and to give a genuine popular movement an ugly name.

There is no doubt that there are persons in Hyderabad, as elsewhere, who wish to utilise mass discontent for their own selfish ends. These people spring from the middle classes and their aim is primarily to secure soft jobs and places of power and privilege in the State. In any assessment of the political situation in the State, therefore, we should not lose sight of this communal factor, for, we shall have constantly to deal with it.

By far the overwhelming majority of the people, however, is disturbed and shaken by long-standing grievances against a corrupt, irresponsible and high-handed administration, by grinding poverty and boundless oppression.

## Absence of Democratic Liberties.

The deep-seated opposition to this regime of landlords and money-lenders is proved by the severity of the laws and the complete suppression of elementary civil liberties. To preserve the administration intact, the Government has persistently refused to grant freedom of Press, Speech or Association, and has looked with suspicion at every activity, private or public, of its citizens. Even places of worship, religious festivals and condolence meetings are carefully watched to see that they do not serve as cover for hostile activities against the Government. Until very recently permission for all meeting had first to be obtained from the authorities. Com-



missioners of Police and Collectors were the persons who gave the decisions. In 1929 all political meetings were banned. After a great deal of agitation these rules were somewhat modified, but they did not give real freedom of speech in any way. In 1929, the City Commissioner of Police, Hyderabad, was asked in a letter, what was meant by 'political'. He thought over it for two years, and then wrote :

"The Government have not favoured with an explanation. It will be better, however, if matters be stopped at this."

A pamphlet recently issued, entitled "A peep into Hyderabad" gives a number of instances of arbitrary bans on meetings. We shall quote one or two.

1. A public meeting organised by the Harijan Seva Sangh to celebrate Gandhiji's birthday had to be abandoned, as only 24 hours before the meeting the Secretary was asked to furnish a security for Rs. 2000 and to give an undertaking that the meeting would be in no way political.

2. The Hyderabad public desired to mourn the death of Sjt. G. K. Deodhar, President of the Servants of India Society, and of Pandit Motilal Nehru. They were not permitted to do so.

3. The Bar Association were recently referred permission to invite Sjt. Bula-bhai Desai.

New rules were made last July, when meetings were divided into two sorts, (a) Social, educational, literary or charitable, and (b) Other than such. For the latter special permission was necessary. These new rules have in no way relaxed the restrictions on freedom of speech.

Restrictions on freedom of the Press are as severe. Copies of all books, newspapers, etc., printed, have to be filed with the Home Secretary, before publication. Permission to start a press or newspaper has to be obtained from the same authorities and is frequently refused. No anonymous tracts may be published. No news likely to affect public opinion adversely regarding the Government may be printed.

In view of these restrictions, the Telugu, Marathi and Kanarese Press has

been completely stifled, and even newspapers in English are carefully censored, many from British India being banned. It is now reported that Hyderabad and other States are making efforts to secure the suppression of news about the States in newspapers in British India, as well. Official agencies, such as the A.P.I., on other hand, are subsidised to the extent of Rs. 3,000 p.m., and special aid is given to loyal Urdu newspapers.

Freedom of Association is restricted to such an extent that even private schools have to receive permission before they can be opened. Many institutions have been closed under these regulations. Similarly strict rules apply to Gymnasiums. Special instructions are issued to officers "to keep the Dominion safe from the poisonous effect of political agitation in British India".

### A Special Regulation

To crown all, special Public Safety Regulations have been passed only last September, giving summary powers for arrest and deportation of outsiders, powers to search houses, to force all hotels and restaurants to keep registers of lodgers. Private individuals who house undesirables are also liable for punishment. Any association may be declared unlawful and unlawful activities include :

- (a) Anti-recruitment agitation.
- (b) Boycott of Government Servants.
- (c) Mock funerals.
- (d) Publication of proscribed literature.
- (e) Scare news and false reports amongst the police and military.
- (f) Activities which endanger the good relations between different communities and sections in the State.

The present political structure makes it practically impossible for popular wishes to be made known, or for popular grievances to be set right through "constitutional" channels, since Civil Liberties are totally lacking. The legislative and executive machinery are far removed from popular "contamination." The Legislative Council consists of 21 members, of which 11 members, the President and Vice-President are officials, 6 are non-Officials and 2 are ext

ordinary members. Of the 6 non-Officials, 2 are Jagirdars, 2 High Court pleaders and 2 are nominated by the Prime Minister. But even so obviously "loyal" an assembly cannot be trusted too far. Its powers are strictly limited and it is kept under the control of the Prime Minister. The Nizam and his Executive Council have the decisive voice in all matters.

### Political Reforms Enquiry Committee

The demand for political reforms has been met by the appointment of official Enquiry Committees. There have been several of these, but their recommendations have been shelved, inevitably. Last year, however, in view of the fresh outburst of popular agitation and the rumours of the impending Federation, a new Enquiry Committee under the chairmanship of Dewan Bahadur S. A. Iyengar, was appointed to draw up a fresh scheme of responsible Government.

Various organisations in the State have submitted their suggestions before this Committee. Amongst these, the scheme of the State People's Convention is perhaps the most important. This Convention is representative of various sections and shades of opinion and seems to have the general support of the recently formed State Congress, the most progressive organisation in Hyderabad.

The main recommendations of the Convention are:

1. The Nizam to become a Constitutional Monarch, on the model of the British King.
2. A bi-cameral Legislature.
3. An Executive appointed by and responsible to the Ruler.
4. Only 10 per cent of the population to be enfranchised.
5. Special seats for vested interests, as well as an Upper Chamber for them.
6. Local self-government through Municipalities, District Boards and Panchayats.
7. Joint Electorates.
8. An Assembly of 200 and a Council of 65 members.
9. Certain reserved subjects, such as the personal affairs of the Nizam, his

relations with the British Emperor, Public Debt, Military, and External Affairs, to be outside the control of the Legislature.

10. Royal Proclamation of Fundamental Rights, granting:

- (a) Freedom of Speech, Association, Press, Conscience and religious practice.
- (b) Equal rights to all citizens and access to wells and other public places.

The proposals set forth by this Convention are exceedingly moderate. For instance, the Report admits that the property qualification is higher than in Mysore, Travancore or British India. In suggesting a bi-Cameral system, an Executive responsible to the Nizam alone, a very limited franchise, and reserved subjects, the convention has obviously sought to secure the reactionary and vested interests, at the expense of the masses. The scheme, therefore, falls far short of the people's demands.

**But even such mild proposals, even so moderate and respectable an organisation as the State Congress, have thoroughly alarmed the authorities.**

### State Congress Banned.

Almost immediately after its formation, the State Congress was declared illegal under the new regulations, and its members decided to offer Satyagraha. And now, a regular campaign of repression has been launched in Hyderabad, Aurangabad and other centres. The authorities have consistently tried to make out that the State Congress is a communal organisation, but to its honour, the State Congress has as consistently refuted these slanders, and has taken its stand on the broad popular slogans of responsible Government. It has from the beginning, thrown open its doors to all, irrespective of religion, caste or class.

But the State Congress has to go farther than this. It has to take up the immediate basic political and economic demands of all the oppressed people of the State. Its present Nine-Point programme runs as follows:

1. Establishment of Responsible Government under the aegis of the Nizam, and making the executive responsible to the legislature, which truly represents the subjects of the State on the elective basis.

2. Declaration of the Fundamental Rights such as the Freedom of Speech, Association, Press and Worship.

3. Decommunalisation of Administration, by declaring that the Hindus are entitled to at least 50% representation in the services of the State of all grades in Civil and Military branches.

4. The Ecclesiastical Department should be abolished and Boards set up to supervise and control religious and charitable institutions:

5. Encouragement to the study and use of Provincial languages, Telugu, Marathi, Kanarese, and Hindi, along with Urdu.

6. Judiciary to be separated from the Executive,

7. Compulsory Primary Education in the mother tongues, and reduction on University Education till Primary Education is compulsory.

8. Alteration of Educational policy to appeal alike to all sub-acts.

9. Tackling the problem of poverty of the peasants in a sympathetic manner by reducing Land Revenue and adopting measures to ameliorate their condition without creating any class-war between the different sections of the subjects.

In this programme emphasis is laid on administrative and educational changes, while only a vague reference is made to the problem of mass poverty. The only way to enlist the broad masses in the struggle is to draw up a clear-cut programme *for them*. It is necessary to point out the close connection between British Imperialism and the reactionary Nizam Government, and to insist on the complete independence of the State people from Imperialism and its feudal and other allies. It is essential for the State Congress to raise its voice against the Haripura decision of the Indian National Congress of Non-Intervention

in the States. British Imperialism's attempts to draw Hyderabad into the federal scheme and to use Hyderabad as a military reserve, should make this alliance between the State and British Imperialism clear as daylight.

### A platform of Action

We suggest that the struggle gathering force in Hyderabad be co-ordinated and fought on the basis of the following general programme (which must be further concretised by those on the spot):

1. Complete independence for Hyderabad as well as for the rest of India from British Imperialism and its reactionary allies;

2. Complete freedom of speech, press, association and worship;

3. A concrete agrarian programme based on the particular needs of the peasants, on the lines of the national agrarian programme, and including the right to form kisan sabhas, 50% reduction in land revenue, and abolition of debts;

4. A similar concrete programme for workers, including the right to form unions, to strike and picket, and an 8-hour day;

5. Total rejection of the federal scheme and a Constituent National Assembly to draw up a constitution for all-India;

6. Total refusal to co-operate with British Imperialism in any way in her preparations for a new imperialist world-war.

On our side, in British India, we must strive, through the Congress and other political organisations, to draw the struggles of the people together, to resist all attempts to isolate the States People or bargain with their reactionary rulers for minor concessions. We must see that the storm gathering in the Indian States, in Travancore, Mysore, Kashmir, Hyderabad, Rajkot, etc., draws into its current not an individual Vallabhbhai or a Massani, but the entire Congress, the entire Indian people, for, the states peoples is a lever to the bigger struggle of all India.

# THE INDO-BURMA RIOTS—THEIR CAUSES AND SIGNIFICANCE

By Maung Khwe Kala

It is evident from the statements of Indian leaders and articles appearing in Indian Newspapers that the forces underlying the last Indo-Burmese riots are not understood properly in India. We find responsible persons trying to explain away the riots in terms of communal and racial hatred. Sjt. Bose in his statement hinted that since this was not the first clash of its kind it was likely that the root causes of the conflict went deeper than communal prejudices. But all he could suggest was that they might have been racial. This is nothing new. An inadequate grasp of the objective conditions has in the past often led to similar mistakes. There is the classic example of the rebellion of the Mopla peasants in 1921 against unjust tenancy laws and the extortions of Hindu landlords which was sought to be explained away as merely an anti-Hindu revolt. Later on, religious fanaticism got mixed up with the main economic factors and the communalists on both sides being encouraged by the third interested party misrepresented these agrarian uprisings of the oppressed peasants as communal clashes. So also in the Kashmir struggle—the discontent of the exploited and poverty stricken tillers of that picturesque valley was termed a communal riot just because all the peasants in that Hindu-ruled state happened to be Muslims.

Along with many other newspapers, the "Rangoon Daily News", an Indian-owned English daily was totally at a loss to understand how there could be any ill-feeling between the Burmans and Muslims who have been living peacefully together so long. In its leading article appearing in the issue of the 14th August it stated, "Religious fanaticism of the sort that Burma had experienced during the past few days was entirely unknown in the history of Buddhism in Burma. Muslims have lived in

harmony and friendship with their Buddhist fellowmen for over two centuries and there was not the least sign of antagonism—Muslims were also employed as some of the important officials in the old Burmese regime. It was a Burmese King who built a Rest House at Holy Mecca for the use of his Burmese Muslim subjects going to perform Haj pilgrimage every year, and it is still in existence. In the face of all this overwhelming evidence of good neighbourliness, the sudden outburst of religious fanaticism bringing such terrible carnage and suffering in its wake, is a thing which is *most difficult for us to understand.*"

## Communal fanaticism—not the root

This shows clearly that the theory of communal or religious fanaticism does not lead us to the main source of trouble. Nor can racial differences explain the recent clash. Apart from the U.S.S.R., which contains peoples of various races and religions living amicably together, China today is an example of a country where various races have achieved amazing unity and co-operation for the purpose of giving a united front to foreign imperialism. As the Director of Chinese Missions in the Al-Azhar University recently declared, "Buddhism, Toism, Islam, Confucianism and Judaism, live in harmony in China. Many Muslims are fighting heroically under Chiang-Kai-Shek."

It is therefore only superficial observers who can trot out the racial myth to explain the recent disturbances. As a matter of fact the "Times" of London showed a greater understanding of the root causes of the trouble when it stated: "It is probable that the jealousy aroused by their (Indians') predominance in commerce and the professions, and by the fact that most of the unskilled workmen employed in the port and in the

city are Indians, has intensified these disturbances."

Whether one likes it or not, it has to be admitted that this is essentially true. For an adequate appraisalment of the situation, therefore, it is necessary to penetrate the thin veil of communalism, racialism and religious fanaticism. It is imperative that we get down to brass tacks and try to evaluate the economic factors responsible for the anti-Indian feelings which were lashed into fury by the publication of an obscure booklet.

### • The Economic Background

Burma is essentially an agricultural country and the well-being of the average Burman depends entirely on what the prices of the agricultural produces can fetch in the market. The phenomenal fall in the prices of agricultural products, since the world depression which started in 1929, played terrible havoc with the Burmese peasant. The burden of debt piled up and the land had to be mortgaged to the Chettis. **These money-lenders from South India charged exorbitant interest and the land gradually passed from the hands of the peasants to the Chettis, with the result that most of the land is today in the hands of the Chettis.**

Though many of the peasants might have continued to work on the land formerly owned by them, as tenants or lease-holders or crops-sharers or even as hired labourers employed by the Chetti landlords, a large number of those who had so far managed to subsist on land became totally destitute. They naturally began to look to the cities, the ports, the oil-field, the rice and timber mills for their subsistence. But there was hardly any opening here also, as they were already entirely captured by the Koorengis—the Telugu labourers—who every year immigrate in thousands from the Madras coast, because India refuses to provide them with even bare subsistence. The Burman peasant, uprooted from his own land and homestead found himself in a sorry predicament. He had neither the traditions nor the training necessary for industrial labour. So the Burmans stood absolutely no chance against the competition of the Indians with their superior training and

equipment. This situation was directly responsible for the serious clash of 1933 when hundreds of Koorengis were stabbed to death and though the looting of property was not so serious as in the latest clash, the toll of death was much greater.

The ultimate result of that clash was that legislation was passed making it compulsory for all employers of labour to employ at least 40% Burmese labour and fixing their minimum wages. Thus a certain percentage of the rural population of Burma which was rendered helpless by the onward march of industrialism in rural areas, was enabled to find employment in the new industries, in the docks, on the oil-fields.

### The Burman Bourgeoisie

The Burmans are temperamentally an easy-going people. So far they were content to live without bothering about self-aggrandisement or material progress as their scant necessities were provided by agricultural pursuits. So far they had more or less ignored the industries and the Britishers and the Indians with their superior economic position had monopolised the work of developing the country on industrial lines.

But the debacle of 1929 has changed all this. When year after year the prices of agricultural goods continued to remain at rock-bottom even well-to, do Burman land-owners, who were well above the margin, lost all reserves and began to flounder. Thus they had to start looking around for more profitable occupations. It was not so much western scientific education as the pressure of economic forces which roused the bourgeoisie from its lethargic state. The rising bourgeoisie is breaking itself away from the old feudal conditions and the mental habits of an old order. The drowsy, slow, peaceful, poised Burman, full of ancient wisdom, poetry and gracious manners, has—for good or bad—irretrievably given place to a country bustling with timber and rice mills, oil-wells, banks, mines, and all the paraphernalia of the capitalist civilization.

It is not unnatural that the Burmans feel that if they have to survive they



can no longer afford to remain as mere hewers of wood and drawers of water as before, and that they must take their rightful place in the fields of trade, industry and commerce. Here they immediately come face to face with the powerful British concerns and the Indian merchants and traders. The former, closely connected with the British concerns are too strongly entrenched to be shaken by the still feeble bourgeoisie of Burma. So the Indian traders and merchants have to get it in the neck. Unfortunately the normal desire of the Burmans to participate in the industry and commerce of their own country was transformed into an anti-Indian obsession by the inspired propaganda proceeding the separation of Burma.

That the economic motive was one of the most important factors responsible for the conflict between Burmans and Indians is proved by the fact that from the day following the restoration of peace after the riots, shops selling provision and general stores owned by Burmans are springing up like mushrooms all over Rangoon and the suburbs as well as in the districts. Ironically enough many of the looted shops and those vacated by the panic-stricken *Chulias*, have been now acquired and reopened by enterprising Burmans.

### New Burma

Let those who have still faith in the theory of religious and communal conflict read what *New Burma* the Burmese owned English journal said—"Burma is now on her feet. Ngo Shwe Phi (author of the offensive booklet which was immediately responsible for the outbreak) is a beacon that signals the first sign of economic nationalism that can be, if properly guided, a road towards economic socialism in Burma."

The attitude of the Burmans can be best understood from the following extracts from a leading article in the *New Burma* of 14-8-38, headed 'Buy Burmese' (this heading is not quite correct since hardly any Burmese goods are sold

in the market except the handicraft products like lacquer-ware, wood-carving, ivory work, hand-woven cloth etc.) :—

"The pursuit of commercial careers by Burmans is the only means at their disposal to bring about the economic regeneration of the country. Foreign exploitation has reduced the sons of the soil to hewers of wood and drawers of water—the 'exporting' industries are confined to rice, timber, oil and minerals and as all know they are monopolies, in the hands of European trusts and companies. Our daily articles of necessities are supplied by foreign manufacturers. The whole sale as well as retail business in these articles and goods is in the hands of foreign merchants,—British, Japanese, Chinese, Indians.—The average annual value of our imports comes to something near Rs. 20 crores—half of this amount may be said to be the cost of Government stores and machinery imported and of similar goods imported by European merchants. The other half is therefore the price paid by the sons of the soil.—The needs of the Burmans should therefore naturally be catered by Burman traders."

In the face of this clear evidence, to declare that the riots were due to anti-muslim feelings caused by the booklet of Nga Shwe Phi, is like saying that the murder at Sarajevo was the cause of the imperialist war of 1914. But the ostrich will always try to hide itself by poking its head in the sand.

It is high time the Indians have a correct understanding of the situation and realise that they should not live as an army of occupation in the commercial field of Burma with the only idea of making a pile in Burma but they should live amicably with Burmans and stand shoulder to shoulder in their fight for freedom. It is a tragedy that instead of organising properly anti-imperialist lines the Burmans should dissipate their energies in sporadic clashes and stray fighting with Indians who are themselves in their own country fighting British Imperialism.

# THE RANIPARAJS

## (Bombay Presidency Students Federation)

### I

#### Introduction

The Harijura Congress had drawn Raniparaj in their thousands. They thronged in their numbers to pay their homage to the great Session. Some had even organised themselves in procession to give the greetings to the Congress.

These simple peasants semi-naked with a cloth only as their garment, carrying all their necessities on their back staring agape at the radio, the microphone and such other miracles drawn into the Congress, yet feeling uneasy at being lost in it, presented to us a problem. What made this simple-shinded, illiterate, ignorant, almost primitive people astir, was a puzzle to us. The mass around the Congress Nagar was moving. Their life was pulsating with new hopes. We were tempted to probe and penetrate into their hearts.

#### Their Abode

The eastern boundary of Surat District (including Navasari Prant, Bansda and Dharampur States) from the edge of the Deccan Plateau, which gradually slopes into the plane of the western coast of the Arabian Sea. The Western Ghats send their offshoots as far as the Satpura Ranges. The ranges of hills and cliffs intersperse the area. These hills showered over by heavy monsoon is overgrown with luxuriant vegetation. The whole area is covered over with forests under the control of the forest department of various States. Dang, richest in timber is monopolised by the British Government while the others relatively poor are retained by Bansda, Baroda and Dharampur. The forest area proper aside, the adjoining area is covered over by trees and is inhabited by the Raniparaj or forest tribes. For these forests are their original abode.

#### People

Raniparaj are the natives of these forests. It seems they were driven into these forests when pressure on the Gangetic plains increased where they remained isolated from the rest of India. They seem to have taken to the settled life a century or so before. Their life verges on the primitive, economically, socially and culturally. The names of certain castes corroborate this inference, for some castes are styled as "docile" or "settled" while others, "residents over tanks" evidently for no other reason, but as a mark of distinction from the rest still backward.

#### Literacy

There is hardly one school in a circle of ten villages. Even in Baroda State under whose jurisdiction Raniparajs predominate, these people were excluded from Free Compulsory Education. Wherever schools were started on demand by the villages they met with response initially, but later on the number of children fell down gradually with the result that the schools had to be closed. The causes are perhaps not far to seek. Grinding poverty deprives their children of the opportunity wherever it is afforded. This intricate problem demands a serious consideration from public spirited citizens to devise ways and means to meet the growing demand for education from this people. Our students have taken note of several instances when enthusiastic villagers on their own initiative started schools and maintained teachers by voluntary contributions. But these attempts met with failure either for lack funds or because the initial enthusiasm was not maintained. Yet some inner urge impels them ever not to yield to despair. They would start anew. We discerned that an urge for education had of late grown intense, with the result that we were able to witness several night and day schools conducted by the villagers themselves.

Hardly five out of hundred people ever entered the doors of any school worth the name. Of those who can be classed as literate include those among them who are fortunate enough to remember how to sign their names.

Women invariably do not know the mystery of the alphabet.

A student in a high school is an exception and becomes the pride of the community and an object of esteem and respect.

They are cut off from the world. Many of the villages are more than fifty miles off from the nearest station. Few village people have ever seen a postman in their life. Most of the villages receive their post a day in a week.

These people are denied the means to communicate with their other fellow beings with whom their life is indissolubly bound up with innumerable ties. They are denied the prerequisites to comprehend the laws that govern their life.

### Standard of living

They live in huts made of mud thatched over with leaves or grass. A door or two provide the only inlet for the air and light to come in.

There are no rooms partitioned in the hut. The whole space serves as the sitting-room, kitchen and the store-room, and a stable for cattle at times.

A few mats, a wooden-box for clothes, earthenware, a few metal ware, and a cot, are all their earthly possessions.

They are huddled together with cattle in the same narrow hut. Their houses would stink on an entrance. The dingy dung is the veritable breeding-bed for mosquitoes who swarm their houses day and night.

### Their Diet

Rice and Jowar form their staple food. In the morning they have breakfast or rather a meal of jowar loaf and rarely some vegetables or pulses.

They prepare Bhadka a kind of soup of a little rice boiled in plenty of water

with salt and chillies. At night they again have a loaf with some pulses.

Rice and dal is a luxury to be reserved for the entertainment of a guest.

Few of their children have ever tasted milk, curd, or ghee.

The want of nutritive elements in their diet is made up by meat, or eggs, chickens and fowl, which they occasionally feast upon when there is any celebration. During the monsoon they add fish to their food.

Of late a certain section guided by false ideas of Reforms and Religious beliefs have considered meat diet prohibitory. This section unfortunately abstain from fish diet and thus famish themselves of the only nutrition at present available to them.

Tea has pushed its head here too. Many take it as a substitute for breakfast or along with it. They prepare a vessel full of decoction—since milk is not available to them—and they freely share, old and young.

The onslaught of foreign capital has not left even these remotest villages untouched. Japanese piece-goods, umbrellas, sugar, tea, kerosene, hurricane lamp, tin-boxes, toys of tin, slate, pen, pencil, paper, post-card have invaded the Chinese Wall of self-sufficient economy and self-satisfied life intruded their homes.

### Social Customs

Several castes comprise Raniparaj. Most of them inter-dine but not inter-marry. Of late, certain reformist section well-advanced, have formed almost an exclusive caste of their own, who though drawn from several ones have their inter-relationships more closely tied.

The girl has a free choice of her husband. Their parents assist her in the choice, but the approval of the girl is decisive and final. The would-be-bridgroom has to incur expenses of about Rs. 200. He presents clothes to his bride. He has to give a caste dinner to his caste-people and relatives. There is a queer custom among these people for the bride goes with her men to the

bride-groom's at the time of the marriage ceremony.

Marriage celebration is their great social function. Drinking and Dancing are the usual entertainments. The reformist section has replaced the drinking by tea and dinner; the dinner includes only 'Rice and Dal'.

Women enjoy equality with men. They can seek divorce from the Panch of their caste on reasons of ill-treatment. The Panch, secures divorce for her and makes the husband pay some compensation.

When a man cannot afford to marry and maintain his family he enters into the bond with the father of the girl of his choice to work at his as a price of the girl. He stays as an ordinary member of the family of his father-in-law but he does not receive any payment in cash nor any share in the produce, save his maintenance. He is allowed to separate after the period of the bond is over. He is not given anything for his work when he separates.

A rich father of several girls has many 'khandhadias' in his house for their labour is a source of profit to him.

Raniparaj men are not strictly monogamous. Rich men at times marry more than one wife and keep them all together. Polygamy to rich husbands is a source of profit since it commands for him additional cheap labour.

These systems of 'Khandhadias' and 'polygamy' are but the forms of slavery however disguised in patriarchal relationships.

### Religious Beliefs

The mass of Raniparaj worship innumerable creations of nature, like the crocodiles, the fishes, and the serpents. It would not be a rare sight to come across their wooden dummies fixed up in the ground with feathers and bones and horns scattered round about. Any disease, death or a calamity is the wrath of the presiding deity consequent upon the failure on their part to offer certain sacrifices. They invoke in such times the help of the presiding deity and swear

to offer sacrifices of goats, fowls, liquor or toddy.

When a person is ill they dare not give him medicine lest the presiding deity should feel insulted and enraged. They will strive to appease her in stead.

Even when they are persuaded to take some medicine they will take some herbs or roots or leaves of certain medicinal plants and trees which are good remedies in simple diseases.

Malaria prevails throughout the year in this forest area. He it under mined their physique and dwarfed their stature. Women and children of this area are seen with their bellies bulging out, their limbs emaciated. They are the living exhibits as displayed by Postal Department wherein two families—one using quinine and the other not—are contrasted in the picture. But people are gradually realising the need for medicinal aid and they have begun to procure it from the dispensaries.

### New Religion.

'A universal imperceptible and invisible god whose spirit pervades the entire universe has emerged out of the forms of innumerable gods and goddesses whom the universal one has superceded.' The followers of this section which each day draws new recruits within their fold do not believe in idol-worship nor in priests nor in prophets or avatars. An omnipresent, omniscient, all-pervading, subtle spirit, reigns supreme in the universe to whom, all the people are the equal subjects.

This concept of new religion is the intuitive recognition on their part however imperceptible and incomprehensible to them of that universal law of commodity production, which has transplanted all other productions has broken all local barriers and has made it universal.

The reformist section which has embraced this religion observes a code of certain morals. They abstain from drinking and have become strictly vegetarians. Between the reformist and the non-reformist one, in their standard of living, their social customs, their beliefs

and other habits, the gulf of difference is ever widening.

### Raniparaj Youth.

This part will be incomplete if I fail to mention of the new youth who is playing nobly his role in the uplift of his community.

The youths who have attended schools have realised how primitive and poor their community is. In them has grown an urge for better life.

Many such youths had participated in the national struggle with the hope that it would emancipate their community and lead them to the promised land. They have very imperceptibly realised the class forces that control the movement. They have seen that the big Khatodars have profited of the movement the enhancement of their revenue. These youths have realised that the Sahukar-Zamindar have enslaved them to the land whose masters they were. They had put their thumb on the cause that made for their ruin. They had known the technique of collective resistance whose proved efficiency inspired confidence in them.

These new youths are ceaselessly, spreading the new gospel of resistance against the robbery of the Sahukar-Zamindars. They have raised The Storm-centre of the Kisan Movement in Gujarat.

This new youth is the hope of their emancipation.

### II

#### Production for Market

As stated previously these Raniparaj were the masters of the soil. Railways piercing this interior constructed for timber traffic, became a link that chained these people with the world. They began to produce for market instead of use and release production out of their hands. The increasing pressure on land, the precipitous fall of prices were forcing their heads down. The subdivided fragments could not feed the peasant and his family. He ate up the livestock, the implements and his lands. The more he ate these up, the more hungry he grew.

### Sahukari Robbery

The new market had attracted quite a host of Banias, Anawils, Bohras, and Parsi Sahukars. These benevolent people are ever ready to help the needy!

They were ready with their snares spread. The peasant needed credit. He went knowing that he was offering himself in the clutches of a tiger.

These Sahukars lent freely, of course, secure on the peasant's land. In these ignorant, illiterate, simple hearted, primitive, loyal peasants of Raniparaj, these hungry pack of wolves found easy victims.

They would deduct all sorts of levies and the claims their caprice would dictate. The purse has to be untied. That becomes a charge. They would deduct the commission. They would deduct the interest. The peasant-debtor receives half the sum for which he signs the bond.

All sorts of frauds are devised that his ingenious brain could conceive of. Payments of interests are not entered. Even if these levies and extra-levies, lies and frauds would not drain off the treasure of the peasant he would resort to forgery. Documents are forged. Lands mortgaged, would turn out into those already sold.

I am citing below glaring instances of how the debts continue to swell up. The poor peasant cannot keep pace and is overbeaten, defeated and cast down.

(1) Somia Dhedia of Parawat (Mandvi, Surat Dt.) borrowed 10 seers of jowar from a Parsi Sahukar who extorted Rs. 60, still he demands Rs. 40.

(2) Devia Meraka (of Parwat) got 10 seers of toddy from a Parsi-licence holder who after three years demanded Rs. 28 and expropriated his land in return.

(3) Rayalo Taglo of Parwat owed some rupees to the Secretary of the co-operative society who allowed him Rs. 50 from the co-operative society and realised his own. He took some of the peasant's land in reward for his obligation.



(4) Bablaseram got toddy worth Rs. 1-8-0 on credit. The Parsi licence-holder confiscated four of his goats for the same.

These cases will speak for themselves. Innumerable facts can be quoted.

They would confiscate the peasant debtor's lands, using force and violence. I had occasion to tour the whole of

Raniparaj when I heard harrowing tales of forcible eviction of the debtors off their own lands. The Sahukar would come with a gang of hired armed labourers and reap the harvest of the debtor's fields and deal with blows if he put up any resistance.

The following table will reveal that more than half of the peasants do not possess any land of their own.

Land between.	No. of land holders.	Their total land.	% to total Land.	Their debts.	Debt per bigha of land.	Amount of land cultivated on hire.	How many times their own.
0-0" Bighas	20	—	—	4700	—	453	—
1-10"	4	33	3.3	1500	48.5	71	2.1
11-25"	5	105	10.5	3000	28.5	47	.44
26-50"	5	165	16.5	3135	19.0	89	.54
51-63"	2	117	11.7	260	2.2	—	—
Total.	34	420	42.0	7895	18.8	660	—

The total land of the village will be 1000 Bighas for the land held by absentee Zamindars is not included in this table. The land cultivated on hire by these peasants will be approximately the lands held by these Zamindars. Of these, some lands may lie in another village.

It will be seen here that more than half of the peasants do not possess any land of their own. The cultivating peasants, in all, possess less than half of the total land of the village, for the other half has accumulated in the hands of absentee Sahukar-Zamindars.

Before we finish the topic of indebtedness we would like to draw readers attention to the fact that half the number of debtors have not been able to return any land of their own whose debts constitute half of the total. Sealing down, Mortgage Bank and the rest of the measures would not be of any use to such a group of debtors who form by itself a large number of insolvents.

Incidence of the debt burden is the greatest with those who have no lands of

their own and lowest of those who possess more than 50 Bighas of land strikingly attracts our notice.

Peasants having no land of their own cultivate nearly 75% of the land cultivated on hire in the village.

### Zamindari Raj

The tenant's heart leaps with joy when he sees his fields green with harvest flowing in the gentle breeze. He harvests his fields. The corn is threshed on the floor. The Zamindar comes with his carts. He shares half the produce. Several dues are deducted from the remaining half of the tenant. He had borrowed for seedling. Twice the amount is charged for a period of about six months. The interest of 400%! He had borrowed for his maintenance. The Zamindar charges the amount and a half again for the same. In the end the tenant is left as he was before. He has to fall back upon the borrowings from the same Zamindar, who it appears, strives for ever to force the tenants into poverty which delivers him safe in his claws.

The Zamindar is the Sahukar and a merchant in one. He takes the tenants share and sells it on his behalf and pays whatever price he chooses. When the tenant demands the proceeds of the sale of his share the Zamindar does not pay the same but lends him some on interest. In the end the Zamindar would give him a few coppers.

In Baroda State the Rent Regulation Act fixes the rents from three to five times the Land Revenue. This law does not exist for the Zamindar.

The bureaucracy has never tried to enforce laws. Contravening the law, Zamindars exact half the gross produce.

We give below accounts of Profit and Loss of representative tenants.

Chandubhai Jamubhai of Lavet cultivates 6 Bighas of land on Adu-Bhag (half share).

INCOME				EXPENDITURE			
	Rs.	A.	P.		Rs.	A.	P.
Cotton twelve (maunds)	35	0	0	Seeds	0	12	0
Total income	35	0	0	Sowing weeding	0	8	0
His total gross income	35	0	0	Tillage with karab & plough	15	0	0
Less Half the share of Zamindar	17	8	0	Picking of cotton	2	8	0
Net Income	17	8	0	Removal of stalks	2	0	0
Total Expenses	29	4	0	Marketing	1	0	0
Net loss	11	12	0		29	4	0

Bucha Lakha of Lavet cultivates 50 Bighas of land on Bhag.

HIS INCOME				HIS EXPENDITURE			
	Rs.	A.	P.		Rs.	A.	P.
Rice	90	0	0	Seeds	20	0	0
Wheat	52	8	0	Sowing tillage before sowing	22	0	0
Pulses (Rabi crop)	12	8	0	Transplanting of paddy	4	8	0
Straws and other things	20	0	0	Tillage for Rabi crops	8	0	0
Cotton	172	0	0	Tillage Cotton	18	0	0
Total gross income	347	0	0	Weeding	17	0	0
Total gross Income	347	0	0	Threshing Rice, pulses and wheat	6	13	0
Less Zamindar's share	173	0	0	Picking of cotton	12	0	0
Net income	173	8	0	Removal of stalks	4	0	0
Total Exp.	114	5	0	Marketing of cotton	4	0	0
Net Profit	59	3	0	Total expenditure	114	5	0

Only those with means who cultivate on an extensive scale can save something by cultivating Bhag. But the majority of the tenants who cultivate 'Bhag' cultivate in small fragments. These small cultivators incur losses every year as shown by these accounts.

How do the tenants pay their losses? Obviously they pay from the subsidiary income if they have any. They never realise the full wages of their labour included in the expenses. The peasants pay the Lion-share of Zamindar 'Bhag' from their wages.

Zamindars have launched an offensive on the wages of the tenant. Their 'Bhag' is an attack on the standard of living of the tenants.

No wonder then that mass of ruined tenantry swell the ranks of labourers.

They had made them serfs. But now they push further. They have launched a campaign to enslave them into Halis. They strive to make their power over the tenants complete. The suzerainty of these overlords of Raniparaj will be envied even by the Mogul Subahs of old.

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