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THE NEW AGE

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THE CHOICE BEFORE THE PEOPLE

"With all the earnestness I can command, I therefore, plead with every Congress-man who believes in his pledge to make his choice: either to apply the purge I have suggested or if that is not feasible, because of the Congress being already over manned by those who have lost faith in its creed and its constructive programme, on which depends its real strength to secede from it for its own sake and prove his living faith in the creed and programme by practising the former and prosecuting the latter as if he had never seceded from the Congress, of his ideal. If one or the other is not done, I see grave danger of the Congress collapsing by the weight of its own weakness."

Mahatma Gandhi in Harijan, dated 3rd Sep. 1938.

These are tragic words, coming as they do from one whose pioneer work undoubtedly resulted nearly twenty years ago, in turning the face of the Congress to the masses, in making it a mass organisation. The article in which these words occur is entitled, "*The choice before Congressmen.*" The choice which Gandhiji places before Congressmen is either way a *split*, a destruction of the National Congress. A gloomy future is predicted for the Congress unless it accepts one of the two alternatives either a purge of the radicals or a secession of the Gandhites. The National Congress which has achieved the growing unity of the Nation, which has been and is capable of effecting mighty mobilisation of the masses must be liquidated as a democratic mass

organisation in order that Gandhism—the abstract principles of "Truth and Non-violence" may live! The quotation given above is the clearest proof that Gandhism has outlived its usefulness. It has become a positive fetter on the further development of our struggle for freedom.

The Crisis in the Congress—its Root

Gandhiji's article is nevertheless symptomatic of the crisis with which the Congress is faced to-day. During the past 14 months of Congress ministries, the forces of mass struggle and organisation have grown. The Congress itself has not come forward as the conscious organiser and unifier of this growing struggle. It has consistently refused to develop the extra-parliamentary movement to sup-

port the Ministries in carrying out the Congress Election programme against the resistance of the anti-National vested interests and the imperialist bureaucracy. It has at every stage sought to compromise with the anti-Congress Zamindars and capitalists and bartered away the demands of the people as laid down in the Congress Manifesto. This has encouraged the offensive of the enemies of the people. These blows are falling on the unprotected flank of the Mazdur and kisan movement. There is growing disunity and disintegration in the National Front. In one word it is the compromising tendency which is at the root of the crisis in the Congress, of the disunity in the National Front.

Gandhism, in the period of Congress ministries is nothing if it is not *COM-PROMISE Par excellence*. The strategy of office acceptance was defined by Gandhiji fourteen months back as "a serious attempt on the one hand, to avoid a bloody resolution and on the other, to avoid mass civil disobedience on a scale hitherto unattempted", (HARIJAN 17-7-1938). This announcement was at that time greeted by the imperialist press as "a step towards co-operation". Subsequent developments have not very much belied the imperialist expectations. *The narrow path of the Gandhian strategy of running the ministries consists in avoiding struggle, in liquidating all extra parliamentary mass activity.* As much of the Congress election programme is put through, as is possible through compromise and conciliation with the vested interests. This of course necessitates non-violence (i.e., passivity) on the part of the masses. The masses should learn non-violence through "self purification." If they do not, it has to

be enforced by the rod of the police and the military as explained by Gandhiji. That is of course, an unavoidable and undesirable breach of the principle of Non-violence. But Gandhiji has sanctioned it. That is the other way of enforcing the principle of conciliation and compromise with the vested interest.

The Basic Question

Gandhiji in his article makes the abstract question of violence and non-violence the basis of his proposed purge. In reality this is not the crucial question at all. The choice which Congressmen and the people have to make is between compromise and struggle—between independence and submission to imperialism. It is no use mystifying the issue by switching the discussion into the semi-religious-ethical plane. The point is whether the ministries are to serve as battering rams driven by the popular struggle and steadily pounding at the walls of privileges of the vested interests and of the imperialist bureaucracy; or are they to be instruments of compromise—tools of checking the forces of mass-struggle. That is the plain political question.

The Rift in the National Front

That has become the most urgent question to-day. Never was the tendency towards disunity and disintegration, as marked as it is to-day. The breach in the popular forces—between the workers' and peasants' organisations, the radical Congress rank and file on the one hand and the ministries and the higher Congress organs on the other, is growing in the measure, the efforts at conciliation and compromise intensify. In the North-West, Frontier provinces the ministry and the provincial leadership is support-

ing the Nawab of Toru, who is levying the over-lordship Tax and evicting peasants from the land. The Red Shirts, and the Congress rank and file are supporting the kisans who have launched a Satyagraha in defence of their lands. The result is that scores of Red Shirts are arrested, kisans are being jailed and bans on meeting are being enforced. There is a breach between the Congress Ministry and the leadership on the one hand and the Red Shirts organisation which is the biggest rank and file organisation of the N. W. F. Congress; just because the former refuses to live up to the Congress election manifesto, refuses to support the elementary demands of the kisans—the fight against an illegal cess and against unlawful eviction.

In Behar, a further concession to the Zamindars as embodied in the Second Zamindar-Congress agreement and the new amendments to the tenancy bill has further increased the tension between the Congress and the kisan Sabhas. In Behar, it is true that the kisans mustered 20 lakhs strong in the anti-Zamindar-Congress-agreement demonstrations. In Behar the massive unity and organisation of the kisan Sabha makes the break between it and the Congress more difficult. But the Zamindars emboldened by the concessions is hitting out. The atrocities of the zamindars and their amlas are on the rise. The Government is taking resort to repressive measures. Bans are being imposed. There was an ugly show of police force at the demonstration.

Even in U. P. where the ministry and the Provincial Committee is far more radical than in any other province, a Zamindar-Congress agreement is being

hatched on the tenancy bill. Zamindar atrocities are rising in U. P. too. The ministry is taking repressive measures against the kisans. In U. P. C. C. itself there was a sharp difference on the issue whether the Congress Committees were to be the agents of enforcing law and order in collaboration with the ministry and a meeting was requisitioned to discuss the question.

Capitulation Leads to Disintegration

In Bombay and Madras, matters are still worse. In Bombay the most reactionary Labour Bill and Tenancy Bill are on the anvil. The former is even more retrograde than the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Labour and seeks to drastically restrict the most elementary rights of Trade Union organisation and strike. The latter gives doubtful relief to a tiny minority of tenants while enforcing strict measures of rent realisation. Both in Madras and in Bombay, civil liberties are most wantonly trampled upon. Rajaji openly defends the use of the hated criminal Law Amendment Act instead of repealing it, while Sjt. Munshi bans ordinary strike processions and refuses to classify Sholapur prisoners as political prisoners.

This policy of compromise and conciliation which is being followed by the ministries is leading to the estrangement between the workers and kisans organisation and the Congress. It must lead to the weakening of the former and therefore to the weakening of the National Front—of the Congress itself. Disintegration which is the direct outcome of this policy of surrender is making itself felt in the Congress organisations themselves. Provincial Congress Committees have almost without exception become hot-beds of factional squabbles and

intrigues. Gandhiji puts this down to the scramble for "the spoils of office." Perfectly right. But this is mainly due to the ministries becoming more and more an arm of British administration and Congress Committee its agency—instead of a leader of the extra-parliamentary struggle of the masses. The development must lead to the progressive bureaucratisation of the higher Congress Committees and their separation from the masses.

Imperialism Emboldened

British imperialism of course wants and greets this disintegration just as much as it greets the tendency towards compromise. It has emboldened it to open offensive against the ministries. The withholding of the assent to bills on the part of the Governors is becoming a common way of bringing pressure on the ministries to drop or modify the bills which Congress legislators have passed. *Imperialist offensive against the people increases in the measure the compromising tendency grows.* The British press now openly demands the use of Governor's veto powers to stop even the most moderate measures of the Congress ministries. Every concession however small coming from a popular ministry begins new grist to the mill of the growing forces of mass-struggle and organisation. It has served to strengthen those radical forces within the Congress which have taken initiative in leading the extra-parliamentary struggles—in building up Labour and kisan organisations. It is this development which imperialism wants to strangle. Certain Congress ministries are making the job easy for imperialism by themselves going over to repressive action against the radical forces (arrests

of socialists in N. W. F. recent firing and lathi charge on strikers in Bombay); and by bringing forward legislations which restrict the rights of organisation and strike (Bombay Labour Bill).

The War Bill

It is in this atmosphere that British imperialism is openly foisting its war plans on India. A Defence Secretariat has been established. Military expenditure is increased by 10% in spite of the adverse vote of the Central Assembly last month. The money is to be spent for the mechanisation of the Indian Army. The scheme of reorganisation is so devised that the Indian Army of occupation will be more British manned than ever. But the most atrocious of all these measures is the War Bill which has been rushed through the Assembly recently, in the teeth of Congress opposition. Though it is mainly aimed at the Punjab Kisan movement, it will, when it comes into operation, render all anti-war propaganda based on the anti-war resolution of Haripura, illegal.

New Role of the Muslim League

The War-Bill which penalises every type of anti-recruiting propaganda is a wanton restriction of freedom of speech. It ought to have obtained the united opposition of all parties in the Central Legislature. But the most surprising part of it was that the newly formed Muslim League party headed by Mr. Jinnah supported the official block and thus helped to get the bill through. This action of the Muslim League, when viewed in relation to the trend of the resolutions of the Council of the All-India Muslim League (on August 1.) and to the developments in Bengal and the Punjab, throws light on the new role of

the reactionary leadership of the Muslim League. The League has rejected the Congress offer for unity based on joint struggle against the Federation. It's attitude, now is not one of total rejection but only that it cannot express its opinion on the alleged modifications in the Federal Scheme unless it is consulted. It has rejected the slogan of Constituent Assembly. In the Punjab and Bengal it is making a drive for a mass basis by launching a rabid communalist propaganda. Communal demogogy coupled with gangsterism has been the key-note of the demonstrations organised by the League in Bengal in support of the Huq ministry, and the "Golden Bills" campaign in the Punjab. In the Punjab, the Leaguers are making attempts to break up meetings and demonstrations organised against the War-Bill. Once again Hindu-Muslim riots are being instigated in U. P. and Behar.

Imperialist Strategy

The meaning of this development is that British imperialism is attempting to use reactionary leadership of the League to bolster up the non-Congress Ministries, to create difficulties in the way of Congress ministries by whipping up communal passions, to create a reactionary Muslim Party with a mass basis with the help of communal demogogy and methods of fascist gangsterism. The aim is to create anti-national forces which will be prepared to run the federation, to carry through the war policy of British imperialism in India and keep India in subjugation by creating an ulster within it. Will this game succeed? Will the broad Muslim masses fall a prey to the deceptive demogogy of "Islam in

danger"? If they do—which is not impossible in the present stage of our national development—our struggle for national liberation will be faced with a serious menace.

But this development is not inevitable. It is true that it is visibly on the increase to-day. But it cannot be ascribed solely to the backwardness of the Muslim masses. If Jinnah and his sort are able to exploit the backwardness of the muslim masses that is partly because of the compromising and conciliatory attitude of the Congress and its ministries towards imperialism. In the measure the Congress adopts a fighting programme in ACTION both in the sphere of ministries and in the struggle against the federation, it will be able to counteract the narrow, sectarian appeal of the Muslim leaguers. Its mass-contact drive as well as its appeal for a united front agreement on the basis of joint struggle against Federation will be successful in the degree it takes a clear cut stand for the kisan and against the Zamindar and moneylender—for civil liberties and against imperialist repression. The pseudo-radical mask can be torn from the faces of the non-Congress Ministries supported by the Muslim league only when the Congress Ministries themselves take an uncompromising stand on the Congress programme—only when the extra-parliamentary struggle is consciously developed to fulfil it. Similarly, only when the Congress launches a bold mass-agitation against the federation and for constituent assembly, only when it firmly sets its face against all practices which may be condemned as having a sectarian Hindu bias, will it be possible for it make its appeal for unity effective among broad Muslim masses.

States Peoples Rise in Revolt

In sharp contrast to the development in the British provinces a variable storm of popular movement is developing in the Indian States. The States which have leapt into prominence this month are Travancore, Kashmir and Rajkot. The beaten popular movements are breaking forth in the States under the direct influence of the national struggle in the British provinces. People are awakening to their rights and have begun to hammer at the bonds of obsolete despotism. In Travancore, the people, under the banner of their State Congress, are heroically fighting the frightful reign of terror instituted by Sir, C. P. a leader of the Travancore National Congress has appealed to the State Congress to suspend the Civil Disobedience struggle on the plea that violence is being committed by the people. But the people who are at grips with the murderous violence of absolutism will not stop until they have won their rights.

The most striking feature of the struggles which are going on in these three states, is the marvellous unity of popular forces which is being forged in struggle. Organisations which were Communal in character and scope have outgrown their narrow limits and have become real popular organisations embracing all sections of the people. In Kashmir it was a question of Hindu-Muslim unity while in Travancore it was one of unifying the various Hindu castes. Under the fire of popular struggle communal barriers are falling. Various sections of the people are entering the struggle. In Travancore Thousands of students are playing a heroic role. In Rajkot the united front of all political organisations is in action.

Non-Intervention Policy Bars Peoples Unity

But the people's unity in the states however heroic, is not enough. Brutal repression has been let loose against it. Firings, lathi charges, mass arrests have become daily occurrences in those states. The struggle of the people of Travancore, Rajkot and Kashmir needs the popular support from the British provinces, from the Indian National Congress, But the Haripura Resolution intervenes. The atrocities of the regime of Sir C. P. must be condemned from a thousand platforms throughout India. But the spirit of compromise with the princes—on which the Haripura resolution is based—prevents unity between the people of British India and the States. Once again we see how compromise leads to disunity.

Congress at the Cross-Roads

The situation, on the eve of the Dehli session of the A. I. C. C. is grave indeed. Forces of disunity and disintegration are at work in the Congress in the National Front as a whole. The root cause of this disease is the growing domination of the conciliatory tendency. Congress is at the cross-roads. The great choice before the people is whether they will continue along the path of compromise or make a sharp turn towards uncompromising struggle against imperialism, the states princes and the anti-national vested interest in land and capital. We have to choose between disunity and defeat on the one hand and the unity of popular forces in uncompromising struggle against the enemies of the people on the other.

(Continued on Page 155)

CAWNPORE—A REPORT

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS AND TASKS

By P. C. Joshi

Cawnpore has witnessed two successful general strikes in the course of a year. It has begun to be looked upon as a model, as an effective Trade Union centre, as a front-line trench of the United Front movement. Cawnpore not only set an example, it repeated its own victory. The political lessons of Cawnpore have become a part of our ideological consciousness; but unless its organisational lessons are equally well assimilated, they will not become a part of our daily practice, we would not know how to transform our own town into another Cawnpore, a citadel of the impregnable unity of the people vanquishing all foes, in which the working class leaders doggedly stick to trade union unity and on its basis build the unity of the people, as a whole by forging link by link a united front between the local Congress and Trade Union organisations, a unity which involves no sacrifice of principles by either side but actually advances the common aims of every son of India—greater democratic rights, better living conditions, growing fighting strength.

The story of this gallant struggle covers three distinct chapters; the first general strike (August 1937), the period between the first and the recent general strike, and the period covering and following the second general strike (May-

July 1938). It is impossible for me within the space at my disposal, to describe the chronological normal development of the organisational base. All I can do is to arbitrarily catalogue the order, organisational forms and the new forms of organisation thrown up by the workers or consciously forged as a result of experience and indicate how they grew from stage to stage, what purpose they served or failed to serve and above all what is the present position and what problems await solution. It is only in fables that the oppressed are given concessions; in history they have to win victories. Again no gains as long as the system of oppression and exploitation remains, are permanent, they call for eternal vigilance. It is only through organisation and struggle that the oppressed win victories and advance their gains—A clear understanding of the organisational problems raised, solved or left unsolved. Cawnpore would tell us how to win out victories and the Cawnpore comrades how to keep their victory.

Communists and others at Cawnpore

From 1934 onwards the Communists have been working inside the Mazdoor Sabha. In those early days of severe repression, experience led to a mutual division of functions. The Communists

did the day to day field work of the Trade Union, conducted regular study-circles, conducted the series of individual strikes and paid the price of it all by always having their most experienced comrades going in and out of jails. The other group led by Comrades Hariharnath Shastri and Raja Ram Shastri was the majority group, holding leading positions in the Sabha, doing the office work, presiding over meetings and carrying on negotiations with the owners when strikes broke out. Despite differences and conflicts, the unity of the Union was preserved all through and an equilibrium established, which was violently upset by the first general strike.

The accumulated effects of the quiet and self-sacrificing day-to-day work of the Communists suddenly became visible to all during the general strike, the Communists were shown to be the leaders of the working class of Cawnpore, enjoying the confidence of an overwhelming majority and possessing effective rank and file cadres who had themselves arisen from within the working class though they continued to be a minority inside the Union Executive, which had been elected before the strike.

The general strike not only marked a change in the relative position of the two groups, it changed the very nature of the tasks as well. Ten thousand workers joined the Mazdoor Sabha creating the problem of organising a real mass union, at least one hundred rank and file militant workers came up during the strike posing the problem of educating cadres. These tasks had to be fulfilled within the framework of the policy of unity with the Congress and unity with labour ranks, the very policy which

had brought the movement to this new advanced stage.

The Communist leaders requested comrade Jayaprakash to visit Cawnpore, see the situation for himself and help to form a Congress Socialist Party (C. S. P.) branch, proletarian in composition, working up the ward Congress Committees as units of the United National Front on the one hand and building a mass Trade Union on the other. Success did not go into the heads of the Communists, it made them realise their responsibilities still more acutely. Comrades Shastries happened to be the usual type of non-working class Trade Union functionaries who import even in the Trade Union movement the traditional organisational methods of the Congress—working from the top, living at the top, to whom “rank and file leadership” is a fine phrase of the Communists to advance their own factional claims, to whom “initiative from below” is a device to expose them, to whom “Trade Union democracy” is just the method of the Communists to have it their own way—the shastries had been in the Trade Union movement before the birth of the C. S. P. Before the Nagpur split, they were nearest Joshi-Giri group than the militants, after the Calcutta split they opposed the Red T. U. C., and inside the A. I. T. U. C. they supported Alwe—Kandalkar and condemned the Reds for the defeat of the 1934 general strike. After the formation of the C. S. P. they joined it but failed to organise its branch in the very town where they lived and worked and in practice themselves became the C. S. P. The Communists knew it all and yet boldly made the proposal to form a functioning C. S. P. branch,

with the 100 or so proletarians found as active militants during the strike, to inspire confidence that they did not want a C. S. P. to rule the roost and enchain its older leaders. They even agreed that the leading Communists would not join the C. S. P. The proposal was condemned as "self-annihilation" by some sectarians, among the Communists, but it was in reality self-realisation. Living application of Marxism taught the Communists that this was the only way to apply the policy of United Front. Communist influence had grown on the basis of unity of the movement below, and the interests of the movement demanded greater unity at the top to carry through new forms of organisation unifying and solidifying the movement more and more. The Mazdoor Sabha Executive had been elected before the General Strike, before the new 10 thousand had joined it, before the Communists had become the undisputed leaders of the Cawnpore workers, in which the group of Shastries—was a majority and which therefore became the tail of the movement and at times, actually acted as a drag rather than assume the leadership of the movement. In the interests of T. U. unity the Communists put up with it all, but it degenerated into a pact of non-aggression and having to fulfil the tasks of the T. U. without the help of T. U. itself and sometimes not even in its name. They could have pressed for the general meeting of the Union to hold new elections but that would have meant a certain split, while critical struggles were looming ahead, and this was just what the owners most eagerly desired. The problem was not to eject the older leaders but influence them, make them move with the movement as a whole. It was for these

reasons that the Communists so ardently advocated the formation of a local C.S.P. for they knew that with proletarians inside the C. S. P. and at this stage of the movement it could not only act as a transmission belt of the experience and demands of the mass of workers for the older leaders but also train cadres for the movement which was growing from day to day and whose natural growth was being hindered because the leaders were lagging behind the movement, were unable to understand its needs and shape its course. The proposal to form a C. S. P. was thus in the true interests of the movement.

The proposal was mistrusted, and not accepted. This multiplied difficulties, division was perpetuated and unity foiled. A whole year has passed by, there are Congress Socialist leaders at Cawnpore but no C. S. P. Once or twice feeble attempts have been made to get together meetings to form a C. S. P. after rigidly excluding all known Communists. Before the meeting was half way through, it became clear that a majority of comrades present are distinctly pro-Communist, and the attempt to form a C. S. P. is given up! No C.S.P. can be formed in Cawnpore containing more than 10 active workers if Communists and their sympathisers are to be kept out of it. This simple fact seems to contain no lessons for our C. S. P. Comrades!

The problems, both Trade Union and political, which demanded *United* efforts had thus to be tackled *single-handed* by the Communists and even the preservation of this formal unity became *their* endeavour alone. This accounts for serious shortcomings in organisational work. A united mass Socialist party

was not formed at the most opportune moment. A second occasion, at a high stage of the movement, as this report will disclose, has offered itself. Would the C. S. P. comrades let it go by once again? Would they make the achievement of Socialist unity impossible except through bitter experience?

Mazdoor Sabha

Before the first general strike it had a stable membership of about 3 thousand. The success of the strike brought 10 thousand new members into the Sabha in September 1937, and there the progress stopped. It is very important to understand the reasons for this.

This seemingly sudden expansion of the base of the movement had taken place under Communist influence and became the dismay of the older T. U. leadership and was considered almost as a personal loss by them. They almost acted in a way that the interests of the union were posed against the daily interests of the workers. Immediately after the settlement, the owners began a campaign of provocation and victimisation and individual strikes broke out but they took no active part in them. This called the enthusiasm of the mass of workers for the Union as such. The owners then tried the game of simultaneously splitting the workers communally and provoking them to premature conflict by getting the slogan of immediate declaration of general strike to fight the owners' (1) victimisation put across through the Muslim League which also began a campaign that the Mazdoor Sabha was a Hindu body and a tool of the Congress Ministry. The old leadership of the union did not even lift their little finger to fight this menace. In fact, they hardly made a secret of their

view that the Communists had sown the whirlwind and must now reap the harvest. Communists, a large number of whom were Muslim proletarians fought out this danger successfully and the Congress leaders freely admitted that it was they who saved Cawnpore from a grave communal riot. Over and above this was the work of the Inquiry Committee—preparation of material, leading evidence, cross-examining the owners. Failure to enlarge the Union membership, despite the above difficulties, constituted one of the serious failings of the period between the first and second general strike in the work of the Communists. It is true that every comrade had more day to day work than he could cope with. It is also true that they continued to popularize the Mazdoor Sabha on a mass scale through the endless meetings they held. But they failed to link up their general agitational work, their struggle against the Muslim League. Their conduct of the individual strikes, their collection of material for the Inquiry Committee with concrete popularisation of the Union, i.e., day to day enrolment into it. It is however true that their work saved the name of the Mazdoor Sabha and created a solid foundation for a real mass Union which would function as such hereafter.

After the first general strike the enthusiasm of the workers was great and the influence of the Mazdoor Sabha had extended but it was not a deep influence. It was the first general strike that the Cawnpore workers had known after the post-war days and it too had lasted only about a week. The general level of class-consciousness remained very low and the ideological equipment and experience of even the militant

workers was not enough to face squarely a very complicated situation. As months rolled by a planned victimisation of the militants began and the Inquiry Committee proceedings went on and this terrorised the backward workers and gave disruptive elements like the Muslim League a chance to spread their poisonous propaganda.

Immediately after the Report of the Rajendra Prasad Committee came out, conceding the demands of the workers, an intense agitation was launched in its favour, mass enthusiasm went up with a bound and burst out in the second general strike.

This second general strike lasted 50 days. It not only restored the influence of the Mazdoor Sabha but further extended it. The duration of the strike, the day to day experience of struggle, endless stream of ideological-political propaganda carried on by the Communists has deepened the consciousness of the mass of the workers. Loyalty to the Majdoor Sabha dominates his mind and he has become a disciplined soldier of his class and no more a camp-follower of "leaders" whom he regarded as being above him. Not mere mass enthusiasm but wide-spread Trade Union consciousness prevails. When I was at Cawnpur soon after the strike all groups expected 25 thousand workers to pay up Majdoor Sabha subscription on the second payday after the mills had opened.

Mill Committees

Before the first strike they existed only in a few mills, organised by the Communists. They were a semi-secret group of individual militant workers, contacts picked up by the Communists through their day to day work. They collected and discussed the grievances of

their mill, found the money for the handbill detailing them, and got the workers to attend the mill-gate meeting. On other evenings they met together as a study circle. The more active among them got victimised and joined the ranks of the professional revolutionaries or pressed hard by continued unemployment and worries of the family they drafted back to their village-homes. The slogan of the mill Committee however had been very extensively popularised.

Immediately after the first general strike, the workers spontaneously formed mill committees without any actual direction from above, even by the Communists. They were the real organisational acquisition of the first strike and were a nightmare to the owners.

The older Trade Union leaders were not fond of rank and file organisations. When the owners' victimisation etc., began and individual mills came out on strike under the leadership of their mill committees, they not only did not actively help to run these strikes but frowned upon the mill committees. This led to a feeling of rivalry, if not hostility, between the mill committees and the Trade Union. The nemesis was reached when instead of welcoming the mill committees and recognising them as the basic units of the Majdoor Sabha they proposed rules for the mill Committees which further widened the breach between them.

The communists had on the one hand to fight for the right of the mill committees with the older leadership and on the other to struggle against what in the beginning was anarchic exuberance born of an easy victory, based on an over-estimation of their own strength. The militants who constituted these mill

committees reflected in a heightened form the elemental enthusiasm which had seized the mass of workers at the time of the first strike, they lacked maturity born of experience, and a sense of perspective which comes from socialist education. The attitude of the older leadership would have thrown these militants to the wolves, real pioneers of a movement which was for the first time becoming a real mass movement.

The owners knew this fundamental weakness when they launched their policy of provocation by victimising group by group, mill after mill, the leaders of the mill committees. Muslim League propaganda was another part of their policy.

The communists achieved a feat when they won and kept the confidence of the mill committees and through them of the mass of workers and made them accept the policy, that another general strike, so soon after the first one, only on the issue of victimisation, would not be enthusiastically supported by the entire mass of workers at the present stage of their consciousness, nor by the non-proletarian elements before the findings of the Inquiry Committee were out; that it would be playing straight into the owners' hands and courting disaster, that this was the period of intense organisation and preparation. They did not talk this down to the mill committee members but helped them to come to these conclusions not only by persistent propaganda among them but primarily through their devoted labour of helping the mill committees to organise themselves and their work, by being one with them in every way. They also became the living links between the Mazdoor Sabha

and the mill committees and their work became a living proof for the mill committee members that the Mazdoor Sabha was not identical with its older leadership which sat apart from them, unconcerned with their daily mounting troubles. Even the communists could not completely stem the tide. Except in four or five mills, the mill committees as functioning bodies ultimately collapsed when most of their members got victimised and many of them imprisoned under security sections, the remaining members kept contact with the communists and kept the torch burning inside the mills. The Communists sacrificed everything else (except preparations for the Enquiry) to keep the remaining mill committees going and maintain the above contacts. Recompense soon came.

When the second strike broke out mill committees again sprang up and functioned virtually as local strike committees and became responsible for the day to day conduct of the strike and its ultimate victory.

Today functioning mill committees exist in all the mills. Their personnel has been strengthened by the inclusion of new members. They are not yet elected bodies. As before they are bodies of militants who came forward during the struggle and who are accepted as the accredited leaders of their departments by the rest of the workers. Formerly all who cared, could attend its meetings and participate in it. Today these meetings are far more formal and business-like and not mere consultations. Proper minutes are kept, resolutions are taken down, they have offices of their own, collect a subscription of one anna per worker for their own work (besides

the union dues). They not only discuss the problem and grievances of their mill but also general Trade Union work. The old rivalry towards the Mazdoor Sabha has disappeared and unbounded loyalty to it prevails. They have become more mature as trade unionists.

Mohalla and Hata Committees

Hata is an enclosure containing anywhere from 20 to 200 working class tenements. A hata is very often the property of one landlord. A large number of hatas constitute one mohalla.

After the last general strike, section 144 was almost perpetually in operation. When gate-meetings were not possible the comrades had to turn their attention to the residence of the workers. Again the enthusiasm of the textile workers had been caught by other sections of workers and different strata of the town poor. They naturally looked to the advanced textile workers and the comrades working in the locality for guidance. This led to the birth of Mohalla Committees.

Before the second general strike there were only a few Mohalla committees which existed specially in those areas which were far away from the Mill Committee offices.

During the second general strike open mass meetings were permitted only in a few maidans. The problem was how to keep up the enthusiasm of the backward workers and not depend only on those who came to the general mass meetings. Our comrades and active workers were asked to form Mohalla committees to intensify agitation in the hatas and organise the militant workers residing therein for two purposes (1) to resist attempts to enrol blacklegs (2) to bring the mass of workers to mass meetings

and draw them in various activities. The slogan of the formation of Hata committees was promptly taken up by the workers, they enrolled volunteers, collected names for relief, organised resistance to the pressure of the house-owners to eject them for failure to pay rents. Our comrades held in the afternoon 20-25 hata meetings per day and these became the mainstay of the strength of the strike.

Representatives of Hata Committees joined together to constitute the Mohalla committees. Old Mohalla committees which were ad hoc bodies now got strengthened. They have continued to function even after the second strike and the first problem they took up after the strike was an intense agitation for getting complete remission of the rent of the strike period. Many of the house-owners have given complete and some partial remission. Some Mohalla committees have volunteers attached to them.

They gather grievances on a residential basis e. g., about latrines, water-taps, lighting etc. It is proposed to develop, through them, agitation for the redress of municipal grievances and enrol members into the Mazdoor Sabha.

"Centres"

There are no Mazdoor Sabha branches. Immediately after the first strike the communists proposed the formation of union branches but it was turned down by the older leadership obviously for fear that they will be manned by the communists for the communists alone had cadres while they had none. This constituted a calamity because it meant not establishing any organisational link between the Mazdoor Sabha head-office

and the mill committees and accentuating rather than checking tendency towards decentralisation and primitive anarchism which was unfortunately present in the Mill committees.

The "centre" is not a very formal affair. It means a cheap hired room where at least one comrade stays all the 24 hours. There is one comrade-centre-in-charge, at least one intellectual is attached to it, and all the worker comrades residing in that area. They are responsible for the work of the Mill committees in their area, hold study-circles which are irregular, and carry through not only the gate but also the hata campaigns. They are the instruments for getting all decisions implemented by the mass of workers. They have become the resort of all conscious workers and volunteers who came there with reports and seek guidance.

During the second general strike they linked up the work of the mill committees with the mohalla committees and both these with the central strike committee. Activists' group meetings were held here, food tickets distributed and volunteers given their orders. It was the gruelling work done at the centres, capacity for leadership displayed from time to time, that endeared the Communists to the mass of workers, sanctified the name of communism to an extent that every advanced worker considers it a matter of pride to be called a communist and addressed as "comrade."

These centres have thus become *de facto* Mazdoor Sabha branches, and the mill committees of the area have also removed their offices to them or to an adjoining room, thus rendering the task of coordination and guidance easier and more manageable.

Central Strike Committee

It consisted of 10 representatives from each mill and 10 each from the Mazdoor Sabha and City Congress Committee. The President and General Secretary of the Mazdoor Sabha were its ex-officio President and General Secretary. It appointed a sub-committee for negotiations of 9 persons, comrades Harharnath Shastri and Raja Ram Shastri (C. S. Pers), R. D. Bharadwaj and S. S. Yusuf (communists)—all of them leaders of the Mazdoor Sabha—and Pandit Balkrishna Sharma, President of local Congress and four rank and file workers. Comrade Arjun Arora was appointed the G. O. C. of the Red Volunteers.

The Central Strike Committee was the supreme organ for deciding the policy and responsible for the conduct and leadership of the strike. It used to meet every afternoon. Problems were brought for decision by the members from different places and the Committee gave its decisions on the spot. The Committee gave general instructions to the Negotiation Sub-Committee and the settlement was unanimously endorsed by it. On the whole, the Committee worked smoothly and became the instrument of giving the struggle a united leadership. Through their work inside this Committee the Communists again won spurs. They came to be regarded by the proletarian members of the Committee, who were the cream of the Cawnpur workers, not only as fearless fighters, but as responsible leaders who are ever prepared to learn from the rank and file and who further no other interests except those of the movement.

The Committee ceased to exist after the general strike; but the advanced

workers continue to come to the communists for guidance and frequent the centres. They have not yet been organisationally consolidated.

Red Volunteers.

As the mill committees were the biggest single organisational achievement of the first strike the organisation of the Red Volunteers was of the second strike.

The first general strike had hardly any properly organised volunteers. Hastily the active elements attached a red badge to their arm did the work in their own way. There was no control worth the name and they disappeared with the strike.

During the second strike the Red Volunteers were about 2 thousand, nearly 60 percent of them being Muslims and mostly youngmen. This time they were well organised and attached to every Mill Committee. Their duties were picketting (day and night, 6 hours duty for every batch) at the mill-gates and in the residential areas, organisation of social boycott of anti-strike elements especially those clerks who insisted on going to work, by beat of drums to popularise the decisions of the Central strike Committee, and addressing hata and Mohalla meetings. They also managed to evolve a fairly efficient Information and Courier Service.

They were divided into batches, each under a captain. Each mill had 5 or 6 Captains, under a Commander. Over the commander was the G. O. C. The orders of the Strike Committee were communicated by the G. O. C. to the commanders who set the rest in to motion. Daily meetings of Commanders were held, who in their turn hold a daily rally of the volunteers in their charge. Every Sunday witnessed a rally of the

volunteers, salutation of the Red Flag, drill, parade, and a lecture at the end.

209 of these volunteers have been through jail for their part in the strike. The organisation of the Red Volunteers has not been liquidated with the strike nor has their enthusiasm waned.

A remarkable phenomenon was the emergence of 200 women volunteers. A little over 25% were wives of workers and themselves workers. 5% were housewives i.e., they did not themselves go to work, and the rest were women workers mostly widows. This in a Purdah ridden province and as such it was a testimony to the fact how widely and deeply the strike had stirred the entire proletarian mass. They specialised in picketing and won the admiration of all, for the devoted and brave manner in which they discharged their duties. Thirty to fifty of them would join a permanent volunteer corps. Two of them have been elected to the General council of the Majdoor Sabha.

Relief work and the Congress.

Pandit Balakrishna Sharma, President of the Cawnpur Congress, Committee had declared in the beginning of the strike "Not one worker shall go back to work because of starvation." He proved true to his word.

The distribution of relief began only 15 days after the strike, a fortnight too early, judging by the usual standard of strike-relief in our country. But it had to be started so early because some of the Communal elements, to discredit the Congress, began to exploit the misery of the workers and egged on the more backward workers to press for relief.

Out of 45 thousand strikers about 20 thousand went away to their village-

homes, relief was distributed regularly to 10 thousand needy strikers.

The City Congress Committee fixed quotas for every Ward Committee whose active members went round in groups of two or three and collected relief from house to house, in cash or kind. They not only collected relief but popularised, during the course of their rounds, the political significance of the strike as well. It was not merely the impregnable solidarity of the strikers themselves but also the painstaking propagandist work of these batches of Congressmen that turned the sympathy of the entire town towards the strike.

Later on the UPPCC through a resolution called upon the entire Congress in the province to support the strike and itself donated 2 thousand rupees, and most of the help that came from outside was from the District Congress Committees of U.P. The Congressmen and the Trade Unionists and above all the Congress Socialists and the Communists of other provinces did not do their duty by Cawnpur.

Four distribution centres were started, all manned by Congressmen. Distribution was controlled through printed cards giving the amount of relief etc. which were issued through the Mazdoor Sabha.

Active support of the Congress did not end with the collection and organisation of relief. In significant words Pandit Balakrishna Sharma had proclaimed "The Congress is not a Seva Samiti, it is a political organisation." Under his leadership the Cawnpur Congress did all that a national democratic organisation could be expected to do. Congressmen participated in day to day agitation as vigorously as any Trade Union leader. Their

vigilance was a great factor in curbing police high-handedness. Congress Volunteers, under their own leaders, but in unity with the Red volunteers and their leaders, actively participated in every phase of strike-work, including picketing. Cawnpur Congress Committee through its delegation of ten members in the Central Strike Committee was also associated with the leadership of the strike. They were a help rather than a hindrance in the conduct of the strike. In the daily meetings of the Strike Committee they effectively put forward the attitude of the non-proletarian masses to the changing course of the strike and thus helped to guide the strike in a way that the proletariat may continue to enjoy the support of the non-proletarian elements. It is to the abiding glory of Cawnpur Congress that even when their view-point was not accepted by the Central Strike Committee they accepted its decisions as their own and what is more carried them out. Proletarian struggle not only became a peoples' struggle but it was also headed by a united peoples' leadership.

Cawnpur Congressmen and Trade Unionists both say with justifiable pride—"we have given a lead to the rest of the country."

This united front work has brought about far-reaching changes in the outlook of various elements and it is of immense significance for the future. Loyalty of the mass of proletarians towards the National Congress comes only after their loyalty to the Mazdoor Sabha and they rightly see no conflict in their loyalties. Rank and file Congressmen and even local Congress leaders have begun to see the necessity of proletarian struggle and proletarian

organisation for advancing national struggle and strength. As a result of the successful general strike a wave of enthusiasm and organisation is sweeping over the proletariat, other workers and artisans besides those of textiles, are setting up their T. U. and Congressmen are actively helping them. They also offer their co-operation and help in the day to day work of the Majdoor Sabha.

Congressmen, from Pandit Balakrishna Sharma downwards, have come to honour the communists as the most effective and selfless anti-imperialist group and what is more they also admit that their virtues come from their being communists. But this is not all. As yet they do not regard the Communists as one of themselves, within the Congress fold. They are as yet suspicious of the loyalty of our comrades to the Congress, they do not completely trust our bonafides as Congressmen. This too they think arises from our being Communists! Old prejudices die hard, persistent anti-Communist propaganda by the Imperialists and other vested interests continues to get the better of us in some ways without our allies being conscious of it, every little and accidental mistake of ours or even of a single comrade assumes a different meaning in their eyes and becomes a source to raise doubts in their minds about our very bonafides. At this present stage mistakes in our attitude towards or work in the Congress no more have the objective character of errors but should be regarded by us at least, just because we are communists, as crimes.

Communists and their Functioning.

It is true that the Communists have been the driving-force behind the great movement which stands victorious to-day

at Cawnpur, carrying through the policy of United National Front and building an impregnable fighting front on its basis. If the great credit goes to them so does the responsibility for the shortcomings. It is thus of supreme importance to self critically examine their functioning as Communists because it is this which is the decisive factor.

Communists are a young rising force, their cadres too are naturally young, lacking the maturity that comes from long experience. These very comrades have been faced with a complicated situation and a movement which has been growing at a tremendous tempo. Naturally a wide lag developed between the needs of the movement and their own capacities to cope with them.

It is of interest to examine the organisational turns they make to be able to shape the mass movement more and more effectively.

Before the first general strike they functioned in practice as one single group meeting all together to decide upon the work to be done or as a study-circle of their own and going out in a bunch to the place of "work"—to mass work was limited and comrades had not developed initiative of their own.

After the general strike it became a drag on any work e.g. Mill Committees had grown up under their very noses but they themselves were not rooted in them and floated from mill committee to mill committee, mohalla to mohalla all in a group, the Trade Union had secured a mass membership but the membership was not organised, the workers' case had to be led before the inquiry Committee but there was no information or Statistics available. It took 4 long months' bitter experience of failures in individual

strikes, and the spectre of the rise of the influence of Muslim League before the new organisations turn was effectively made. Individual comrades were delegated to man the centres and be responsible for the entire work in their area, live there and not come to the headquarters unless called for. Some were delegated for the Mazdoor Sabha office and Inquiry work. During this stage a rapid gradation took place. Some of the ex-student comrades crashed—"I have not learnt Marxism to do clerical work" type—when they had to write up tens of applications per day containing workers' grievances and old chummeries were split up. Pressure of day to day work was so great that every comrade was yoked to practical work and collective education almost given up. This adversely effected some of the worker-comrades. As militant workers they were taken in the communist ranks but given no communist education. There was however greater system in day to day work and more output. Muslim League offensive was successfully defeated, within and around the Mill Committees militant workers became organised, comrades developed capacities of leadership. Thus the organisational basis for the second strike was created.

After this decentralisation had taken place a co-ordinating mechanism was being set up to link together the comrades working in different areas. But it could never assume a stable form because the comrades responsible for co-ordination were being rushed off to danger-spots. This machinery almost collapsed during the general strike. Thus no collective communist leadership was evolved. One leading comrade

continued to be the leader. Failure to train this leadership has meant that the entire basis of our work is very insecure—it rests on one comrade.

The Cawnpore Communists have become more steeled, better organised, more effective but they miss inspiration in their daily work. This is directly attributable to their not getting enough opportunities for ideological discussions of their daily problems and thus losing a sense of perspective, and to a failure to select, train and promote cadres. These defects too are generally recognised and when they are remedied then alone any further improvement in their own work will follow.

Tasks

(1) *Unity of Leadership*:—As I have said this has assumed the peculiar form of a pact of non-aggression and offers difficulties which cannot be solved by the efforts of Communists alone. There are old Trade Union leaders but not responsive to influences from the mass of workers, because they do not believe in organising the T. U. rank and file or raising basic organisations. There are local C. S. P. leaders but there is no local C. S. P. So they are answerable to nobody but themselves. They are not active from day to day and thus they cannot be influenced through their own experience. The growth of the movement is accompanied by a rapid increase in the influence of the Communists and this is regarded as a personal loss by them and a threat to their own leadership. One of them has begun to take of late, a left-adventurist stand, which, in practice, would mean disruption.

In such a situation what is to be done? Even formal unity which at present exists must be preserved at all

costs. Better functioning of the Mazdoor Sabha would directly aid the preservation of unity. If the C. S. P. leadership would not form a broad-based C. S. P. for fear of the communists, we have to appeal to them to form any sort of C. S. P. so that we may have unity with the existing C. S. P. Even if the C. S. P. does not move, we have to rely on ourselves and patiently and persistently explain every new move initiated by us to them personally, consult them beforehand so that at least avoidable misunderstandings are eliminated. A split would demoralise the backward workers and give the chance of their lives to the owners. It is the task of the communists to see that they do and go on doing all that they can to prevent a split in the T. U. leadership even though it may not mean splitting the working-class.

(2) *Training of Cadres*:—This assumes two forms:

- (a) Training for Communist leadership. The existing Communist cadres by regularly running their study-circles, deepening their knowledge of Marxism, by giving greater attention to the task of co-ordination and supervision and delegating comrades for this task and by giving more and more guidance in practical work coupled with an ideological political explanation of the steps suggested. This would immediately improve the quality of our work and give it stability.
- (b) Training of militant workers as new Communist cadres. There are about 400—500 militant workers, drawn from the

Mill Committees, Volunteers, Mohalla Committees, who have elementary class-consciousness which is flowering into political consciousness and who are working with us from day to day. They understand the role of the working class in the national struggle, and on Trade Unionism. They accept United Front with the Congress and also that their partial struggle is part of the wider struggle against Imperialism. Not one of them believes to-day that the help of "Sarkar" can be secured against the owners, which was one of the prevalent illusions before the general strike. They call themselves Communists. They have to be given elementary socialist education and trained into being T. U. functionaries and cadres for doing Congress work. An unending series of short-term classes must be run for them, with the courses written out in their own vernaculars and attached for practical work to the existing Centres under the discipline of comrades already working there. It is only thus that these rising sons of the working class will not be lost to their own class and to the nation as was the sad experience of the 1935 general strike in Bombay and to some extent after the August 1937 strike in Cawnpore itself. It is only when these militant workers have been trained into Communist workers that the gains of the general strike will be

organisationally consolidated and Cawnpore will witness still mightier struggles and greater victories. The basic problem of our movement to-day is that of cadres and our Cawnpore comrades, have its solution before their eyes and within their hands.

(3) *Mass enrolment into the Mazdoor Sabha* :—25 thousands members must be enrolled within a month and the slogan "all 45 thousands inside the Sabha within 6 months" advanced and implemented. To-day the Mazdoor Sabha can be made a genuine mass union, with Mill Committees as its basic units at the place of production and Mohalla Committees on the basis of locality.

(4) *Congress work of the new Type* :—Communists have been able to achieve united front between the local Congress and Mazdoor Sabha not by themselves doing Congress work and moving the Congress from within but through actual struggle and by maintaining political contact with the local Congress leadership. So far lack of time and cadres has been the pretext for neglecting organisational work within the Congress and as Congressmen. If the advanced workers are given political education there should be no lack of cadres. The dream of Sharmaji, of which he has spoken so often, must assume real form; T. U. branch and Ward Congress Committee offices must be in the same building, more and more Congressmen must be drawn in day-to-day T. U. Work and active workers and Communists must work up the Congress primaries as efficiently and vigorously as they have worked up the Mazdoor Sabha with the technique of moving the whole mass

behind each step planned from above; and on top of this, building from where all this work is done the Tricolour and the Red Flag must fly together. As yet the great United National Front movement of Cawnpore has no organisational base of its own,—down below, and as long as this is so, it is not safe from storms and the attacks of our enemies who have already become panicky.

(5) The Red Volunteers must on no account be disbanded but organised as the permanent Volunteer Corps of the Union. In the greater struggles that loom ahead a trained corps of Volunteers would be an asset of great value.

(6) *Trade Union Press* : The Weekly organ of the Majdoor Sabha, *the Mazdoor* is at present being run in the factional interests of the older group. This must be stopped and *the Mazdoor* run as an organ of the T. U. movement, a non-party paper advocating the policy of the Sabha and bringing the mass of workers into it and into the united national struggle.

Prospects.

The annual general elections of the Majdoor Sabha have recorded an overwhelming Communist victory. The great trust the Cawnpore workers have reposed in Communist leadership have doubled its responsibilities, which they can only discharge by fulfilling them as true Bolsheviks the tasks facing them.

If our Cawnpore comrades successfully tackle the organisational tasks facing them they will be influencing events beyond Cawnpore. Their August 1937 general strike set in motion the nationwide wave of textile struggles which resulted in the appointment of Inquiry Committees leading to and wage-increase. The struggle for Trade Union recognition

and social legislation is yet on; it will emerge victorious only on the basis of the organised strength of the working-class and the broad peoples' support behind working-class demands. In this new round as well, Cawnpore already occupies a very advanced position; it has almost won T. U. recognition and if the other textile centres line up together, through an All India Textile Conference, an irresistible movement for social legislation like minimum wage, holidays with pay etc. could be effectively initiated. The textile workers of India have always been at the head of the Indian working-class and the Cawnpore workers to-day lead the textile workers. A victory of the textile workers would be not only

their own victory but would effect the future of the entire working-class.

The developments in Cawnpore would not only effect the working-class but the national movement as well. U. P. is becoming the hub of the coming struggle against the Federation, it has the most Left Congress, a popular Ministry which moves with the people, a rising Kisan movement which is winning greater and greater Congress support. In such a province, Cawnpore, its industrial centre steeled through two general strikes and steeped in United Front spirit, is the natural leader of the whole people.

The work of our Cawnpore comrades, therefore, has assumed national importance.

EDITORIAL NOTE

Since the above article was written the Cawnpore Mazdoor Sabha Elections have taken place. The Election which resulted in overwhelming victory for the Communists bears out the estimation and analysis made by Comrade Joshi in his article.

The Cawnpore workers have given their verdict. The victory of the Communists is a victory for the policy of militant Trade Unionism, of working class unity which triumphed over communalist disruptors, of closest unity of the working class with the National Congress which was forged through united struggle against the recalcitrant millowners and the bureaucracy.

It is not surprising that the imperialist Press, The Times of India and the Pioneer, describe the election result to be the greatest calamity that could befall "industry and the working class." "The whole position demands the very serious consideration not merely of the U. P. Ministry but of the All-India Congress to whom the growth of Communism in the U. P. is as serious a menace as it is to any other section of the Community" writes the Times Editor.

What imperialism and vested interests fear most is the unity between the Congress and the working-class, between the Congress Ministry and the Mazdoor Sabha. They know that Congress-Working class unity is the most serious obstacle in their way and is the surest guarantee for people's victory. The Communists

have proved themselves to be the main driving force behind this unity movement. Therefore the main attack is directed against them to be able to break this unity, drive a wedge between the Congress and the working class.

It is surprising however to see the *Congress Socialist* joining in the chorus and expressing identical fears about the future. After alleging that the communist victory was due to their alliances with Muslim League it says, "The Mazdoor Sabha under the leadership of Congress Socialists, regarded the Congress as their supreme political organisation.....The new combination (of communists and communalists is an obstacle in the continuation of that policy." (*Congress Socialist* August 27 page 2.)

The arguments of the Times of India, Pioneer and the Congress Socialist differ but the conclusions are identical; fear of the future under the leadership of the Communists, slander against the Communists, the builders of peoples unity.

The slanderous allegation against the Communists made in the columns of the Congress Socialist is, on the face of it so absurd that it requires no refutation. The Cawnpur Congress gave its whole hearted support to the strike. The 120 Members of the general council were elected by 15000 workers. To allege that one-third of these elected members were anti-Congress Communalists and it is with *their* support that the Communists won the Elections means that the heroic struggle of 50 days has taught the workers nothing that the Congress has failed to win the confidence of workers, that the workers elected anti-Congress elements to the General Council. Comrade Santosh Kapoor the new General Secretary secured 80 votes against 33 secured by Kashi Babu. Com. Yusuf got 70 votes as against 44 votes of Com. Harihar Nath. Only those who are blinded by factional considerations would attribute such a big difference to unscrupulous alliances and manoeuvres. Only those who have no faith in the working class can maintain that communal considerations determined the verdict of the chosen representatives of the 40,000 workers.

The Cawnpur workers chose their leaders from the fighting trenches, from among those who by their qualities of heroism, sacrifice and leadership had won their love and respect. The Pioneer and the Times of course cannot accept the free verdict of the working-class. Why should not the Congress Socialist?

DEFEATISM LED TO COUNTER— REVOLUTION

BUKHARIN AND RAKOVSKY'S CONFESSIONS

John Strachey

[In the following pages John Strachey gives the most comprehensive analysis of the Moscow trials ever done in the short space of an article. His article, though it deals with only the Bukharin—Rakovsky Trial, gives the clue to a proper understanding of the nature of the entire conspiracy and explains the motive behind it. On the basis of the Verbatim Report (Published by Lawrence and Wishart, 800 Pages, price 3s 6d) Strachey shows how lack of faith in the Victory of Socialism and wrong estimation of Fascism, led Bukharin and his companions to the camp of Fascism. It is by far the best study of the trials that has appeared in the Indian Press.—EDITOR.]

A Profound Tragedy

The first thing which it is necessary to say is this: It was a profound tragedy that the men who stood in the dock at the Soviet trials had engaged in a conspiracy to overthrow the Soviet Government. Any friend of the Soviet Union who even seems to deny this, is, in my opinion, behaving foolishly. It is a historical tragedy of the first magnitude that these men, who had played prominent parts in the Russian Revolution, should have done these things. And it is true that in doing them they have done grave harm to the Soviet Union. They did grave harm to the Soviet directly by the attempts which they made to frustrate the Russian people in their task of building up their new industrial and economic system; they did harm to the Soviet Union by the relations with the Fascist powers into which

they entered; and they did the greatest harm of all, by the effect which the revelation, that there were prominent Soviet citizens who could do such things, has had upon the opinion of the world. That they harmed the Soviet Union in these three ways is the overwhelming responsibility which the names of Bukharin, Piatakov, Zinovieff, Rykov, and the rest must ever bear before history. It is this which makes their acts something which mankind will for ever remember and for ever execrate.

But this does not mean that the Soviet Government did not have to arrest these men; or that it had any conceivable alternative, when they had told their stories, but to shoot them. The conspiracy of these men was formidable. If it had gone undetected even a few months longer (the date fixed

by Tukhachevsky for this COUP D'ETAT was May 15th, 1937) the Soviet Government might have been overthrown, and the Fascist armies might even now be in occupation of the Ukraine. It would have been far better if these men had never conspired; but since they did conspire, the whole future of humanity was dependent upon their detection and execution. The Soviet peoples to-day, after going through the inevitable shock of discovering that some of the men in whom they had placed their trust were so horribly unworthy, are to-day far stronger, politically, economically and militarily than they were two years ago when these men were still at large.

Authenticity of the Confessions

The above statements are based on the authenticity of the confessions of the accused. I believe that no one who had not unalterably fixed his mind in the contrary opinion, could read the verbatim reports of the trials without being wholly convinced of the authenticity of the confessions. The report of the last, 1938, trial is a document of some eight hundred closely printed pages. It contains an immense weight of self-exposure; of careful detailed, precise description of the conspiracy as a whole, of detailed descriptions of the criminal activities of each and all of the prisoners; the whole delivered by each prisoner separately in open court before the assembled diplomats and correspondents of the world. Moreover it contains internal proofs of authenticity which cannot be doubted by any reasonable person who takes the not inconsiderable trouble to study the matter. For that very reason only a very small percentage of those who talk so freely

about the Soviet trials have read, or ever will read them. But that cannot be helped.

Two major questions arise from, and are resolved by, a study of the report of the trial. First, why did the prisoners confess, and second, and more important still, why did they commit the terrible acts to which they confessed?

As to the first question, I should have thought that the testimony of the prisoners themselves as to why they confessed might be allowed to carry some weight. And several of them were at great pains to explain exactly what had induced them to confess. Let us take the cases of Rakovsky and Bukharin, two of the most important of the prisoners in the last trial.

"My Past Rose Before Me"

Rakovsky says that this is why he confessed.

RAKOVSKY :—"*.....For eight months I denied everything and refused to testify*".....

UYSHINSKY (The Prosecuting Counsel) :—"*And then, as they say, you laid down your arms*".....

RAKOVSKY :—"*.....But before this the thought frequently arose in my mind: was I doing right in denying? Nobody will deny that imprisonment solitude in general, makes people undertake a revaluation of values. But I remember, and will never forget as long as I live, the circumstances which finally impelled me to give evidence. During one of the examinations, that was in the summer, I learnt, in the first place, that Japanese aggression had begun against China, against the Chinese people, I learnt of Germany's and Italy's undis-*

guised aggression against the Spanish people.....

I learnt of the feverish preparations which all the Fascist states were making to unleash a world war. What a reader usually absorbs day by day in small doses in telegrams, I received at once in a big dose. This had a stunning effect on me. All my past rose before me. Of course this past may be reduced to naught and will be obliterated by my disgraceful actions, but as an inner motive, nothing and nobody can do anything against it. *All my past rose before me, my responsibilities, and it became clear to me that I myself was a party to this, that I was responsible, that I myself had helped the aggressors with my treasonable activities...And then I became a judge over myself, I sat in judgment over myself.* This is a court which no one will reproach with being biased. I sat in judgment over myself. I had given myself to the labour movement from my youth, and where had I got to? My rancour, which all of us harboured, some to a greater and some to a lesser extent, rancour against the leadership, rancour against particular individuals, had played a great part. Rancour and ambition fell from me. I considered that from now on my duty was to help in this struggle against the aggressor, that I would go and expose myself fully and entirely, and I told the investigator that on the following day I would begin to give complete, exhaustive testimony."

Tibetan Drug?

Does that sound like the statement of a man under the influence of a "Tibetan drug"? Or does it sound like a "Dostoyevsky soul"? Bukharin answers these very suggestions and does so specifically

in order to convince the outside world that he is telling the truth,

BUKHARIN:—"...I take the liberty of dwelling on these questions because I had considerable contacts with these upper intellectuals abroad, especially amongst scientists, and I must explain to them what every Young Pioneer in the Soviet Union knows.

Repentance is often attributed to diverse and absolutely absurd things like Tibetan powders and the like. I must say of myself that in prison where I was confined for over a year, I worked, studied, and retained my clarity of mind. This will serve to refute by facts all fables and absurd counter-revolutionary tales.

Hypnotism?

Hypnotism is suggested. But I conducted my own defence in Court from the legal standpoint too, orientated myself on the spot, argued with the State Prosecutor, and anybody, even a man who had little experience in this branch of medicine must admit that hypnotism of this kind is altogether impossible. This repentance is often attributed to the Dostoyevsky mind, to the specific properties of the LAME SLAVE as it is called and this can be said of types like Alyosha Karamazov, the heroes of the 'Idiot' and other Dostoyevsky characters, who are prepared to stand up in the public square and cry: 'Beat me, Orthodox Christians, I am a Villian!'

But that is not the case here at all. LAME SLAVE and the psychology of Dostoyevsky's characters are a thing of the remote past in our country. Such types do not exist perhaps only on the outskirts of small provincial towns, if they do even there. On the contrary,

such a psychology is to be found in Western Europe.

Why They Confessed?

I shall now speak of myself, of the reasons for my repentance. Of course, it must be admitted that incriminating evidence plays a very important part. For three months I refused to say anything. Then I began to testify. Why? Because while in prison I made a revaluation of my entire past. For when you ask yourself: 'If you must die, what are you dying for? *An absolutely black vacuity suddenly rises before you with startling vividness. There was nothing to die for, if one wanted to die unrepentant. And on the contrary, everything positive that glistens in the Soviet Union acquires new dimensions in a man's mind.* This in the end disarmed me completely and led to bend my knees before the Party and the country. And when you ask yourself: very well, suppose you do not die; suppose by some miracle you remain alive, again what for? isolated from everybody, an enemy of the people, in an inhuman position, completely isolated from everything that constitutes the essence of it..... And at once the same reply arises. And at the same moments, Citizen Judges, everything personal, all the personal incrustation, all the rancour, pride, and a number of other things, fall away, disappear. *And, in addition, when the reverberations of the broad international struggle reach your ear, all this in its entirety does its work, and the result is the complete internal moral victory of the U. S. S. R. over its kneeling opponents...* I am about to finish. I am perhaps speaking for the last time in my life."

Well, if you can read even these two tiny extracts from the final speeches of

only two of the prisoners at one of the trials and still believe that is all a put up job, well, then I am afraid that you are not a very good judge of men.

Why They Became Traitors

But even if the authenticity of the confessions cannot be doubted, there remains the immense question of why these men committed their crimes. In order genuinely to understand that, you would have to read not only the verbatim reports of the trials, but the history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. And not every one has the opportunity to do this.

I find that after very careful study I can just realise it, in spite of very earnest study and in spite of certain experiences in the British Labour movement which help me to understand. I have never been able to understand, however, why members of the British labour movement have difficulty in believing that individual Labour leaders may sometimes betray their cause. Mr. J. R. MacDonald and Mr. Snowden both did that. *The difference between Britain and the Soviet Union in this matter is not that all our Labour leaders are incorruptible while some of the Russians go wrong; the difference is that when the Russian Labour leaders sell out, they are shot, and when the British Labour leaders sell out, they are put into the Cabinet.* Undoubtedly it is a big difference; indeed it is the difference between a Capitalist and a Socialist country. But it is not a difference of which I am proud.

I cannot here attempt to rewrite the history of the Communist party of the Soviet Union, and, I repeat, that without a full understanding of this history we cannot fully understand why the accused in the three trials committed

their crimes. Perhaps it is best in a brief treatment such as this to begin with the year 1928. It is true that this excludes the period (1914-1918) above all. During which Bukharin formed the theories of "Organised Capitalism" which he applied in action during the 1930's; it is true that it excludes the whole question of Bukharin's struggle with Lenin and the party over the Brest-Litovsk Treaty.

It was, however, from the year 1928 that both the theory and practice of the so-called "Right Opposition," under Bukharin's inspiration, which was to fuse with the Trotskyists, began to develop. Let us therefore take the development of this important trend of the conspiracy as an example of how the whole thing happened.

They Lost Faith

Ten years ago two things began to happen in the world. On the one hand the Socialist part of the world, the Soviet Union, entered into a period of rapid, but stormy, development. The workers and peasants led by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union took the offensive both in the cities and in the countryside. In the country it was a question of laying the foundations of a Socialist economic system; of ending individual peasant agriculture and building up a completely new system of collectivised agriculture. In the towns the "Great Offensive," as Maurice Hindus called it at the time, consisted in a colossal effort to make over the whole of the Soviet Union into a modernised industrial country.

We now know that, after encountering enormous difficulties and at the cost of small sacrifices, both these sides of the "Great Offensive" fought their way

through to success. Russian agriculture was collectivised; Russian industry was completely made over on a twentieth century basis. But many times during this process it seemed, not only to foreign observers, but to many of the less resolute Soviet leaders also, including, above all, those such as Bukharin, Rykov, and all the Trotskyists, who were already disgruntled by previous disputes with Lenin, Stalin and the central majority of the party, in which they had been worsted, that the "Great Offensive must fail, and indeed had failed. Both Bukharin and his friends on the Right and the Trotskyists had been from the beginning against the launching of the "Great Offensive." When therefore the offensive ran into severe, though foreseen, difficulties and struggles, they were ready to say that all was lost and that the only possible thing to do was to call not only a halt, but a retreat. *They abandoned the attempts to lay down the foundations of a working, Socialist Society within the Soviet borders (an attempt which Trotsky, above all, had from the beginning said was impossible.) And this abandonment involved them in working for a retreat to the only conceivable alternative, namely, some form of State Capitalist Regime.*

Bukharin puts all this in the course of his evidence. He recounts how he and his followers came to find themselves in bitter opposition to the Soviet Government. He is speaking of the period which began in 1928.

Deviation Grows into Treachery

"The Right counter-revolutionaries seemed at first to be a 'Deviation': they seemed, at a first glance, to be people who began with discontent in connection with collectivisation, in

connection with industrialization with the fact, as they claimed, that industrialisation was destroying production. This, at a first glance, seemed to be the chief thing. Then the Ryutin platform appeared. When all the state machine, when all the means, when all the best forces were flung into the industrialization of the country, into collectivization, we found ourselves, literally in twenty-four hours, on the other shore, we found ourselves, with the kulaks, with the counter-revolutionaries, we found ourselves with the capitalist remnants which still existed at the time in the sphere of trade. Hence it follows that the basic meaning, the judgment, from the subjective standpoint, is clear, we went through a very interesting process, an over-estimation of individual enterprise, a crawling over to its idealization, the idealization of the property-owner. Such was the evolution. Our program was the prosperous peasant farm of the individual, but in fact the kulak became an end in itself. We were ironical about the collective farms. We, the counter-revolutionary plotters, came at that time more and more to display the psychology that collective farms were music of the future. What was necessary was to develop rich property-owners. This was the tremendous change that took place in our standpoint and psychology. In 1917 it would never have occurred to any of the members of the Party, myself included, to pity Whiteguards who had been killed; yet in the period of the liquidation of the kulaks, in 1929-30, we pitied the expropriated kulaks, from so-called humanitarian motives. To whom would it have occurred in 1919 to blame the dislocation of our economic life on the Bolsheviks, and not on sabotage? To nobody. It

would have sounded as frank and open treason. Yet I myself in 1928 invented the formula about the military-feudal exploitation of the peasantry, that is, I put the blame for the costs of the class struggle not on the class which was hostile to the proletariat, but on the leaders of the proletariat itself. This was already a swing of 180 degrees. *This meant that ideological and political Platforms grew into counter-revolutionary platforms. Kulak farming and kulak interests actually became a point of program. The logic of the struggle led to the logic of ideas and to a change of our psychology, to the counter-revolutionizing of our aims.*" (page 380 of the report).

This passage seems to me likely to remain the classic account of how a deviation can grow into treachery.

Bukharin's Programme

Soon after this passage the President of the Court interrupted Bukharin and asked him not to lecture at this stage of the proceedings. He would have an opportunity to say everything he liked in his last plea, but here he was to give concrete evidence as to his actual treasonable activities. Bukharin asked the President whether he might not, however, enumerate the points of his program and the President replied in the affirmative. "Only more briefly, please." Bukharin goes on:

If my program stand were to be formulated practically, it would be, in the economic sphere, state capitalism, the prosperous muzhik individual, the curtailment of the collective farms, foreign concession, surrender of the monopoly of foreign trade, and, as a result—the restoration of capitalism in the country. (page 381 of the report.)

A Programme of Retreat

It is vitally important, in order that we should be able realise how it was that Bukharin, a leading and in many respects brilliant, Marxist could sponsor such a programme, to understand that this programme was the only possible alternative to the daring, arduous, and as Bukharin and Trotsky wrongly thought it, hopeless, attempt to build a genuine Socialist Community by means of the "Great Offensive." It was in this precise sense that it is true to say, as the indictment charges, that Bukharin and his colleagues intended to restore Capitalism in the Soviet Union. They did so, not because they had suddenly

come to think that Capitalism was a better social system, but because *they had come to despair ; because they had concluded that it was impossible to build Socialism.* They thought, and goodness knows only men of heroic resolution could have avoided the thought, that in the contemporary condition of Russia, and above all in the contemporary World situation, it was impossible to establish Socialism. Therefore they concluded it was necessary to retreat, at any rate a long way towards Capitalism ; for everyone, including Stalin himself, was perfectly agreed that you could not stand still in the position reached in 1928-29.

(To be Continued)

THOUSANDS CERTIFY AS THE
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MASANI ON THE WAR—PATH AGAIN

K. R. Dutt

This time it is the Soviet Trials. In No. 25 of 'Congress Socialist', Masani thunders against the Soviet Union, against the C. P. S. U. and against Stalin. It is not the intention of this article to go through all the aspects of the Soviet Trials. The past history of the leaders of this gigantic anti-Soviet conspiracy, as well as the general theoretical and practical aspects of the trials have been described in exhaustive detail in a previous article on the subject by the present writer (in No. 8 of *National Front*) and in the series of succeeding articles that have since appeared on the subject in the same journal and in the *New Age*. Here however an attempt will be made to examine in greater detail certain specific 'problems' raised by Masani's article.

The first thing readers should note, is the amazing manner in which *Masani* completely ignores the facts set out in previous articles about the Party history of these traitors. To him they are still "flowers" of the Bolshevik Party and of the Revolution—facts or no facts. In this connection Masani conveniently ignores the elementary and well-known fact that it is not only Bolsheviks who participated in the October Revolution. Left Social-Revolutionaries, Right Social-Revolutionaries and even Mensheviks—all making large mental reservations as was made clear at these trials—participated in the Revolution. To give some examples from the recent trial: Bessonov was a Social-Revolutionary,

and Chernov a member of the Menshevik Party, until 1920. Rosengoltz, Rakovsky and Krestinsky were openly associated with the platform of the Trotskyite Opposition even during Lenin's time. Then there are people like Levin and Pletnev who as bourgeois 'intellectuals' never accepted the Revolution and the Soviet State at all, even while in the 'service' of the latter. About Zinoviev, Kamanev, Bukharin, Rykov and Trotsky himself, enough has already been said. So when Masani suggests that a clique led by Stalin is liquidating all the "old Bolsheviks" and the "associates of Lenin," it is untruth. Of course all these people held high posts in the new State and in the Party at times. But surely the idea that during the Revolution and after its victory only staunch and consistent Bolsheviks could be given high posts in the political and the technical spheres, is fantastic nonsense. Apart from the special difficulties of the Russian Revolution and of the new Soviet State—a technically backward peasant country with a tremendous amount of illiteracy and ravaged by war and international intervention—such a proposition would be absurd of any Proletarian Revolution. Only people who have absolutely no faith in the working-class and the masses could think of such a thing. The only true guarantee of sound leadership in any sphere is of course the power and vigilance of the working masses and their democratic and intimate contact

with, and check upon, the leaders. This has been brilliantly vindicated in the case of the Soviet Union by the timely exposure and punishment of all these traitors, even though they held high posts in the State and Party mechanisms. The ultimate watch-dogs of the October Revolution and its fruits are the proletariat and the working peasantry of the Soviet Union themselves. Let this be clearly understood.

Masani's Witnesses

Who are the witnesses whom Masani brings forward in defence of his anti-Soviet thesis? Leon Blum, Eugene Lyons, Nictor Serge, Dr. Ciliga, Monsieur Gide and the like. Their mere words are quoted as 'Holy Writ,' as unchallengeable truth. The first thing that any sincere reader should ask at this point is: "Who are these people whom Comrade Masani so authoritatively cites? What is their record in the working-class and democratic movements? What is their general attitude towards the Soviet Union?" Unless these questions are properly examined, we cannot have any useful guidance in the matter at all. For, the reader should remember that there is in Europe today a host of 'authors' coming up and wielding their poison pen against the Soviet Union under the cloak of 'objectivity.' And quite naturally so too. Anyone who does not expect anti-Soviet propaganda in this sphere of 'literature' is either a fool or a knave. The bourgeois and fascist newspapers and bookshops of Europe and America are nowadays splashed with such 'sensational' literature. Unless the reader asks the questions suggested above, about the authors of such literature and satisfies himself on those points, he might as well take his infor-

mation straight from the Goebels press.

The people on whom Masani relies for his inspiration fall into two broad categories when we examine them. (1) Pillars of the Trotskyist International. When we say 'Trotskyist' here, we mean it in the full sense, both objectively and subjectively. (2) Leaders of the second International. And mingled and interwoven with these two broad groups, we have a third category of incorrigibly individualistic bourgeois and petty-bourgeois 'dilettantes of Socialism' who go to the Soviet Union expecting to find a Utopia there and when they see real life instead rave about 'tyranny' disillusionment.' Such people are typical products of the wretched hot-house of Capitalism and generally know as little of real life under Capitalism as they can stomach under Socialism. Let us examine some of these 'witnesses' Masani brings forward on behalf of 'truth'.

Masani cites Dr. Ciliga as evidence for his allegations of "G. P. U. torture." Who is this Dr. Ciliga? Here are some facts as given by a working-class leader from the Balkans: "In 1919 Ciliga insinuated himself into the Yugoslavian C. P....In 1921 Ciliga participated in the uprising of Croation and Slovanic peasants in Poland, Italy and even appeared to be one of the leaders of this revolt. The revolt was drowned in blood. Ciliga "emigrated" to Yugoslavia. As a "dangerous communist" Ciliga was deported by the Yugoslavian authorities to Italy. It was generally presumed that the Italian fascists would treat him in the most brutal manner as the former "leader of the peasant revolt of 1921." But nothing of the kind happened. Some little time later the Yugoslavian workers learnt to

their great surprise that the Italian fascists had not injured Ciliga and after a short "imprisonment" provided him with an Italian passport for travelling abroad. In 1926 by posing as a political emigrant Ciliga succeeded in going to the Soviet Union and becoming a member of the C. P. S. U. There he began to organise his Trotskyist groups and to carry on factional and disruptive work among the Yugoslavian emigrants. He was expelled from the C. P. S. U. in 1929 and later arrested owing to his counter-revolutionary activities and connection with the illegal Trotskyist apparatus. He obtained a passport in 1936 from the Italian Consulate in Moscow and went abroad. Since then with the Italian passport in his pocket he has visited all countries in Europe freely, and as a representative of the O.V.R.A. (Italian political Secret Service) and the Gestapo, has carried on everywhere like any ordinary fascist agent, the basest anti-Soviet and anti-Comintern propaganda. Ciliga belongs to the leadership of the so-called Paris Trotskyist Centre. He himself asserts in his circles that he enjoys the special confidence of Trotsky. In the Paris Centre, he directed the propaganda in the Balkan States and regards himself as the leader of the Yugoslavin Trotskyists.....At the end of summer 1937, Ciliga travelled to Yugoslavia on a 'special mission' with Trotsky's son, Sedov.....It is a well-known fact that Ciliga agreed in Belgrade to the collaboration of the Trotskyist groups with the so-called 'Anti-Comintern Committee' which has its headquarters in Berlin and whose chief representative in Yugoslavia is again Neuhasen. In Neuhasen's rooms, in the so-called 'German Tourist Bureau' which, in reality, is the Centre of the joint Nazi disruptive

work in Yugoslavia, the Anti-Comintern Committee conducts its meetings." And so on goes the story.

A similar tale could be told of the others whom Masani cites. Victor Serge, in his writings, literally 'out-Trotsky's' Trotsky himself in his mad and frenzied ravings against everything connected with the Soviet Union, against the C. P. S. U. and against Stalin. Anybody who knows a bit about his writings will have no difficulty at all in assessing his value as an 'impartial' witness on the Soviet Union. As to Monsieur Gide, here is his opinion about the Soviet Union: "The regime overwhelmed as it was at first by the lowest dregs and their brutality allowed art, culture and sensibility to be trampled on. It is the modern form of the barbarian invasions." And elsewhere M. Gide quotes with approval these words of somebody else: "He (Trotsky—K. R. D.) is far more an enemy of fascism than is Stalin himself and it is as a revolutionary and anti-fascist that he denounces Stalin's compromises." Even Professor Laski, whose well-worn doctrines of 'classical Liberalism' are quoted by the 'Marxist' Masani against the Soviet State, some time back in a curt review of M. Gide's latest book on the Soviet Union (in the 'Manchester Guardian', I think), completely rejected M. Gide's claim to 'objectivity' on the subject. And after citing such people, Masani protests with an innocent air that he is a sincere friend of the Soviet Union and of its tremendous cultural and economic achievements! Some time back, the American revolutionary writer Mike Gold wrote in the American 'Daily Worker': "About a year ago, the Hearst press presented the dirty fairy-stories typical enough of a so-called 'Socialist

who had returned from the Soviet Union bitterly 'disillusioned' with it all and glad to be back safe in the kindly arms of Hearst and Morgan. I forgot this particular one's name; does it matter, call him Fred Beal or Isaac Don Levine or Eugene Lyons or what you will, even rat; the breed is all alike except for differences in refinement and grammar." The American and the European workers know these people very well; and it is high time our Indian Socialists recognise them too. Let us have the full truth about these people. If Masani is afraid of the truth, we are not.

A Crucial Test

People who have been expelled from the Communist Parties and people who stand openly at the head of the Trotskyist International are brought in by the side-door—veritable 'Cagoulards'—to testify for 'truth' about the Soviet Union and the C. P. S. U. Why doesn't Masani in his search for truth accord at least the same degree of attention to the testimony of the Webbs, of Leon Feuchtwanger, of D. N. Pritt, of Dudley Collard and a host of other honest Socialists and democrats who have by no means taken an uncritical attitude towards the Soviet Union? *Indeed none of them is a Communist; they all make plenty of criticisms, some recognised as justified and the others arising naturally out of their lack of understanding of Revolutionary Marxism. But this is the crucial test: all these people by their actual record of work in the democratic and the working-class movements have proved their bona-fides and their sincerity.*

Not only Trotskyists are brought in to give 'object evidence', but the 'Marxist' Masani likewise presses into

service the leaders of the Second International too. Presumably any stick is good enough for Masani to beat the Soviet Union with. People who are opposed tooth and nail to all the principles of Marxism and of Revolutionary Socialism; people who, in the name of class-collaboration, have again and again betrayed the interests of the working class; people who, even without waiting for the completed record of the actual evidence presented at the trials telegraphed their 'protest' to Moscow during the course of the trials; people who are using this pretext in aid of their reactionary attempts to hold back working class unity and trade union unity, and even unity in action to save Spain and China; these are the people whom Masani presents to us melodramatically as 'shocked martyrs' whom the Soviet Union places in a 'cruel dilemma. They had taken their stand long before the Soviet trials. Look at their record of activity in the working-class movement both before and after the War. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

"G. P. U. Torture"—a myth.

Masani makes certain allegations of 'G. P. U. torture' and quotes the usual crowd, Dr. Ciliga, Victor Serge & Co. on this point. Such charges are fully refuted by the Webbs in their monumental work "Soviet Communism". They examine there a variety of sources including the usual 'sensational' literature on the subject, go carefully into the question of the objectivity of sources and come to the emphatic conclusion that all such allegations about G. P. U. 'torture' are absolute fabrications. A book has recently been published in England ('G. P. U. JUSTICE', by

Maurice Edelman-Allen & Unwin) where a German engineer, a non-Communist, Peter Kleist, who was arrested in the Soviet Union and detained by the G. P. U. for some months gives a detailed description of his experiences under G. P. U. procedure. This book gives the final quietus to all this talk of G.P.U. 'torture'. Even without all this, nobody who has read the verbatim Reports of the trials and observed the stubborn resistance which the traitors still offered in Court to the cross-examination in a series of public trials attended by a host of international diplomats and bourgeois journalists all agog for some bit of 'sensation' can believe seriously such allegations of 'torture'. Add to this the personal testimonies of D. N. Pritt, of Leon Feuchtwanger, of Harold Denny of the "New York Times" and other unprejudiced observers.

Masani pompously declares that history will judge the Soviet Trials. We agree. History will judge these trials as history has already judged the like aspects born of severe class struggle associated with the English Revolutions of the 17th and 18th Centuries, with the French Revolution, the Irish anti-Imperialist Revolution and the other revolutions of past history. All these Revolutions involved a bitter, violent and long-drawn-out struggle between the forces of revolution and those of counter-revolution lasting through years. The reader should compare the historical facts of these past Revolutions with the history of the Russian Revolution and of the Soviet State. He should remember that in the case of the Soviet Union, a technically backward peasant country of several nationalities, Proletarian

Revolution followed hard on the heels of the Bourgeois Revolution. He should remember the immeasurably more severe class-struggle associated with a proletarian revolution as compared with a bourgeois revolution. As Lenin pointed out long ago, a bourgeois revolution is usually completed with the seizure of power, whereas for the proletarian revolution the seizure of power is only its *beginning*, while power is used as a lever for breaking up the entire old state machine and for the transformation of the old economy and for the organisation of the new one. And he should finally remember the world environment of Fascism and Imperialism. Yes; history will judge the Soviet Revolution; only, we would request Comrade Masani to read a little more of history before precipitously invoking its aid.

Who Suppresses the truth?

Masani has another line of attack. He declares that after Lenin's death Stalin has killed all Party democracy. The first thing to note in this connection is that this is precisely the same charge that used to be levelled against Lenin by his opponents, more particularly by Trotsky and his associates. Trotsky has hurled against Lenin the epithets of 'dictator', 'tyrant' etc., and once called him a 'professional exploiter of every backward feature in the Russian labour movement'. And now the scene has changed and Masani raises this bogey against Stalin in the name of Lenin! Here too let Masani produce the facts. Let him point out a single occasion during all the recent years of stormy controversy in the C. P. S. U. over the questions of industrialisation, of collectivisation, of the Five Year Plans etc.

when the 'opposition' was not given the fullest right to expound their point of view inside the party and to try to convince the majority of its correctness. And if After their utter inability to this, they refused to obey the majority decision, the party had quite rightly to take steps against them. And even here it is a matter of record that the Party showed the utmost leniency towards them. People who were expelled were again taken back only to follow the same path once again as in the case of Bukharin. "How many readers realise when they read the Trotskyist tales of suppression within the C. P. S. U. the extent to which Trotsky had his full say, spoke, wrote, addressed Congresses, made factions, manoeuvred in unprincipled grouping, this day with one group, the next with its antagonist, the whole time endured as a member until taking opposition into street and factory at last led to his expulsion at a Congress addressed by him consisting of 1669 delegates and following a campaign in which his theses received 6,000 votes as against 725,000 for those of the Central Committee?.. in the words of Ivor Montagu.

Much the same story could be repeated of Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin, Piatakov, in fact all the leaders of this dirty gang. No; it is not Stalin who is doing any suppressing. It is Masani who is suppressing—the truth.

No Sitting on the Fence

"Historically the Moscow trials may be viewed either as an important episode in the history of the Soviet State since 1917 or a chapter in the history of fascist aggression." So declares a writer on the recent Soviet Trial in the New York "Pacific Affairs" on June, 1938. And he goes on: "In this respect it is helpful to remember and to corroborate from contemporary evidence that it was not individuals, least of all the individuals on trial, who made the Russian Revolution.....It was the masses who made the revolution. It is the masses who have developed and saved the Soviet Union." Between the forces of revolution and those of counter-revolution, there can be no sitting on the fence. The 'Third way' suggested by some of our friends, of the C. S. P. is sheer hypocrisy.

(Continued From Page 126)

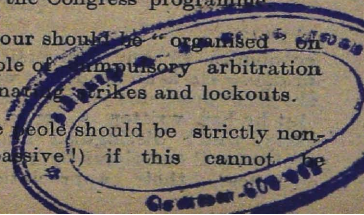
The choice which Mahatma Gandhi has placed before Congressmen is no choice at all. It is a threat. Either you allow me to purge you out or I shall leave the Congress with my true followers. In any case the Congress will be split unless you ALL decide to follow the path of compromise and conciliation which is the essence of my strategy of runing the ministries. This is what Gandhijee's threat amounts to. The political meaning of this strategy may

be summed up thus:—(i) only such agrarian reforms should be carried out as can be achieved to which Zamindars and moneylenders would agree to. There is no need for mass mobilisation in support of the Congress programme.

(ii) Labour should be "organised" on the principle of compulsory arbitration thus eliminating strikes and lockouts.

(iii) The people should be strictly non-violent (passive!) if this cannot be

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achieved voluntarily, imperialist machinery of repression shall have to be used to preserve "non-violent" atmosphere.

(iv) Congress organisations provincial as well as all-India, should not participate in the states peoples struggle, so that individual Congress leaders can play the role of the "third party" in bringing about a conciliation between the princes and the people.

The Choice—not Between Violence and non-violence

The real choice before the Congress at this stage is not between violence and non-violence at all. It is between compromise and struggle. The concrete political implication of the path of compromise which Gandhijee wants us to follow are summed up in the four points given above. The point is whether we accept them or reject them. They must be rejected because they are a violation of the Congress programme itself. The political line emerging out of these points will necessarily lead to a compromise on the issue of the Federation. It will lead to the disruption of the growing class organisation of the workers and peasants it will emasculate the Congress and to the destruction of the United National Front itself.

The A.I.C.C. must reject this line

It must give its unequivocal support to the States peoples struggle now going on in the different states., condemn the atrocities of the state authorities and

give a call for an All-India States Peoples Day to demonstrate the solidarity and the indivisibility of the Indian people and to support the demand of the States peoples demand for responsible government and civil liberties.

It must instruct the Working Committee and the Congress ministries to work out a plan to implement the agrarian programme of Faizpur *within specified time.*

It must reject the principle of compulsory arbitration which is the basis of the Bombay Labour Bill and instruct the ministries to implement the labour programme guaranteeing the right of strike and organisation and recognition of trade union to industrial workers.

It must categorically condemn the use of violence and the use of the repressive machinery by the congress ministries against the people.

It must immediately give the call for an All-India anti-federation rally to initiate the campaign for mass agitation against the Federal scheme. The main slogans for this rally should be.

NO COMPROMISE WITH IMPERIALISM.

DOWN WITH THE FEDERATION.

DOWN WITH THE WAR BILL.

LONG LIVE THE STATES PEOPLES' STRUGGLE.

UP WITH THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY.

BOOK REVIEW

MAURCE DOBB, Political Economy and Capitalism (London, Routledge 10/6)

Mr. Maurice Dobb is a lecturer in economics in the University of Cambridge. He is an academic economist in the most academic of economic schools. But he has written a series of critical essays which distinguish him from his professional associates by reason of their acuteness, their appreciation of the

methods and traditions of Political Economy, their fresh inspiration and their fine English style.

Probably no other field of knowledge reflects so well as economics the decay of capitalist society. 120 years ago when David Ricardo published his volume, *On the Principles of Political Economy*, it

was assumed that political economy was a science would eventually describe the behaviour and development of society with the same accuracy as a physicist describes the behaviour of levers, molecules, atoms and forces. To-day we have before us the spectacle of physics, a great and respected science capable of describing a certain phase of the universe with a considerable degree of accuracy, while political economy (now called economics) is a chaos of voices among which there is little or no agreement. The reason for this is fairly obvious. Political Economy concerns itself with social and economic relationships. So long as political economy was a weapon of the industrial bourgeoisie for criticizing and attacking feudalism and mercantilist capitalism, it could afford to tell the truth. Once the industrial capitalists triumphed, a science, which in the hands of Adam Smith and Ricardo had demonstrated that all value is created by labour, was obviously a danger. It made the capitalist feel uncomfortable in his conscience and it provided the worker with a criticism of society. It was obviously useless and positively dangerous. Some more comfortable philosophy than that of Adam Smith and Ricardo had to be found.

Influence of class Struggle on Economics.

The effect of class interest on this department of bourgeois thinking is no prejudice of wicked Marxists but something revealed by bourgeois struggle. James Mill, the great bourgeois thinker and apologist, was able to tell the unvarnished truth in these terms: "What is the difference in the case of the man who operates by means of labourers receiving wages instead of owning slaves?.....He is equally owner of the labour with the manufacturer who operates the slave. The only difference is the mode of purchasing. The owner of slaves purchases at once the whole of the labour which the man can ever perform: he who pays wages purchases only so much of a man's labour as he can perform in a day, or any other stipulated time. Being equally, however, the owner of the labour so purchased, as the owner of the slave is of the slave, the product which is the

result of this labour, combined with his capital is equally his own." Mill and Ricardo had not been dead twenty years before Carey, a leading bourgeois economist of the generation when Chartism was threatening the English ruling class, denounced the greatest figure in political economy before Marx in these terms:....."the system of Ricardo is a system of discord...it creates hostility between classes.....his book is a manual for demagogues who seek to gain power by the distribution of the soil, by war and by pillage." Here it is plainly stated that political economy is not good if it describes discord. Bourgeois economics became a species of shallow apologetics.

In his first four essays Mr. Dobb examines the problems which confronted political economists during this period when class forces were changing economics from a science into a system of scholasticism. He critically analyses the contributions of Adam Smith, Ricardo and Marx. Smith and Ricardo had developed the concept that a thing is valuable in proportion to the human labour expended on its creation. On the basis of this analysis they worked out part of the mechanics of exchange, and Ricardo analysed the sources of economic rent, Marx's contribution to political economy consisted in his analysis of capital and profits together with laws of the development of the capitalist form of society. Marx demonstrated that capital is a product of labour and that profits pass to the capitalist only because his classes possess the political power to prevent the labourer—whether he be coolie or skilled engineer—from appropriating the full amount of the value he creates. This is the basic feature of capitalist economy, and it is the basis of class divisions. Mr. Dobb shows that it was the analysis of capital and profit in terms of this proposition, hitherto accepted by English economists of the calibre of Smith and Ricardo, that all value is created by labour, which divided scientific political economists from bourgeois, apologetic economists.

Bourgeois Economists cannot Face Reality

The modern bourgeois economist refuses to discuss political questions because he

regards economics as something divorced from politics. The politics have been taken out of political economy, and it has become a "science" which, in Mr. Dobb's phrase, "creates for us a realm where disembodied minds hold communion with etherealized objects of choice, and then, unmindful of the distance between the abstract world and reality, seek to represent the relations which it finds in this realm as governing the relations which hold in actual economic society...." It has even become fashionable to deny that such traditionally important questions as value, have any significance in economics. The bourgeois economist cannot face reality. If he faced it as Smith, Ricardo, James Mill and Marx faced it, he would see the struggle of one class against another. He would understand the crudities of General Franco or General Dyer, and he might even grasp the subtleties of a Lothian or a Halifax. Always there is the struggle, and the struggle is to take from the worker as much of the produce of his labour as possible. It is only by a willingness to retrace their steps that political economists can save political economy from madness: this is Mr. Dobb's thesis.

Crisis and Imperialism

Several thousand books are written on economics every year. It is a relief to find one in which the economic phenomenon known as imperialism is discussed. Mr. Dobb treats the subjects of crisis and imperialism as separate topics, but he demonstrates how closely capitalist crisis is linked with imperialism. Crisis are generated by a declining rate of profit (among other things) and the capitalist class can only resolve this contradiction of falling class revenues by intensifying the exploitation of the workers. The form of intensification differs with political circumstance. In countries where there is an old and well organised proletariat the attack is an oblique one consisting in devaluation of the money and the introduction of "rationalization". The principal solution is, however, imperialism. This con-

sists of drawing into the orbit of capitalist producer on the disorganized peasants and craftsmen of Asia and Africa. The basis of colonial exploitation is the political oppression of the workers and to a lesser extent of the industrial bourgeoisie. Imperialist profits are high because in colonial areas the worker is most bitterly exploited and most rigidly excluded from any consideration as a human being. His business is to work hard and die quietly. The intelligent English worker sees that reformism can yield him little. Only a fool can imagine that he can make a career for himself by foisting reformism on the Indian worker. Reformism is not a possible tactic for capitalism in India.

An Indispensable Book

Several years ago J. M. Keynes' work on the *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* was hailed as a fundamental re-orientation of English economic thinking. Mr. Dobb's book enables us to see Keynes in a proper perspective. In spite of all his bluster about Marx, Malthus and what not, Keynes posed no problem which the early economists did not examine and answer better than he. If any book can claim to give a fresh lead to economists and all those interested in economics (and that means all of us whether we admit it or not) it is Mr. Dobb's eight essays. His fine critical appreciation of the methodology and problems of economics will be most admired by the trained economist, but his book is indispensable to any one struggling for the first time with Smith, Ricardo, Mill, Marx, Lenin or Keynes. It should be available wherever economics is studied in India, for it is a wholesome, critical antidote to the tons of junk which torture the hours of any Indian student of bourgeois apologetics. By reason of its excellent English style and its searching content it can transform the dull abstractions of modern economics into a living science which gives some meaning to the antics of Lothian, Lintlithgow, Chamberlain, Hitler Mussolini.—X. Y. Z.

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