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THE NEW AGE.

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## The New Age

VOL. II

OCTOBER 1935

NO. 5

#### GROWTH OF UTOPIAN SOCIALISM

By

M. R. Raju, BA., L.L.B.

Socialism is not an invention of some ingenious brain. Nor is it a discovery by some adventurer. It is an outcome of the struggle between two historically developed classes—the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. This should be clear in one's mind before one proceeds further into the study of its problems and phases of development.

Where was Humanity ceased in the beginning? Certainly it was in communism, which is generally known to-day as primitive communism. In the beginning human beings owned everything in common. To some it may be like a dream-land but it is a hard fact, which is prevalent even to-day in some of the primitive tribes in Central Africa and Asia. When the savages ceased to lead a nomadic life. they settled down at some place and built for themselves houses. But these houses were not private property but common ones. The long size and structure of their houses are very interesting to note. In Polynesia the houses used to be 110 feet long with entrances situated at both extremities. Each of the houses used to give shelter to more than a hundred people. Such houses in Iroquois existed till the beginning of

the last century. In those communal, houses food used to be prepared for all in common. The author of 'Incidents' of travel in Yucatan' says that he saw a procession of women and children coming with a quantity of hot broth in their earthen bowls from the same road and disappearing among their houses. He found their practice among Malaya Indians too. In the Caroline Isles, says Paul Lafargue, an indigene sets out on journey without provisions and when he feels hungry, without any formalities he enters a lodge and fills his stomach from the tub containing popoi (a preparative of fruits.) and departs without thanking anybody. "He has but experienced a night" says Paul Lafargue. This kind of communal life was prevalent among the Bushmen of Central Africa also.

After the decay of primitive communism and after passing through the systems of slavery and feudalism (though they are existing in some parts of the World like India eyen to-day). Humanity is passing now, through the capitalistic system. We can trace the beginnings of the modern scientific socialist thought in Karl Marx, but some of the socialistic ideas, though unscien-

1

tific can be traced to utopian socialist thinkers.

At first socialism was unconscious of its process. The real origin of its process was at the time of the Greek philosopher Plato (1427-347 B.C). Plato in his Ideal State was against private property and in his dialogue with Socrates declared, "wealth produces luxury and idleness and innovation, and, poverty leads to meanness, bad workmanship and innovation." We find such tendencies again in the later Roman Empire. Many Roman writers like Virgil and Seneca, who lived between 3 B.C. and 65 A.D. conceived of a State without private property. Virgil wrote:-

> "No fences parted fields, nor marks, nor bounds Divided acres of litigious grounds But all was common."

In A.D. 1000 there was a peasant revolt in Normandy. From then to Black Death in the fourteenth century we don't find any clear development. Black Death arose in South Russia and came by way of Crimea and by a Genoese ship to Genoa and West Europe. It passed by Armenia to Asia Minor, Egypt and North Africa. It reached England in 1348 and every student of History knows what havoc it caused. It was only from the distresses caused by Black Death that Peasant Revolts of the fourteenth Century broke out. The cry of the poor found terrible utterances in John Ball, a follower of Wycliff. He cried out, "My good people, things will never grow well in England so long as goods be not in common and so long as there be villains and gentlemen. By what right are they whom we call lords are greater folk than we? On what grounds have they deserved it? Why do they hold us in serfage? If all came of the same father and mother of Adam and Eve how can they say or prove that they are better than we, if it not that they make us gain for them

by our toil, what they spend in their pride? They are clothed in velvet and warm in their furs while we are covered with rags. They have wine and bread and spices while we get rye bread, offal, straw and water. They have leisure and fine hours; we have the pain and the labour, the rain and the wind in fields. And vet it is of us and of our toil these men hold their state." Then came the Kentish rebellion in 1449 led by Joh Cade who declared that all things shall be common. In Germany both economic and religious causes joined together in their Annaleist outbreak from 1521 to 1535.

From 1478 and 1535 lived the first Utopian writer, Sir Thomas More who in his 'Utopia' declared that there was no private property in his ideal He gave also a day of 6 island. hours' work for all in his ideal state. Another utopian writer Bacon lived between 1511-1622 who advocated in his 'New Atlantis' communism in knowledge. Johan Valentine Andreaca a German traveller and Christianopolis of Italy and two more Utopians lived in the same period and their motto was "To be wise and to work are not incompatible if there is moderation." Campanella who lived between 1568 and 1639, another famous Utopian socialist writer who in his book "The city of the Sun" gave a vivid picture of his city where citizens "have all they receive from the community and the magistrates take care that none receives more than he deserves. Yet nothing necessary is denied to anyone." Between 1611 and 1677 James Hanington another Utopian writer in his 'Oceana' preached the gospel of Republicanism and following many came Peter Chamberlain who said "Let no one say that men were poor because they were unworthy."

Then with the dawn of French revolution or in the later half of the eighteenth century appeared a thread of famous French Utopians. The first was Babeuf, born in 1764 and sent to guillotine in 1797. Once he declared his philosophy of equality in the following words. "The aim of society is the happiness of all and happiness consists in equality." Etine Calect wrote 'the voyage of Icaria' while he was an exile in England in which he gave his ideal of 7 hours work a day and State ownership of large industries. Sain-Simon who was born a richman in 1760 and died as a poor man in 1825, said: "The golden age of Humanity is not behind us.....our children will one day behold it. "Another time he said" The idler is a parasite whether he is a rich idler or a poor beggar and cannot be tolerated for he eats what others have produced and is thus no better than a thief." Obviously he is wrong in his statement, because a worker who cannot get work (which is not uncommon in modern world) must go on begging otherwise he has to starve himself to death. Another famous French utopian writer was Fourier who lived from 1772 to 1837. He in his theory of universal unity preached the law of attraction. He divided labour into three kinds and distributed rewards. His teachings afterwards found following in America. Engels said of him: "As Kant introduced into natural science the idea of ultimate destruction of the earth, Fourier introduced into historical science that of ultimate destruction of human race." From 1813 to 1882 there was Louis Blanc on the utopian stage. He conceived of social workshop established by the state and gradual abolition of private shops. He said "If you are twice as strong as your neighbour it is a proof that nature has destined you to bear a double burden. Weakness is a creditor of strength; ignorance of learning. The more a man can the more he ought." Louis Blanc for the first time put the present communist formula in a systematic form "From each according to his ability; to each according to his needs."

Proudhon who lived between 1809 and 1865, urged for a national bank and for the first time aimed at an Anarchio state.

Now, let us take a glance at England where Indian money, robbed of the poor peasant, was going upwards as if to Heaven in clouds of smoke from the factory chimneys where Mr. Watt and his compeers were experimenting their new inventions. Perhaps, it will not be out of place here for me to say that British socialism owes its rapid birth to the Indian peasant; for it was because of his money that Mr. Watt and others could bring out successful industrial researches and because of the Industrial revolution thinkers like Robert Owen appeared to solve Industrial problems with their weapon of socialism. On this ground I say that the Indian peasant was the father British socialism. Let me name some persons who prepared the stage for Owen before his appearance. Robert Wallace and Edmund Burke pointed out the evils of private property. Came after them, Archbishop Paley, who compared society with a group of pigeons who eat away all the corn and leave some chaff and refuge to the Then came after him, Thomas Spence who lived between 1750 and 1814. He attacked private property very severely. The famous poets like Coleridge, Southey, W. Wordsworth were always maintaining an attitude of kindness towards the weak and all of them ran into poetry when French revolution broke out. The French revolution made Shelly speak out to people in the following way :-

"The seed ye sew, another reaps
The wealth ye find another keeps
The robes ye wave, another wares

The arms ye forge another bears," Then came the hero of British socialism. Robert Owen who lived between 1771-1840 who with a philanthropist's soul experimented many methods in his mills of New-Lanark. He wanted

to bring good to labour with the goodwill of capitalists. He attacked religion to which he attributed the vice of preventing mankind to know what happiness really is.

Now let us see how socialism developed in America. In America Horace Greely tried to extend the Fouriestic principles. Once he said, "I understand by slavery that conditions in which one human being exists mainly as a convenience for other human being." On April 4, 1844 a National convention was formed to propagate this idea with George Ripley, Greely, Albert Brisbane and a host of others as members. By starting colonies they tried many experiments and one of them was "Brook Farm experiment" which lately failed.

Many of the Utopian writers can be called as philanthropists. They tried to bring about their ideals with the help of capitalists whom they tried to

influence by experiments which of course were bound to fail. The Utopian socialism was not scientific. To them all previous history was a heap of irrationality and violence. But Marxism or scientific socialism sees in it a process of evolution of humanity and tries to discover laws therefrom. In a haphazard way the Utopian socialists conceived some ideas about socialism in their brains and tried to bring about revolutions, mostly peacefully. In so doing they forgot the fundamental historical fact that revolutions are to be sought not in men's brains but, as Engels said, "in changes in the modes of production and exchange." Moreover, only a few of them cousidered religion seriously. But certainly the Utopian socialism had its part in contributing to the thought of socialism. The help of the thought provided by the Utopian socialists, to Marx in evolving scientific socialism should not be gainsaid.

# ASK FOR OUR FAMOUS TILAK ASAFOETIDA

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SOLD EVERYWHERE.

#### OUR GOLDEN AGE

I had a talk last week a with a very shrewd old man, who has spent his entire adult life chasing typographical errors in first editions.

We discussed democracy, or rather I did, for he disclaimed any interest in the subject.

He is a man with a simple mind and a keen eye; and he left me unconvinced. I could not make him understand that we are living in an antidemocratic world. He dismissed arguments as nonsense.

This is briefly what he said.

Politics as politics does not interest me. I am quite ignorant of what has happened politically during the last quarter of a century.

First editions are my business. have developed an instinct for spotting errors, and because I have read a lot of modern biography, I can spot your error.

This is not an anti-democratic age. As a matter of fact we are now living in the golden age of democracy. And I can prove it.

When I was a boy, kings and aristocracies were the cocks of the walk. Now it is different. The world has become thoroughly democratic.

Practically half the world is ruled by men who belong to the working class. Mussolini was an elementary school teacher: Hitler was a house painter; Mustapha Kemal was the son of a man who was little more than a wood pedlar; Stalin was the son of a cobbler; and the late Pilsudski was a workink-class revolutionary after your own heart.

The old man threw out this information in a very matter of fact and decisive tone of voice. He cut my from social history-we have regarded

argument short with a wave of his hand.

"You can't fool me," he said. "a remember the time when the idea of I working-man in the Government was enough to make a cat laugh.

"Now they are all working-men-Ramsay MacDonald, Jim Thomas-oh the whole lot of them. Why, if some of the present rulers of the world had called on the political bosses when I was a boy they would have been kicked out of the grounds, or at best sent round to the servants' quarters for a glass of ale.

"They run the world now. That's why I say that this is the golden age of democracy. If these fellows are not democrats, who are?

"And they have more power than any kings or aristocracies.'

I let my old friend go, triumphant. Having settled the greatest of all problems to his own satisfaction, he trotted off home in the light of a declining sun, with a pile of books under his

He had passed what appears to be a remarkable paradox.

But for those who, unlike the old gentleman, have been actively through the political developments which have so far culminated in reactionary dictatorships, there is no paradox at

There is just the superficial contradiction that the children of the masses become tyrants of the masses.

The history of individuals and society is full of this contradiction. Note how over-fond parents are tyrannised by their offspring.

And-to choose only one example

it almost as a matter of course that the little Corsican corporal as testamentary executor of the great French Revolution, which had cut off the head of a Bourbon king, finally set himself on an emperor's throne.

Look at the contemporary political scene.

In a "democratic" manner the dictators were raised to power; but in a dictatorial manner they then threw out the democrats and stamped on democracy.

Thus in one respect the bourgeois Fascist dictatorships pay a compliment to their working classes by choosing political puppets therefrom.

Apart from the dictatorship of Mustapha Kamel, which is historically different from the others, every reactionary seizure of power has been effected under the flag of a caponised Socialism.

The masters of economic life were once able to govern politically through men of their own class. Until economic developments sharpened the class conflict, they treated the idea of working men participating in government with amused contempt.

Indeed, they governed in such a way as to deny not only the rights, but also to prevent workers exercising the rights to organise any opposition to their rule, both industrially and politically.

But a sharpening of the class conflict made them revise their ideas.

Briefly, they were forced to compromise in the interests of their own economic system. Ultimately, and more or less reluctantly, they conceded the franchise and the right to organise trade unions.

And when, as a result of these concessions, the pressure of the industrial and political organisations of labour became strong enough to challenge their mastery, the rulers of life—again in the interests of their own economic system—assumed—an attitude of

recognition and conciliation towards labour.

And many labour leaders, looking on the gracious social world of the bourgeoisie and finding it good to live there, proved excellent missionaries of the sublime and seductive gospel of democracy.

So we got the first act in the tragedy of working-class emasculation—Socialism by means of the gradual permeation of the bourgeois State.

Share and share alike, instead of the old unregenerate doctrine of grab yours and run.

Sharing in the control and management of the factories—industrial cooperation. Sharing in the government of the State—political co-operation.

A new world dawned. Instead of the impolite class struggle against the State there emerged the gentlemanly struggle for participation in the State.

But of course, there is an end to all good things; and the end of sweet illusions is disconcertingly swift.

When the end came, "democratic" leaders gave some wonderful imitations of the original elastic-skinned man. They assumed the convenient qualities of fluid, which can be poured into, and fit perfectly, vessels of any shape.

They were up to date, very much alive, very much on the spot, don't you know. As smart as sharks that swim after ships for the trifles of offal flung overboard.

The general crisis of capitalism, which marked the end of the demoeratic swindle, found them ready and willing to participate in other forms of co-operation, to act as missionaries of a different gospel.

For this crisis brought about a return of the grab-yours-and-run school of thought; and since all the loot was piled up on one side—i.e.. on the masters' side—some of the "democratic" leaders found themselves gravitating irresistibly thence.

And so it came about that these same leaders stood on their heads in order to prove that their political intelligence and morality were always in their feet—which indeed they were.

For it is by the direction of a man's feet, and not by his professions, that you discover just what kind of a fellow he is.

And the "democratic" leaders stood, in the brutal searchlight of the crisis, exposed in the short and incomplete shirts supplied to them by their political and industrial masters.

Instead of concessions—cuts; instead of the freedom of industrial action—Acts refusing the right to strike; instead of free opinion—legally enforced dumbness or prison cells which stifled free speech.

And finally Fascist dictatorships in one State after another.

These dictatorships succeeded so rapidly just because the opposition was betrayed by "democratic" leaders. Where some opposition asserted itself within the working-class movement, the leadership of the movement helped to crush it by bureaucratic methods.

Thus democracy, so long held up as the means of dislodging the masters of life from their reactionary positions, is turned into a means of consolidating their rule.

The demand which labour leaders made for more power was, when supplied, transformed into a demand that power should be used to prevent action, to frustrate the fighting strength of the workers.

So much for the golden age of democracy. Now for the present and future.

A working-class movement must be active. It must be an organisation in which every member consciously works for the conquest of the State.

And this requirement presupposes the conviction that the bourgeois custodians of the State will not voluntarily evacuate their political and economic power, even under the demand of parliamentary majority.

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## WOMEN IN SOVIET

The Russian woman has been, in common with other features of Russia, so grossly misrepresented by interested propagandists that it is necessary to present here the result of a study of recent impressions of distinguished visitors to the U.S.S.R.

The mode of living of women in Soviet Russia has been designed on the principle that Socialism is impossible until the woman has absolutely equal rights with men and until she is no longer kept a slave to her household and her family, as is generally the case in our unfortunate country. Recognising the need for perfect equality to realise the best from Socialism, ways and means were designed to enable women to become equals with men, legally, socially and economically.

To attain economic equality a woman must be entitled to go to any profession, so long as she possessed the qualifications for it. Not a single profession, therefore, that is open to men in Soviet Russia is closed to women. All offices are held by women in all kinds of institutions. Thousands of women who were previously engaged in professional work as doctors, scientists, teachers or writers in music, dancing or the stage have "found" their feet and continued their careers under the new regime most cheerfully. There is a steadily increasing number of women sailors, engineers and the like, working freely, with no stigma attached to it, along with men. A large majority of the teachers and nearly half of the younger doctors are said to be women.

Women also hold responsible posts as Directors and Managers, and there are even women Ministers of State. Sidney Webb has observed that Mme. A. G. V.

Kollontai, after holding important offices for years, was for sometime ambassador at Mexico and is now Minister Plenipotentiary at Stockholm.

There is equality between sexes in wage-payment, thus destroyiny the practice, prevalent in almost all parts of the world outside, the U.S.S.R. of employing woman as a form of cheaper labour compared to men.

In other countries large numbers of women are remaining practically unemployed for various reasons, or are seriously under-employed. But in the U.S.S.R. the first Five Years Plan has so thoroughly eliminated unemployment that there is not a man or woman who can work but does not find work.

The Revolution brought not only to industrial women, but to the peasant folk complete legal and constitutional emancipation. Unlike our rural women labourers who have to work from dawn to dusk for less than a living wage, the Russian agrarian women have an 8 hour day, after the introduction of collective farming. It is also a recognised fact that the worker in Soviet Russia is able to afford several amenities, such as cinemas, clubs etc.

Even in the extensive area where Islam prevailed, the Social Revolution has cast off the purdha and women are now taking intelligent interest in all affairs of the state like the rest of their sisters in the Soviet Union.

#### The Family in U.S.S.R.

There is a lot of difference of assertion on what is happening in Russia to the institution of the family. With the nearing completion of the Social Revolution, the aristocratic type of woman

—a relic of the Czarist age—has disappered into the proletarian mass.

What has become of the institution of marriage? Have not the economic freedom and social revolution tampered with the fidelity of married life? The institution of marriage is there, but it takes various forms and has been made the will of the individual man or Registration of marriage is left to the option of the couple. So also is divorce. Though divorce is easy to obtain, at the will of either party, there is a strict enforcement of the legal responsibility of both parents for the maintenance of any offspring according to their respective economic capacities. It is claimed by numerous visitors that the easy facilities available for changing partners have not destroyed the house. Mother love is said to be the same in Soviet Russia as elsewhere and the Soviet father is just as fond of his children and wife.

With the communalising of services, domestic work plays an insignificant part in the daily life of the Russian woman. So, keener interest is attached to the upbringing of a healthy and virile population, which the State is anxious to have at any cost. In the absence of religion and other conventional checks, for a time, the greater freedom of the women manifested itself in numerous changing of partners, but now there is a greater love of stability in marriage. The com-

pletely free marriage is now found to be as enduring as any other kind. Promiscuity and perpetual firting, though scarce, are rightly frowned upon. Organised commercial vice is said to have disappeared. There is a welcome change towards stable marriages. "I do not want to inquire into your private affair." Stalin is reported to have said to an important party member, who was leading a scandalous life, "but if there is any more nonsense about women, you will go to a place where there are no women."

Motherhood is said to begin about 17 or 18. It is said that most liberal provisions in the world have been made for the protection of Russian motherhood, during the pre-natal and postnatal period. The manual worker gets four months' leave with full pay, two before and two after delivery. "Penpushers" as the office-workers are picturesquely called are given twelve weeks' off, in all. Special allowances and concessions are made for maternity. Every factory has a hospital attached to it and a creche for the children.

Contraception is said to be on the increase and sex-education systematically imparted. Abortion is legal in Russia, but not unrestricted. It is illegal unless performed in state hospitals and entitles one for three years' imprisonment, a very heavy penalty in U.S.S.R.

The New Age will make you A New Man

#### MAMMON

Drink-sodden fathers are cursing and swearing; Grief-stricken mothers worry and fret; Poor, starving children, their filthy rags wearing, Are cringing in allies—rank, dirty and wet.

Eyes once lustrous grown bleary and dim; Faces once youthful now wizen and pale; Cheeks once blooming are sunken and grim, Children of poverty, weakened and frail.

Hardened the slaves that labour and sweat— Cruel, grasping taskmasters urging them on— Shackled there always, too resigned for regret, With all hope of freedom crushed, vanquished and gone.

These slaves for their taskmasters ever are working— Taskmasters worshipping Mammon defiled— For never a day their labours are shirking, By rogues, liars, scoundrels ever beguiled.

The worship of gold is the sin of the ages; The populace wholly devoured by greed; The poorer the worker, the more shut in cages; The richer the master, the crueller the deed.

Then rise ye oppressed, rise up and demand, Justice and freedom from toil and from strife; Though the law be against ye; for your rights ye must stand,

Banish knavery, corruption and humanise life.

## THE PROLETARIAN DICTATORSHIP

At the S. A. Trades and Labour Conference held in Durban recently, the following motion was adopted.

"That this Annual Conference of the S. A. Trades and Labour Council records its opposition to political dictatorships and calls upon its affiliated members to work for individual liberty and free institutions by every means in its power." The following are excerpts from the speech of Mr. W. H. Andrews, the famons labour leader.

Of all forms of dictatorships, the ecclesiastical is the most deadly, for the reason that it enslaves not only the body, but the mind and intellect. This form of dictatorship survives in many countries to-day and where it has lost its power it constantly seeks to regain its authority.

However, whether the dictatorship is exercised by a church, a king by divine right, a feudal aristocracy or a financial and economic monopoly, the exercise of its power is a political arc and that, in the last analysis therefore, all dictatorships are political dictatorships and are maintained by force.

There is one form of dictatorship which I have not mentioned, a form which has never existed in history, at least for any length of time, until the present century. I refer to the dictatorship of the working class, the dictatorship of the proletariat.

In the phraseology of the reformist organisations of all countries the issue before us is put thus: Either dictatorship or democracy?

The assumption underlying this statement of the question is that we are enjoying a democratic form of Government. That capitalist parliamenta-

#### W. H Andrews

rism and democracy are identical terms; are one and the same thing. That by upholding and supporting the political and economic apparatus of the bourgeois (the capitalist class) we can escape the fate which has overtaken the working class, the small farmer and the lower middle classes in Italy, Germany and elsewhere.

In the discussion on Fascism, we have heard how this doctrine has led to the destruction of all liberty in Fascist countries. How Trade Unions, workers, political parties and all free associations have been destroyed and their property confiscated. Still the social democrats, the labour parties and the reformist Trade Union leaders in those countries which are not yet openly Fascist, stubbornly adhere to their formula that the workers can effect their emancipation gradually by using the political and legal machinery of the capitalist state.

Is the capitalist state a democratic state in anything more than name?

Let us examine the state of affairs in the Union of South Africa.

In South Africa, certain political privileges have been granted to a limited number of the inhabitants. The Europeans, the coloured people and a small minority of the natives (in the Cape Province only) have the right to vote in elections. (The right to sit as Members of Parliament is, however, confined to Europeans.)

They may use the roads, travel in public vehicles, hold public meetings (if the authorities permit), publish and read such books and periodicals as are not objectionable to the authorities (note the banning of overseas literature

and Lamont's books). They may see films and plays (subject to a rigid censorship, which is careful to exclude any film which in any way criticises the present order of society, e.g., Russian films, etc.) They may listen to broadcasts which are entirely controlled by the ruling class and which are notoriously capitalist propaganda agencies.

Trade Union organisation is allowed (but any effective militant action is made most difficult by such legislation as the Industrial Conciliataion Act, Riotous Assemblies Act and the use of the injunction in strikes).

But even these limited privileges are denied to the great mass of the inhabitants of South Africa, or at any rate, seriously curtailed.

I have mentioned the most glaring of the political disabilities of the native people regarding votes and seats on public bodies. In addition the native can only travel in certain public vehicles, specially set apart for him. He may not purchase intoxicating liquors. He is heavily taxed in proportion to his income, and has no voice in deciding on how the taxes shall be raised, nor how the proceeds shall be spent. He has few facilities for education. (It was stated in Parliament by an Afrikaans M. P. a week or two ago that only 1.6 per cent. of the natives of school age were attending school in the Cape Province, and even most of those who do attend left school without getting higher than the first two or three standards.)

The native has to carry all kinds of permits and passes. Although in theory he may form, Trade Unions, he is debarred from the provisions of the Industrial Conciliation Act, and if he takes strike action he is guilty of a criminal offence and is instantly arrested, very often brutally ill-used by the police, fined and imprisoned.

The Masters and Servants Act, the Native Servants Contract Act which govern the relationship between the native worker and his employer, reduce the native worker, particularly in rural areas, where most of them are found, to the status of a helot and a serf.

The frequent murders of natives and brutal flogging by Europeans, even when they come before a Court, result in such light sentences of the European accused as to call for frequent condemnation even in the editorials of such organs of capitalism as the "Star."

On the other hand the slightest breach of the law by a native, even a technical breach such as the failure to produce a pass, results (in addition very often to brutal ill-treatment by the police) to heavy fines or imprisonment out of all proportion to the offence.

But a much more serious, if insidious, curtailment of personal liberty and free institutions results from the economic dependence of the great mass of the people, both black and white, on the real ruling class, the owners of the land, the factories, mines and, above all, the banking and financial magnates. In fact, from this dependence of the workers, small farmer and middleclass, on these controllers, of the national wealth, arises all the political and social evils, inequalities and injustices which I have briefly described. There is a never-ceasing struggle between the employer and the employed. The very fact that in every industrialised country Trade Unions and working class political parties have been formed, is a recognition of this fact.

The workers are compelled to organise in order to resist the employing class in its never-ceasing efforts to reduce them to absolute slavery.

Now, the Trade Union Movement is itself a curtailment of the liberty of its members. The individual member relinquishes a portion of his freedom of action and submits to certain rules and discipline in order to collectively put up a more effective fight against the injustice of the employers than he could hope to do individually.

The members of the Union (often out of very meagre wages) must pay certain fees and levies, they must strike if called upon and suffer hardships rather than scab or work below the recognised standards.

The upholders of the capitalist state argue that, in the words of the American Declaration of Independence: "All men are born free and equal."

I have demonstrated how this works out in practice in South Africa. In the United States things are not much better, particularly where negroes are concerned. In fact, the state—whether absolute monarchy, limited monarchy, or bourgeois republic—is an apparatus designed to protect the property of the owning class and seeks to crush the propertyless class, the workers, into complete submission to their exploitation. In spite of all its Parliamentary form, it is domination of the few over the many.

The Trade Union Movement makes no pretence that all men are free and equal. It arose out of a recognition of the unequal status as between the workers and the employing class. Whether consciously or not, it was based on a recognition of the antagonism of the class that buys labour, and the class that is forced to sell it. The class struggle.

In its primitive form it organises the workers on the basis of trade or craft, in local unions or clubs. As the fight proceeds, it develops into national unions on craft and later on industrial lines. It aims at 100 per cent. member ship. Its ultimate weapon is the strike. Later it forms federations, amalgamations, Trades and Labour Councils, Trade Union Congresses.

It aims at organising all workers as a class. With what object? To impose its will on the employers. What is the workers' will? At first, a fair day's work for a fair day's wage by means of collective bargaining with the weapon of the strike in reserve to enforce their

demands. The employers reply by a weapon of the lockout, and starvation. Sometimes certain sections of the workers succeed; often they fail. The workers learn from experience that a slump in trade, a change of Government, some mainpulation of currency, tariffs, quotas, etc. can take from them in a few days or weeks, what it has taken them years of self-sacrifice and struggle to obtain.

To begin to understand that only the abolition of the system which permits the control of the whole resources of the community to be owned and controlled by a few persons can permanently solve the problem of social justice (as it is called at Geneva).

The logical objective of 100 per cent Unionism is the control of production and the means of wealth by organised labour. Now, as two antagonistic forces cannot both be in control, it must follow that the present small group of owners and controllers of all the nations' wealth must be displaced by the great mass of the producers if the workers are to take control, to become the dominant class. Perhaps so far you will say you agree with me. We have, however, to look facts in the face. It is not what we should like, but what actually is the case that we have to face frankly and unflinchingly.

No ruling class throughout all history has ever abdicated voluntarily.

If we attain 100 per cent Trade Unionism, or even approach it, and in addition approach a majority or even obtain a majority of workers, representatives in Parliament, is it conceivable that the many lords, mine magnates and trust kings will meekly submit to the votes of the majority and hand over their control of wealth to them? It may happen; but we have no justification in the light of history for expecting it.

Therefore the workers must be prepared to back up their industrial organisation and votes by taking steps to ensure that their expressed will becomes effective. They must watch and prepare for such crisis in the capitalist world as will enable them to seize power. Seizing power does not mean merely occupying Parliament House and Town Halls. It means the occupation of the strategic points in capitalist economy, railways, postal and telegraph apparatus, radio stations, docks, mines, arsenals, armouries, barracks, aerodromes, factories, banks, etc., the winning over or the destruction of the capitalist police and military forces.

At this stage, if successful, the workers will have established the dictatorship. The French, in 1792, set up a Convention, then a Committee of Public Safety. They created an army to defend the Republic against the intervention of the Kings of Europe. The Russians did the same in 1917. They formed the councils of workers, soldiers and peasants' deputies (the Soviets) and formed the Red Army to defend the Workers' Republic against enemies within and interventionists without. This apparatus must take the place of the old forms of Government. A new class taking power cannot use the Government apparatus of the class they dispossess. The dictatorship of the majority, the great mass of the people, over the minority, must be established and must continue until all serious danger from the overthrown class has disappeared, and also all danger from intervention by capitalist states has been removed.

But, it will be said, how do you propose to select the representatives of the workers to the responsible Government and administrative apparatus, call it what you will?

Elections and voting will, of course, be held, but will only be participated in by the workers, peasants and proletarian soldiers. The remnants of the old ruling class and their agents and parasites must be ruthlessly prevented from participating in the Government of the country until they have been tested and have proved their loyalty to the workers' state or have become powerless to seriously endanger the workers' Government.

The choice before this Conference and the workers of the world to-day is not Dictatorship or Democracy, but Capitalist Dictatorship or Workers' Dictatorship—a Fascist State or a workers' and peasants' republic.

Compare the two. Their objects and methods. The Capitalist State is organised to extract the last possible ounce of labour power from the worker for the lowest wage that it is considerd safe to pay him. The difference between a frankly Fascist State and the ordinary Capitalist Government is only one of degree. The ob jective in each case is the same. The enrichment of the few at the expense of the many. The Workers' State makes useful labour and service to the community the passport to full citizenship. Those who will not accept this obligation are denied citizen's rights. The collective product of the socially organised labour is equitably distributed amongst all who labour.

Those who will not work, neither shall they eat. Unemployment is abolished; the haunting fear of poverty through sickness, accident and old age is not felt by the workers for the reason that all these eventualities are amply provided for.

Compare this with the position of the workers in capitalist states, whether Fascist or otherwise, the unemployment, hunger, misery, crime, wretched housing conditions have so often been described that I need not detain you by describing it.

But there is another great difference between capitalist and workers' dictatorships. In the case of the former, its one aim and purpose is to maintain,

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to tighten up and extend its absolute domination over the working class. It will stop at nothing, even wholesale massacre, in its efforts to maintain the rich in their privileged positions. The proletarian dictatorship, on the contrary, is recognised as a temporary The Workers' State is necessity. anxious that the period of dictatorship shall be as short as possible, its ideal is the classless society, in which all shall work for the benefit of all and in which the need for a repressive state as at present understood, with its army, police, courts of law, will have ceased to exist.

The political state will "wither away" and in its place will only remain the administrative machinery necessary to plan to organise and direct the energies of the whole of the nation into the most advantageous channels of expenditure of energy and to organise the distribution of the national production in the most equitable manner. The motto will then be "From each according to his ability;

to each according to his need."

But this is for the future. For a considerable period, perhaps, the Workers' State will have to struggle against not only the survivors of capitalist society within, but will also have to combat the remnants of capitalist ideology in the minds of its own workers, employees and farmers. It will also, so long as powerful states retain the capitalist system, be on its guard against attacks from without. A powerful and devoted army is a necessity. Hence I repeat, we have not to-day the choice between Dictatorship and Democracy, but between Dictatorship of the few over the many or the Dictatorship of the many useful people over the few drones and parasites.

The proposition invites the Conference to renounce the only weapon by means of which they can obtain that control over the land, the raw material and instruments of production without which they cannot be masters of their own lives and without which no true Democracy can ever exist.

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## SOME SOVIET PARADOXES

For the past two years the Russian colossus has shed the Soviet exclusion and has been striding about the Capitalist world in a manner apparently diametrically opposed to her declared revolutionary policy. Her first important contact with the outside world was her recognition by the United States of America, prompted mostly by the great credit she commanded as a prospective debtor, owing to the successful execution of the Piateletka. It was then expected that this recognition would soon be followed up by the two great republics establishing closer contact and working in such a way as to subserve the interests of the world proletariat. But, unfortunately, the bitter thought of the repudiated prerevolutionary debt was a snag, potent enough to baffle the best of intentions, and the recognition remained for all intents and purposes of little practical value.

Russia had to come out of her seclusion and make alliances with capitalist powers, to counteract effectively the growing menace all round, not only to her Socialist construction, but to her territorial integrity in the Far East and in the West which were seriously threatened, respectively, by the aggressively imperialist Japan and the rising tide of Nazism in Central Europe. Further. as the Piateletka could not be successfully pushed through without foreign credit, it was necessary to make friends with the moneyed world. As the idea of a 'world revolution' was apparently given up for good, with the exile of Trotsky, it was but expected that sooner or later Russia would join the League. In helping her into the League, France only subserved her own interests, as she had the greatest fear about her territorial integrity with the rise to

#### A. G. Venkatachary, B.A.,

power of Hitler in Germany, and, in the face of the traditional policy of vascillation, so characteristic of Great Britain, she could not but think of the great U.S.S.R. as the one power a military alliance with whom was indispensable in her own interests. Thus came into being the Franco-Soviet Pact of Mutual Assistance. This was followed by a round of visits by Maxim Litvinov to the various capitals of Europe, not excluding Rome, and the conclusion of a series of mutual non-aggression pacts with the Balkan Entente, the little Entente, Poland and Lithuania. Thus, the Soviet, along with her entry into the League with the idea of strengthening "collective security," left no stone unturned to ensure the territorial inviolability of her western frontier and strengthen her defence forces in the Far East in the best possible manner. It was a master stroke of diplomacy of the Soviet Government, when they magnanimously announced that they would allow the Jews driven out of Hitler Germany to form an independent Republic of their own in the Far East. Russia's aim was most certainly the strengthening of her eastern frontier, and, incidentally it showed a unique expression of human good will, a commodity that has become so rare in a world ridden with racial animosity and colour prejudices.

That Russia was anxious to avoid any threat to world peace is borne out by the sale of the Chinese Eastern Railway with other developments in the Far East to Japanese interests, thus reducing appreciably the Soviet-Japanese tensions, which only last year threatened to lead to a Pacific imbroglio. Not only that, After the contract of sale was signed in March 23 last,

Litvinov suggested to the Japanese authorities, the desirability of concluding a bilateral non-aggression Pact. In her anxiety presumably to get at all costs such a pact signed, most unabashedly, the Soviet Union made it clear, that the Soviet Eastern army will not be used to defend China from Japanese aggression. The Union may probably be anxious about the safety of her maritime provinces but in her undertaking not to help China against Japan, she has flouted the League Covenant which Russia was bound to respect fully and most honourably. Also such an under taking sought to be given was not in conformity with the assurance given by M. Molotov, at the 17th Party Congress that the Soviets would enter the League to "battle for peace." Anyway, Japan stoutly stood against such a pact, which she characterised as needless. That has only increased the growing suspicion entertained all the world over, about her possible aggressive intentions.

Anthony Eden, the debonair and energetic British Minister for League Affairs had created for himself a reputation among the Chancellories of Europe as a dynamic personality and a realist in modern foreign diplomacy. But nobody, not even an incurable optimist, could ever have even dreamt that he would develop such close friendship with Maxim-Litvinov, Soviet Commissar of Foreign Affairs. Maxim Litvinov seems to have almost forgotten those strenuous days of 1918, when he was deported from England as a "danger- ous revolutionary." Captain Eden who was welcomed in the inner sanctums of the greatest powers in Europe met M. Stalin, the Soviet's senior statesman within the Kremlin itself. Soon, it was found that Imperialist Britain and Bolshevik Russia held 'identical views' upon the European Crisis. Enthusiasm ran so high that a joint communique was issued announcing that "at present no conflict of interests exists between them on any of the main issues of international policy." The Soviet with its 9,60,000 troops and a potential war-time force of 20,000,000 troops, holds a key position in the present tangled skien of international affairs. But it takes one's breath away when reading of such delectable episodes, as the historic banquet tended to Mr. Eden, at which leading members of the Politi Bureau led in the singing of the British National Anthem, and where rosettes of butter, showing the Union Jack flying side by side with the Scythe and the Sickle, adorned the table.

Now, the very existence of the League is being seriously threatened by one man—Signor Mussolini, who avowedly admits no moral or political restraints on his action. He has stated in the most unambiguous terms possible, that he would not rest content till Abyssinia becomes either an Italian Mandate or an Italian colony. He would not even countenance the imperialist proposals of "peaceful penetration" sponsored by Britain and France and the Committee of Five, set up to settle the 'dispute.' The Italian offensive has begun in all its ruthless barbainty. M. Litvinoy, in his League Assembly speech on the dispute emphatically declared, that the U.S.S.R. would act up to the letter and spirit of the Covenant and stand by the League. He went a step further, and (it could not have otherwise been consistent with Russia's declared antiimperialist policy), made it clear that Russia would not countenance the creation in Abyssinia of spheres of economic or political influence. Let us hope that this reaffirmation of the only right attitude would be followed up by the timely enforcement of sanctions against Italy which has now been rendered inevitable. Weak Abyssinia! she has but to bow to the "enlightened self-interest" of Great Britain and France, and yet she has not been saved from the rapacious Duce.

At the recent session of the World

Communist Congress held in Moscow, it would appear, that fundamental changes in the methods of Communist propaganda abroad had been made.

For the sake of presenting a united front against Fascism and Imperialism a decision has been taken that communists all the world over should ally themselves with Social Democrats in free countries, and with the extreme nationalist forces in colonial countries and work for the emancipation of the masses in the best way possible, according to local conditions and possibilities of collaboration. Though many all the world over are bound to welcome this great change in the communist methods, it should not be forgotten that the Soviet Union, has by this, finally abandoned her direct interest in the emancipation of the world proletariat. might be differences about the wisdom of this change: but, there could hardly be any doubt that it has violated the very principles of international socialism on which the Soviet State was sought to be built.

The soviet accepted as her objective standard, the ideals, which have been summarised by Emma Goldman, a veteran American anarchist thus:

"Communism is the ideal of human equality and brotherhood. It considers the exploitation of man by man as the source of all slavery and oppression. It holds that economic inequality leads to social injustice, and is the enemy of moral and intellectual progress. Communism aims at a society where classes have been abolished as a result of common ownership of the means of production and distribution. It teaches that only in a classless commonwealth can man enjoy liberty, peace and well being."

No doubt from the reports presented to the seventh soviet congress of the U.S.S.R. by M. Molotov, chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, one can gather that stupendous

advances have been made in the sphere of technical and structural achievement. Based on a 1929 index of 100, industrial output in 1934 stood at 239, the gross productions having gone up from £ 2,800,000,000 in 1929 to £ 5,000,000,000 in 1934, an achievement, even the shadow of which is not to be seen in any capitalist or Fascist state. No doubt Russia has been forging ahead most successfully with her socialist construction. But, she has severely left alone her great obligations towards the world proletariat and her paramount duty to secure for them what was contained in the "Declaration of Rights of the Toiling and Exploited People," penned by Lenin in the beginning of 1918.

Further, a close observation, of the way communism is worked in Russia, shows that Russian authorities seem to be as intolerant as Fascist dictators of criticisms levelled against them.

The recent "purge" in the party machine, is in no way better than the ruthless suppression of the deviationists in Fascist countries.

Trotsky, the one great man still fired with a genuine leftist ideology, is to-day dying of tuberculosis and has had to seek a political sanctuary under a Labour Government in Norway, despite his militant contribution to the Revolution that succeeded in establishing the U. S. S. R. And why? The present dominant group in Russia, with its new policy of "National Socialism" could not put up with the programme of internationalism by which he still stands.

Thus, to-day, the general policy of the Kremlin seems to be a chain of surprising paradoxes, and no amount of specious casuistry can explain them away. Her foreign policy to-day is a complete reversal of the original Bolshevist policy as derived from the tenets of Communism, which is said to be at work within the Russian borders. And why? It is for the students of current history to answer.

#### A DAY IN THE MADRAS PENITENTIARY

#### By a "Penitent"

It is easier to wake up early in the morning here than when you are outside; and for two reasons. Firstly, by 9 o'clock in the night the lights are out and hence you are compelled to seek the embraces of sleep as early as you can. Secondly, in the morning, the order to "get up" is more peremptory than at home. You have to join "the file" at 5-45 A.M. While on file you have to make certain evolutions of the body, at the bidding and after the example of Charlie, the lord of our 'yard', which are very much similar to the "drill" performed by school-boys.

"Charlie" is a very nice fellow. He would "dismiss" us within 3 or 4 minutes. Even in the course of the drill we had a lot of fun. There was one chap, a young private, who had been sentenced to the very short term of 20 years (for, what is 20 years in eternity?) for shooting his colonel, who would do wonderful tricks in the name of drill. "Left turn!" would mean to him "Right turn!" and "lunge forward!" would be a command to "lunge side ward!" Though he did the same trick everyday, we used to laugh at his antics with the same boisterousness as ever. And Charlie would laugh with us. But Charlie was not a very lax disciplinarian either. For one day while I was fiercely arguing with some Congress people the disastrous and deceitful tactics of the Congresswallas from the point of view of a Communist, Charlie stepped in with a serious, longish face, and said, "If you indulge in any such loud discussions I would prohibit wholesale all talk between you." We lowered our voices a bit, feeling more ashamed at the heat to which we had developed

our debate, than cowed by his reprimand. The next day again we were as loud as ever. Fortunately Charlie had gone out somewhere. So, that is Charlie.

After drill, I would pay my visit to the latrine. Our yard is a very wellkept yard. It is scrupulously neat, and will always present an appearance similar to any hospital ward. At the western corner were the latrines, the taps and specimens of what we might call an apology for a bath-room. In the latrine we had got 9 commodes always clean, and very inviting for a constipated ass like myself. But apropos of constipation, I might tell you, the jail diet is a remarkable specific for constipation; at least, I think the 'B' class diet was such, and to me at any rate. After paying my respects to one of the commodes, I would go and clean my teeth. By this time, the cook would have brought milk, coffee decoction and bread and sugar. We had to do the mixing ourselves for preparing coffee. This arrangement proved very good for us, later. For, some of us (All the 'B' class politicals were supplied rations on a wholesale basis) preferred to take milk alone. Also, when we wanted to diminish the quantity of decoction supplied, we suggested to the cook to prepare 'thicker' decoction, adding less quantity of water. The coffee thereafter tasted very splendid. We had no butter for the bread. However, I had a bottle of ghee with me. which was allowed to me, at my own expense, as I was an 'A' class prisoner. All of us made use of the ghee in lieu of butter. One volunteer was on wheat diet. He used to get in the morning one big chapathy, but no bread. We exchanged something of his for our bread. (Surely an offence according to jail rules, for no exchange is allowed.) We thus enjoyed variety. Breakfast over, we "politicals" had nearly four hours before us ere we could have our dinner.

If it was not a Sunday, ordinary convicts had to march out of their cells for work in their different, but usual workshops. I know very little about the work done by the C class convicts. We politicals in the B class were most of us remand prisoners, and hence had no work. Only convicted person amongst us was a young chap of less than twenty-three years, but he had no jail work. He was by the way studying for some Hindi Exam. and the jail Superintendent, a very clever and kind man, had granted him two special privileges, a cup of milk and a lantern before the usual lighting time, as aids to his study.

We washed our clothes and took our baths, soon after the breakfast. Some would bathe even before breakfast. In our yard the washing and bathing arrangements were good. Afterwards I learnt that the 'C' class prisoners were suffering terribly in the matter of these facilities. But I think, it is the politicals in the C class that must have felt these disablities most keenly. In fact, it is so. For the convicted prisoner I told you about, was originally placed in C class. He told me that in three weeks he managed to lose weight at the rate of one lb. per day. He used to simply shiver when he described his experiences there. "No ghee, butter-milk, not enough water to bathe or wash your clothes, no soap." It seems even the rice a more indigestible variety. The prisoner studying for Hindi exam was later on transferred to Vellore jail. Before he went he took a number of things from me. because he hoped and I hoped that I would soon be released. I gave him all the cocoanut oil, tooth paste and soaps I had. Though I felt a bit inconveni-

enced, as my stay was unexpectedly prolonged, I did not, no man could, regret his taking those things away with him. Even if I had been convicted and had to remain longer inside that blessed abode which is becoming more and more commonly the normal habitation of the flower of the Indian people, and even if I had not been placed in the 'A' class I would not have felt for a moment parting with those things. Though, if you only knew something of the life in a jail you would realise with what intensity men hankered after these things inside the jail. would know how much ingenuity it requires to manage to get a couple or two of beedies in return for half a loaf of bread or a handful of potatoes. You would then know, that beedi acquiring is not less romantic a task than beedi lighting. You will thus admit the possibility of certain situations occurring, in which our ancestors' art of extracting a spark from the flint, not so primitive and out of date even in our days of safety matches and cigar-lighters.

But now to the daily routine. If it is not a Sunday, the B class ordinary convicts will leave the yard for work. On Sabbath days all have rest. And on these days, I would go to the cells of the two European convicts, to have some chat with them. One of them was that young private (he is I think barely 22) who was always proud of repeating "I am Briton by name and Briton by blood." He had a lot of vulgar jokes all army fellows have. He cared very little for politics and said that after his release, say after some 7 or 8 years more, he was going to start a saloon in England. He had a few books with him, a Bible, one or two religious books. the Oxford book of English Verse and some others. He had also a good safety razor. (I am informed that this prisoner died suddedly and his ambition of opening a saloon is gone.) The other European convict was a Swiss. He had been convicted for cheating. He was a very clever and a very

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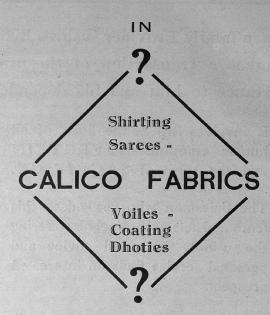
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strong fellow. One day, when he returned from work, he was complaining that he had lost weight again. I was somewhat surprised, because to tell you the truth, I was daily leaving something out of my rations. When I asked of him what the reason was for his loss, he said in a bitterly ironical way, "You Indian people don't get sufficient food outside, for us, there is nothing in this nasty food." He was a strong well built, and tall chap and in addition to jumping 5' 10" and speaking broken English, could draw sketches and portraits, play chess, and masterfully light smuggled beedies. He was always grumbling. I was able to learn from him something about the Swiss people. But his opinion of the Indians was very poor. He repeatedly remarked, "the Indian has no intelligence. You can't make him understand." Regarding politics he firmly held that "Gandhi was no good. India must have a Mussolini." It is not surprising that a Swiss cheat in an Indian prison and an Irish puritan should hold similar views regarding the political salvation of India. But the real fact is both of them meant by the remark different things.

About 10-30 is the Jail dinner-time. All convicts would leave their workshops for dinner. By the time our European and other (Anglo-Indian) chaps returned, we would have washed our cloths and suspended them on the wires for drying. Drying is no easy joke, as you might find it outside. Not because the sun is less fierce inside these massive and very high walls. Not in the least. The Sun is praised by many for his impartiality between the rich and the poor. The fact is the poor fellow can little afford to be otherwise. When he is partial to "the naked negro panting all the time," it is not of his own choice and when he makes his visits to the people in the arctic, even that is not of his own volition. It is our perverted imagination, incapable of setting right unequal human social organisations, which seeks the resort of the hide-bound nature for illustrations in impartiality, and for confirmation of the equlitarian principle. But that is neither here nor there. I was about to sav that drving was something of an arduous process inside the jail, because of the thickness of the Jail clothes. Of course, the only jail wear allowed for the remand prisoners was a blessed pair of very heavy and thick jail made towels. But anyway, they were excellent scrubbers, especially, when you were under a splendid shower tap. I am not a whit exaggerating when I tell you that for the first time in my life, the jail towel and the jail shower bath enabled me to discover the ecstasy of a cold water It was simply delightful. I couldn't contain myself. And my heart was thrilling with the new found experience. A shower bath and a scrubbing with a jail towel, I tell you, if you have only the capacity to live, as the most delightful things in the world.

And now the table would have been laid by an old dacoit, for our dinner. If you have not learnt by now, you can know now at least that there was a kind of class division inside the jail also, as it was outside. This old dacoit. and a gigantic burglar, and a bulky cyclop were our menials inside the Jail. The old bandicoot used to smile very servilely whenever we questioned him about his famous exploits. But now they are all history. He has become part of the jail household, by having been continually invited there for long periods, and at last one very hearty invitation had been incorporated into its fold for life. He used to do odd services for us.

He laid the tables and the benches for our breakfast, dinner or evening meal, washed our jugs, filled them with water, and kept them in a corner of the cell or at the door outside, every morning. Now and then he would beg for a piece of soap or a "few drops" of oil. Somebody would offer him the

same, abusing him in very familiar terms. The abuses were the only words of affection, which this old criminal soul was capable of relishing. The cyclop was a mysterious looking fellow. Whenever he turned his face towards me while I was washing my clothes, I would turn my own the other way so that I might avoid the very awful sight of his eyes. I even dreaded him a bit. He was the scavenger for our yard. In the morning he would take the commodes from each of our cells (which had been placed there the previous evening) and clean them well, and place them in a row exposed to the direct rays of the sun.

Every day the superintendent would visit our yard at about 8 or 8-30, along with the jailor and the deputy jailor. Any person who wanted to go to the hospital or had some request or complaint to make might do so. But on Sundays it was different. That day we had to stand in file." The convicted people, were to wear new clothes and appear trim when the "Super" and his satellites came and inspected us and our yard more thoroughly than on the other days. The importance of these visits was very immense for the convicts, for, a jail clerk called the remission clerk was part of the company, and he followed the "super" noting in his fateful notebook his observations regarding each convict. If his notes were favourable you may thank your stars. For, your day of incarceration would be less than what the magistrate awarded you. alas! woe unto you! The days in prison would be simply numbered till the last date of your sentence had been served. Briton, was a clever fellow and kept the Remission clerk in good humour. But there was another important fact about our "super's" visits. He would inspect the "yard" the then have a peep inside the jugs, kept warming in the sun, or inside the commodes. I do not think he ever

expected to see anything strange inside them. Nor did they ever deceive him.

As to the giant of our yard, a curious fact about him was that he had a voice incomparably "sweet and low" for his mighty frame. He offers a contrast as it were to one of our own comrades. some of you can easily guess the person, who has a mighty pair of lungs inside a less than ordinary size of a body. If this huge lion of a fellow had been asked to roar he would have roared like Bottom in the play, I were a nightingale." He was the cook for the European and Anglo-Indian convicts. But he also got our extra milk also boiled for us in the evenings. I do not think that in entrusting my milk to him I was asking the cat to keep the cheese. He might have been a burglar outside. But here if at all he could do anything in the old line, it might be a bit of pilfering now and then. For we were all of us poor as Church mice inside this establishment whose great task seemed to be to find the G.O.M. of all the convicts huddled up within its mighty walls.

I am feeling hungry now. So let me return to the dinner. The dinner was prepared by a brahmin convict. belonging to the Madhwa persuasion. I do not mean any disparagement to members of that venerable community. I love them, personally, because I have had many friends amongst them., and also because they are as a community worthy followers of Epicurus. I believe, their special and favourite dish is a hundred polies with sufficient amount of ghee. But that is not to the point. Our Raoji was more than 40 years old, and he had only 4 months more to serve in the jail. I was wondering what would happen to these B class people if comrade Rao left them in the lurch after four months. latrines and other places, and now and I was hoping however that some other kind brahmins probably a Vaishnavite would step into his shoes. I haven't made any enquiries till date as to how

"B" class people are being fed now in the penitentiary, as Raoji must have left it long ago. But I do not propose to do either. Nor am I anxious to know what has become of poor Raoji. I have met a lot of persons whose acquaintance, made only in the gaol, after I was released in a number of odd places. And once! even in the Neo Komala Vilas Hotel! This blessed place seems to be luncheoning all sorts of people, a chatterbox like "K. V. V." and an extinct volcano like myself, and bless Heaven, that short sly rogue of the penitentiary! Here was something to make up a philosophy of life indeed!

But goodbye! I am feeling sleepy. I can't entertain yoù on mere literary accounts of jail dinners. If you are very anxious to enjoy one, just wear a khadi cap and really stand before Chellaram's, and ere the sun goes down, if you are only a bit lucky, you would be having your supper in the penitentiary by 5 o'clock. And as the supper is exactly the same fare as the dinner, you would be having your fine and coveted experience of a jail dinner in a jail supper. At any rate you are sure to have your dinner by next day 10-15 a.m. And there you go! Good-

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## THE PEASANTRY AND THEIR ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

The peasants can be divided into four categories:—Agricultural labourers, poor peasants, Middle peasants and rich peasants.

Agricultural labourers include the landless agricultural proletariat, as well as those who hire themselves out for wages, on account of their meagre income on their lands which is not sufficient even to maintain their low standard of life.

An acre of wet land growing paddy yields net income of:-

Rs. 80 In Guntur (according to Mr. N. G. Ranga 1926) Rs. 15 Malnad, Mysore

Kesava Iyengar (1929). Rs. 64 S. Canara. Rs. 29 Tanjore. Slater Some south Indian villages

Sugar cane Rs. 67½ in Jalegaon
Budruk, Dr. Mann (1921)

An acre of Dry land yields a net income of:—

Rs. 13 in Guntur.

N. G. Ranga (1926) Rs. 17 Tanjore. Slater (1918) Rs. 7½ Deccan. Mann (1921)

So, we can safely assure an average income of Rs 50 per wet and Rs 20 per Dry acre. So, a wet acre yields 2½ times to that of a dry acre. (The rupee income is subject to the price prevalent.)

A family owning 3 acres of wet paddy land have Rs. 150 per year. Cost of living at the margin of subsistence is Rs 57 per adult. (Survey of an Indian village N. G. Ranga). A family consisting of five people or 4 adults should

have Rs 228 per annum. But the yield being only Rs. 150 the remaining Rs. 78. has to be earned by hiring themselves out for wages. In case of dry lands even though the extent of land be 5 acres, still they have to work for wages.

Due to depression, the income is only half to that given above. But a family owning 5 acres of dry land by hard work and intensive cultivation may be able to earn its marginal subsistence. So, also will be the case for owners of wet lands. The psychology of these people, since they are not working for wages, will be that of the poor peasants. The effects of the depression will be found in the low standard of life of these peasants.

The poor peasantry cultivate their lands either with the help of their family or with the co-operation of others for seasonal planting and harvesting work. These generally, by hard work may be just able to make both ends meet at their low standard of life, in a normal year. We can generally take that this group owns land to an extent of 3-8 acres of wet or 5-20 acres of dry land.

Next comes the middle peasantry leading relatively a comfortable life. These generally own 8-15 acres of wet land or 20-35 acres of dry land. They partly work on their land and employ regular farm servants to help them to carry on the work on land. These also employ besides the servants, seasonal labour at harvesting and transplanting season.

The fourth category is that of the rich peasants. These own more than

20 wet acres. We may re-classify these into two more categories. To one class belong those people who manage their fields and supervise the cultivation. To the other class belong the landlords who do not even manage their lands but engage foremen to do it.

This division of peasantry into classes by the extent of the land they hold is supported by the following table in Economic Enquiry Committee report. (Madras Legislative Council commission)

> Cost of maintenance of 4 Adults

Those having 5 acres of land.

Those having 15 acres of wet or 20 acres of dry.

Those having 25 acres of wet or 40 acres of dry.

Rs. A. P.

261 4 0

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In the next category we see the Janmis of Malabar, the rich mirasdars of Tanjore and the permanently settled zamindars of Northern circars included. For each category they have given the number of pattadars single as well as Joint and the number of acres which each category of single as well Joint pattadar. I calculated the average holding per single pattadar and per shareholder or a joint patta. A shareholder of joint patta which is paying more than Rs. 500 as kist has less land than a single pattadar who pays Rs. 100-250.

So, instead of taking those 9 categories as my basis for re-grouping I took the average holding of each group separately for single pattadars and for joint patta shareholders. Since an acre of wet land gives an income which is about 2½ times that of an acre of dry land I transformed all the wet acres into their equivalent dry acres.

One special feature of these rich peasants is that they do money-lending business both in coin and in kind. The rate of interest in grain is 60-100. To find out the exact percentage of these four classes is impossible as there are no definite statistics. For a number of villages various investigators have given various statistics. We may calculate the percentage of the classes from those statistics but is impossible to calculate the percentage of land which each class occupies.

In Madras Land Revenue Settlement report, figures are given about the number of pattadars paying taxes of various values. They are of nine categories.

0		
I.	Those pay	ing less than I Re.
II.	do	Re. 1 and less
		than Rs. 10
III.	do	Rs. 10 and less
		than Rs. 30
IV.	do	Rs. 30 and less
		than Rs. 50
V.	do	Rs. 50 and less
		than Rs. 100
VI.	do	Rs. 100 and less
		than Rs. 250
VII.	do	Rs. 250 and less
		than Rs. 500
VIII.	do	Rs. 500 and less
		than Rs. 1000
IX.	do	Over Rs. 100

and thus got the number of dry acres each single pattadar or joint Pattashareholder possess on the average in each category. Taking these figures as the basis I grouped the peasantry into four groups.

- 1. Land-owning Ag. labourers.
- Dry 1-3 Acres. 2. Poor peasantry. " 3-20 "
- Middle peasantry., 20-40
   Rich peasantry. Over 40. Acres.

It is true that this will not give us very accurate results and that these averages may mislead. But when there are no statistics giving the income of land for every holder of land there is no other better way to ascertain the extent of classes among the peasantry. Another objection is also raised that many peasants who own land do not actually cultivate land. According to

Madras Census 1931 the people depending on agriculture for their livelihood are divided thus:

Non-cultivating land-owners, & tenants. 5.

Cultivating landowners and

Tenants. 519

Farm servants and labourers. 42.9% Taking farm-servants and labourers to possess no land (about this the census is not clear) out of every 56 peasants we have 5 non-cultivating peasants (ie.,) 9% of the total peasantry is non-cultivating. Even if these 9% form the rich people, it will affect our calculations very little especially when we see the large difference in the percentages of these classes. These form the very poor people who leasing their lands have gone to cities to find employment. But the principles of classification-division which we adopted is not so much based on land as on the fact of work the peasant performs, which is determined by the income on land. So, the increase in the percentage of land of the middle peasantry from this source will not make many of the middle peasants to rise to the level of rich peasants. But it may be quite possible that a good proportion of the middle and poor peasantry might be better off by leasing the lands of the absentee, rich landlords. But seeing that poor peasantry consists of 10%; middle peasantry 3% and rich only 6%, our conclusions will not be affected in any way, even if there is a considerable increase in these classes.

Here is the table:—

Land-owing Agri-labourers.

	Dang-owing A	gri-ranourers.
	Percentage to that of whole	Percentage of land to
Year.	number of	the whole
	Pattadars.	land.
	(1)	(2)
1901	80.	38.5
1906	79.4	36.7
1911	80.6	35.9
1916	82.2	38.3
1921	85'8	41.8
1926	86.3	42.3
1931	86.6	43.2

Poor Pea- sants.		Middle Peasants.		- Rich Peasants	
(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
14.7 15.2 14.2 13.3 10.6 10.3 10.	27.6 26.6 26.5 26.3 25.3 24.5 24	2.65 4.7 4.4 4.9 3.1 2.9 2.9	21.2 21.1 21.7 20.8 19.0 18.6 18	·65 ·7 ·7 ·6 ·5 ·5	12.7 15.6 15.9 14.6 13.9 14.6 14.8

From the above table we can draw the following conclusions:—

1. During the last 30 years the percentage of agricultural labourers to the total pattadars is increasing steadily.

2. Percentage of the poor and middle peasantry have decreased and their

percentage of land also fell.

- 3. Even though the percentage of rich peasantry has fallen the percentage of land which they own has increased.
- 4. From the following table we see that the increase in the number of agricultural labourers is due to the gradual economic deterioration of the poor and middle peasantry and the rich peasants' average increase at the expense of these two classes of peasantry. Though this concentration is not pronounced yet we see it in the percentage of increase of land of the rich peasants.

	Land-ov Agri-labor		Poor Pea- sants.	Middle Pea- sants.	Rich pea- sants.			
	Difference in Pattadars over 1931:							
	1906. 1911. 1916. 1921. 1926.	6 +.6 +2.2 +5.8 +6.3	+·5 -·5 -1·4 -4·1 -4·4	- '05 - '25 - '75 - 1'55 - 1'75	+.05 +.05 05 1			
	1931.	+6.6	-4.4	-1.75 $-1.75$	-1			
Difference in land:								
	1906. 1911. 1916. 1921. 1626.	-1.8 $-2.6$ $-2$ $+3.3$ $+3.8$	-1' -1'1 -1'3 -2'3 -3'1	-1 +5 -4 -2.2 -2.6	+2.9 +3.2 +1.2 +1.9			
	1931.	+4.7	-3.6	-3.5	+2.1			

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The class dividing the villagers is seen also from the following figures.

1. Non Cultivating Landowners and

1901 1911 1921 1931 3·2 4 9 5

2. Cultivating Landowners and Tenants.

67·9 68·6 63·8 51
3. Farm servants and field servants.
28·9 27·4 27·4 42·9

The absentee landlordism is growing but there is considerable fall in the decade of 1921-31. The percentage of actual cultivators has raised a little in the decade 1901-1911, but fell very abruptly in the following two decades. The slight fall in percentage of farm servants in the first two decades is stopped and there is a very slight increase in the last decade. This again shows that the cultivating tenants and owners are gradually being proletarianised.

#### The class struggle in rural areas:

We have seen that class divisions exist in rural areas. But unfortunately there are no statistics of the strikes. All the same, I got information of 6 strikes in Andhra.

A rich peasant was paying 3 measures of paddy daily to his farm servant and certain amount of paddy at the end of year. I suggested to him to pay 4 measures a day. I pointed also that he will not lose anything as he usually stored the grain practically during the whole of the year, (ie.,) almost to the beginning of the next harvest season and that the stored grain will not fetch him any interest. His reply is worth quoting. "If I pay the increased wages, it will absolve the farm servant from borrowing and thus I will lose the interest in borrowing by 1-20 of this annual payment. Therefore, I am not going to increase the daily wages."

I calculated the net income of two rich peasants. They used to get Rs. 75 when the price of paddy is Rs. 100 35 ,, 65

25 " " 50 12 " " 40

These two have holdings of 50 acres each. They used to employ 6 farm servants each. Each servant is paid Rs 50-60 and the owner gets Rs. 600 besides the service which he gets from the servants. These servants are not paid anything extra and their wages are debited to the agricultural accounts.

The agricultural labourers have no fixed hours of work nor any limit to the working day. "They are expected to dance attendance before the ryot for all twenty-four hours of the day".

Exhorbitant rates of interest are charged on the grain loan given by the ryots. 1-3 of the loan amount is taken as interest for a period of 4-6 months. So, the rate of interest amounts to 100 %.

About this debt Kesava Iyengar writes in his "Studies in Indian Rural Economics", "Loans secured by the promise of labour (One's own or recruited) and by the standing crop are weighing much more heavily upon the power of ryots and agricultural labourers than mortgage debts do upon land-holders".

Even the bourgeois economist N. G. Ranga has to admit that the rise during the period 1900-'26 in the wages paid to Panchama workers caused the annual death role due to Cholera go down almost to nothing" Yet he continues that "many ryots declare that they will be ruined if labour exchanges and unemployment insurance funds are established" Because these will raise the cost of labour and as N. G. Ranga says "it is the plentiful supply of cheap labour that makes these ryots to undertake to cultivate the uncultivated lands.

The rich peasant uses many questionable methods to exploit their servants. They use false measures and keep false accounts. They exploit the so called criminal tribes' terribly.

Rich peasants beat them if they do not turn up for work. They do not pay anything for his labour. These tribes would prove in such circumstances a danger to the working class organisations in rural areas; unless we make them revolt against the present treatment meted out to them. An intensive agitation against C. T. Act should be carried on.

Besides these tribes in Tamilnad, Kerala and to some extent in other parts of Madras presidency actual serfdom exists. This has become possible due to the indebtedness of the labourers. About this the census report 1931 says:—

His condition varies from practical slavery to comparative independence. But such is the custom of the country that the master nearly always contrives to get his servant and thus obtains a powerful hold over him in case he thinks of leaving his service."

So, we have to organise agricultural labourers separately with the following main demands:

- Abolition of debt and provision for cheap credit;
- 2. Fixed hours of work and limitation of working day to not more than 8 hours. Overtime should be paid at a progressive rate;
- 3. Less hours and more pay for night work;

- 4. Minimum wage;
- 5. Extensive 'social insurance regarding unemployment, old age, pensions, accidents, sickness Benefits.
- 6. Free hospitals and free and compulsory education.
- 7. 5 day week, the fifth day being a holiday.

The poor and middle peasantry is to be organised with the following demands:

1. Abolition of the existing land-tax and introduction of a progressive land-tax according to the income of the ryot power ryots who have Rs. 250 per, annum peing exempted.

(This has caused rich landlords to howl in the recent Nellore Ryots' Conference. But they could not show their faces when they saw how enthusiastically it has been received by others present.)

- 2. Abolition of debt.
- 3. Irrigation sources completely under corresponding ryots associations.
- 4. Supply of cheap credit and instruments.
  - 5. Abolition of landlordism.
  - 6. Consolidation of holdings.
- 7. Demonstrating and encouraging collective agriculture.
- 8. Abolition of the zamindari system and plantations and running them as model farms.



### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

#### CONGRESS AND CLASS WAR

In his letter to Mr. Ruikar, our President Rajendra Babu is reported to have said that the Indian National Congress is not an organisation belonging to any particular class. He has

rightly said that it is an organisation of every class—Zamindars, peasants, mill owners, labourers, rich men, poor men and what not.

Let us make it clearer. Suppose a peasant is oppressed by a Zamindar, what should the Congress do? Will it try to redress the grievances of the peasant? That, of course, means doing some harm to the selfish Zamindar. Will the Congress do it? According to the definition of our President, it cannot. Because, both the peasant and the Zamindar have an equal right on the Congress. And the Congress should treat them alike!

Some of us had been under the wrong impression that the Congress—the greatest anti-imperialist organisation of our slave country—is an organisation of peasants and workers and poor men. If my memory is not short even Mahatma Gandhi has repeated this many a time. If the Zamindars and Capitalists are bold enough now to proclaim that they are inside the Congress for their own selfish interests, my humble opinion is that they should be ousted from this organisation. The earlier it is done, the better.

We are continuing our struggle against British Imperialism. We have already suffered much and we have determined to suffer more. For whom? Is it for the sake of the fat Zamindar? Is it for the sake of the rich mill owner? Never. We are struggling for the sake of the suppressed peasants and the oppressed labourers. Swaraj! What is your Swaraj if these innumerable poverty - stricken brothers cannot be saved from the cruel clutches of tyranny and oppression? We want an economic swaraj to pave way for a classless society in which every one is happy and all are equal.

Any one who is bold enough to face the naked facts of this ugly society will understand that the heart of the present civilization is full of a dangerous class conflict between a minority with all the fruits of civilization, culture and happiness and a vast majority which lacks them. A few persons who are born with silver spoons in their lips are destined to enjoy every good and useful thing in this mad world while all the others are to struggle ceaselessly till their death against hunger and oppression. The vast difference between these HAVES and the HAVE NOTS is the result of the present inequitous and unequal distribution of land and property. So long as this unjust inequality lasts, so long as poverty exists in the midst of plenty. there will be this wretched class conflict. This class conflict is not created by the socialists. It is created by Capitalism. If we really wish to see an attractive society in which there is no class war, we shall have to establish a classless society. For that, capitalism, which is a terrible obstacle, will have to be driven away. We must also understand that capitalism is and always was an intimate friend of Imperialism. History proves it.

So our work is two fold. We have to fight with Imperialism. At the same time we have to fight these capitalists also. For that the congress should first become a class organisation—an organisation of the poorer class, the exploited class.

K. DAMODARAN.

# LABOUR IN INDIA TO-DAY

In response to an urgent command of the Editor of the New Age I am endeavouring to give a few features of the Indian Labour Movement today.

#### Central organisations

Labour is organised under two central organisations: -(1) The All-India Trade Union Congress; and (2) The National Trade Union Federation, the A. I. T. U. C. was founded in 1920 and it continued to be the only central organisation till December 1929, when there was an unfortunate split, which resulted in the formation of what later came to be known as the National Trade Union Federation. The later section mainly consisted of Labour leaders of the Reformist School, like Messrs, N. M. Joshi, V. V. Giri, Jamnadas Mehta, R. R. Bakhale, Dewan Chaman Lal and B. Shivrao. The All India Trade Union Congress, with leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, R. S. Ruikar, S. V. Deshpande, B. T. Ranadive, Subash Bose, Harihar Nath Shastry, etc. carried on its work with a radical programme under the Red Flag. In July 1931 a further split in the Congress took place, and as a result the section led by Messrs. Deshpande and Ranadive seceded from the Central organisation and started the Red Trade Union Congress.

#### The advent of the Royists

At this juncture, Com. M. N. Roy came to India and formed a group of his own with certain modified programme and tactics, which distinguished itself as against the programme of Comrades Ranadive and Deshpande, which decidedly had taken an ultraleftish turn, which, along with the repressive policy of the Government

R. S. Nimbkar

was mainly responsible for the downward path and segregation of the Left Wing movement in the country. Soon after the Bombay Girni Kamgar Union came out with a platform of Unity, which was discussed threadbare in the Unity Conferences of Indian Labour, held in Bombay and Madras. No appreciable result in the direction of Unity between the rival organisations was achieved, but the All India Trade Union Congress adopted the platform and has carried on since then ceaseless efforts for bringing about a merging of these organisations into one Central body.

#### Partial Unity Today

In the meantime, there was a fresh onslaught on the working class movement. The policy of repression took a severe turn, and arrests, shootings, deputations, banning of meetings etc. became the order of the day. Similarly the employers started the rationalisation of the Industry which really cannot be said to be rationalisation. The workers were asked to tend mere machines with no consequent material benefit to them in their wages or conditions of labour. On the contrary so-called rationalisation resulted in increasing unemployment, thus bringing untold hardships to various poor families. Wages began to be cut in a large percentage and other hardships of a serious nature began to be felt. As a result, the A. I. T. U. C. planned an All-India Strike of the Textile workers, which took place in Bombay, Sholapur and Nagpur in 1934. This was the first time when a strike on an All-India basis was organised and it achieved, from the workingclass solidarity point of view a large

measure of success. But the strike failed, due to the attitude of the authorities and the employers, in achieving its objective.

To fight the new situation, the All-India Trade Union Congress restarted vigorously its efforts towards the organisational unity of the three central labour bodies. Partial success was achieved at Calcutta in April last by the merging of the Red T. U. C. in the A. I. T. U. C. The Trade Union Congress today stands as a stronger body with the various unions controlled by radical leaders like Ruikar, Nimbkar, Maniben Kara, Karnik, Dange, Khedikar, Bannerji, Harihar Nath Shastri, etc. These leaders are people, who have devoted their lives to the Working-class Movement and have suffered immensely in the cause of labour.

The A. I. T. U. C. with its affiliated Unions carries on a ceaseless fight for the betterment of the workers' conditions, but at the same time, it works for its political objective of a Workers' and Peasants' Republic.

On the other hand, the National Trade Union Federation is a reformist body, which has a few strong Railway Unions affiiliated to it, but which also contains Unions, whose only function is to secure representation at Geneva for its leaders. But it has many workers under its banner. The A.I.T.U.C. strove for organisational unity into this body. Recently in August last, a meeting took place in Bombay between the accredited representatives of the A.I.T. U.C. and N.F.T.U. to bring about unity in some such form. But due to certain reasons, which I may not mention here, the way for unity of an organisational type could not be found out. But to increase the points of contact between the two organisations, an All-India Labour Board with V.V. Giri (Chairman) R. S. Ruikar (Secretary) N. M. Joshi, R. S. Nimbkar, J. M. Mehta, R.A. Khedjikar, Aftal Ali and Shibnath Bannerji as members was formed. Let us hope, that this Board will pave the

way for real unity, which is the immediate necessity of the labour movement.

The Congress Socialists

The formation of the Congress Socialists is a new factor in the Nationalist Movement and their advent into the Labour field has created a new situation. Their actions particularly in Bombay of co-operating with the reactionary section of Messrs. Alwe and Kandalkar is to be deplored; but as they get older in organisation and gather experience, it is hoped that they will use better tactics and will be, in due course of time, a welcome asset in the Labour Movement.

## Co-operation with the National Congress

The important feature of the recent developments is the effort of the A.I.T.U.C. to have some sort of understanding with the National Congress. "The agreed objective of the Labour Movement is the Workers' and Peasants Republic, and the National Congress stands for Complete Independence. The Congress leadership today has temporarily abandoned the fight for Swaraj and is definitely on the down-ward path of Co-operation with the Government. But objectively it is the rallying centre of all anti-Imperialist forces in the country and as such it will be definitely advantageous to the cause of Independence, if some points of contact are found in both the organisations, which will be useful for any fight with the Imperialist forces in the near future. The Labour Movement believes in class-war, and the National Congress has denounced this basic principle of the Working-class Movement. It is doubtful to what degrees this co-operation if achieved will last. But the A. I. T. U. C., has begun in the right direction, and let us hope, the impending meeting between the National Congress and the All India Labour Board will achieve something concrete in this direction.

I have mentioned a few factors in the development of the Indian Working-class Movement as I cannot be more extensive for lack of ready reference.

But let me request all my colleagues to put in better efforts to strengthen the organisation of the All India Trade Union Congress. The situation in Madras Presidency is absolutely deplorable, and I have noticed a few so-called labour leaders here, hob-nobbing with the Imperialist forces or decrying the very basic principle of class-war of the Labour Movement. An immediate effort and vigorous propaganda in the

right direction is necessary.

Note.—Com. Nimbkar is a well known labour leader. He has spent the major portion of his youth in the cause of the labour movement in India and has suffered for his work and views. He was hauled up at Madras on, a charge of sedition and was sentenced to six months R. I. on 25th September. We thank him for the above article which he sent us in spite of his other pre-occupations and the short notice we gave him.





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# THE PLACE OF DETECTIVE FICTION IN LITERATURE

#### By P. G. Sundara Rajan, B.A.,

I have been reading a detective novel as a change from the usual heavy stuff which alone endows self-appointed critics like me with literary dignity. The trouble about detective novels is that they are all, as a whole, monoto-This may sound somewhat strange, as detective novels are supposed to be thrillers. Of course, it is not all who soon get tired of stories wherein the detective hunts down the criminal after laborious and ingenious search. Where intelligence plays a prominent part the story is enhanced in its entertainment value. The multitude of detective fiction published during the past half a century might well cause one to wonder whether they could any day be admitted into the Temple of literature. It is, of course, the fashion of highbrows to scoff at novels which only thrill the reader's senses. Detective novels and mystery stories in spite of their vogue and popularity, are treated more or less as passing and perishing meteors. They have not found a place as yet in the beautiful constellation of literary masterpieces.

But most of us today are addicted to shilling shockers and mystery thrillers. It is almost a social crime not to know at least half a dozen writers who specialise in murders—of course in their books only. It does not matter if you are not well up in Shakespeare or Shelley or Johnson or Dryden. It is fashionable to go about with a colour-jacket book of Edgar Wallace or of some one of that fraternity. So much of contemporary literature is obscured by these glow-worms that the beacon lights have to struggle through their

intermittent twinklings. There is a sort of vague hesitation on the part of critics to accept such literature as depicting any thing from real life. And the critics are not to blame. They like the books because they are interesting. But they fall short of a true reflection of real life; for reality is generally less romantic than it is depicted in such books.

Still one is tempted to observe that such works reflect the spirit of the age. At least they speak about such rare phases of life wherein the happening romantic things are not uncommon, Crime novels, though they do not represent general life at least throw a little light, often lurid, of course, upon the life of a section of humanity. If the newspaper today is evidence of the modern life, the critic of a century hence would not be wrong in concluding that the thrillers and detective stories were not mere figments of a vivid and in cases morbid imagination. Murders, mysterious disappearances and burglaries are some of the essential components of a modern newspaper, and the enterprising reporter is often more interested in such "copy" than in epoch-making political or social events. For it is an indisputable fact that human feelings react to primitive emotions more quickly than to happenings which affect the finer intellect. No wonder then such novels enjoy such a wide popularity. But why the literary snobbery on the part of critics who are not inclined to treat them as weighty as other productions?

There must be something fundamentally wrong with these novels.

Even if language was the criterion there would have been innumerable novels to satisfy that standard. We know that among the writers of detective novels there have been names whose position in literature could hardly be disputed. But the detective fiction alone constitutes the untouchables of literature. Chesterton is a literary giant. But his Father Brown stories are hardly the material going to make literary excellence. that he has fared any the in those stories than in his usual writings. An interesting conjecture would be to guess the result if Shaw, Hardy and Galsworthy had written detective stories. Would their work of such a nature be also treated as something less valuable than literature in purest sense of term? It is a debatable point, and he must be rash who would venture a conclusion.

But this much one can say: however much beauty of language and loftiness of conception may endow an ordinary thriller with artistic dignity, it would prove a waste of language if the theme to be treated is similar to the common run of thrillers. The fact is, literary appreciation, to be true and sincere. shies at life which is artificial and makebelieve. The thriller-writer is handicapped by the fact that he has to build up his premises from his conclusion. The development of a particular story in his mind is backward in process. He has to determine the ending of his story first, and then introduce characters and incidents to fit into the pattern. Needless to say this kind of improvisation necessitates the interpolation of scenes from a life which, if not altogether unreal, is quite out of the bounds of reasonable imagination.

If the story is one of pure imagination, then it will at least have the characteristic of good fiction. For, pure imagination takes the mind off the irrelevant and unnatural devices designed for the purposes of the story. In a detective story imagination must

either purge the essential characteristic of the story, namely, artificial weaving or be subjected to an inartistic and crude way of handling. Certain incidents in a story may be highly imaginative and be intensely thrilling to the fancy. But they are the pitiable remnants of the wrecked vessel of fancy which, with poorer sail, ventures out into the vast ocean of literature, unwittingly though. It is not sufficient that the ship has a comfortable cabin or a gay flag. It must have the necessary equipment for wading the deep. If bigger and better vessels sail in majestic splendour amid the storm and lightning of destructive criticism, it is because they are built perfect: they are fashioned by experts who have a keen eye for its seaworthiness. This quality is the indispensable characteristic of realism in literature.

When this realism of naturalness is lacking from stories written to satisfy the only surface requirement of sensation and thrill, no wonder they serve nothing but a cursory reading to pass the hour. Yet by sheer embellishment of features peculiar to detective fiction, certain series of stories have almost earned immortality. The Sherlock Holmes series is a case in point. Conan Doyle cannot be said to have written about life as other great novelists have done. But he has done the alternative. He has created a character who takes his place among the immortals of literature. It is the force of character that makes detective stories like those Holmes stand out in Sherlock prominence.

There is another possibility. A work may be great due to the mere beauty of its language. Just as realism, this factor, too, has no place in detective fiction. In recounting the actions of an investigator who carries on his search relentlessly till the end there could be little excuse for rhetoric. What the reader wants is action and incident. Give him these in plenty and he is satisfied. Movement is the main aim.

and rapid movement at that. The operation of such factors render it difficult if not impossible to bring out a book of sterling worth—from the point of view of theme and language. The plot is a mere formula, an old one. A book crammed with hair-raising thrills and sensational happenings is easily preferred to what might be a great piece of literature. The popularity of the one and the immortality of the other depend upon fundamentally different factors, and there could never be a common basis of assessment where reflections of true life and thrills of an artificial life are concerned. Old masters are understood and appreciated by the discerning few. Mere pictures which are depictions of a riot of colour appeal While the one is everlasting the other is momentary in its appeal. But for certain aspects, even the detective and mystery stories outlive their short life and become almost temporary classics, if there could be any such a thing as that. Time, no doubt, will decide. Still, detective fiction, thanks to powerful creations by masters like Doyle, Van Dine and others, has come to occupy a place in the life of the reader which is not of slight importance. If it withstands the prejudices of its period and retains its freshness in the passing tempest of the years, then surely—well what is the use of hypothetical reflections?

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#### NOTES AND COMMENTS

#### Congress and Office.

For the first time in the history of the Indian National Congress, the question of acceptance of office under the aegis of British Imperialism has become a momentous and live issue which threatens to create an unprecedented furore throughout the land. So far the Congress was considered to be an organisation mainly intended fight for the Independence of the Indian Nation and ever since its inception its main ideal and work were consistent with the above objective. Leaders of distinction and fame have contributed their mite to build up this organisation and its chief function so far was to present a determined front to the foe.

The Gandhian era brought in a programme of passive resistance and non-co-operation which reached their climax in the two Civil Disobedience movements which helped considerably to awaken the masses. These movements were crushed by the Minions of Imperialism by adopting the most brutal and unheard of repressive measures and a helpless nation had to submit to the dictation of the bully and the strong. This was followed by the retirement of Gandhi from active political leadership, leaving the Congress in the hands of the reformist elements with a programme of constitutional fight through the puppet legislatures in India. Meanwhile a Constitution to rule India firmly was framed and accepted by the Parliament and inspite of the universal protests of the Indian people, it was thrust upon India. It confers more powers to the Governors and the Vicerov than enjoyed by them till now and a sort of meaningless, complicated and expensive system of election is sought to be introduced to set up legislatures

which have no sovereign powers to act according to the wishes of the people. They are intended to register the orders of the masters who have power and strength to command.

It is this constitution that is sought to be used and worked by a section of the present day congressmen. They have realised the futility of resistance (for what is the meaning in knocking your head against a wall they say) and they have despaired of any other idea of work for the achievement of Indian Independence. Their slogan is to-day what Messrs. Javakar and Kelkar were saving a decade ago. "Fight the enemy from within. Accept what you get and demand more" If the enemy is omniscient and omnipotent where is the question of fighting either from within or without. Working the constitution cannot mean fighting the enemy. In place of the present agents of Imperialism foreign and Indian fresh agents in the name of the Congress will step in and they will have to do what exactly the present agents have done namely to serve the interests of their masters and not our country; for it would be absurd to that a Congress Minister whose power is as much limited as that of any other man in the street, will keep quiet when a born Satyagrahi like Gandhiji will break the law. the name of law and order he has to put him in prison which means that the Congress Minister has to do exactly the same thing as any other minion has done. If the Congress Ministry gathers up sufficient courage to resist the resistance of Gandhiji then that Ministry can truly serve the interests of Imperialism as the Justice Ministry in this province and other Ministries in other provinces are doing. On the

other hand if the Congress Ministry will register its protest against the idea of putting a civil resister in jail, then the Ministry will be accused of wanting proper notions in law and order and Indians will be stamped as unfit to administer law and order! The Governor gives a sack to the Ministry and there ends the joke.

Both these above propositions are likely to happen, for it is admitted even by the Ministry minded Congressmen that the country has not got 'Swaraj' and it has to fight for Swaraj. So also those who differ from the Ministry minded Congressmen. There is in the country a vast section which carries on a campaign of ceaseless resistance to Imperialism and this section will never remain quiet so long as the country has not achieved its complete Independence. These people either in the name of the Congress or otherwise will carry out a programme of resistance and the powers that be will use all the forces at their command to crush any attempt of winning the freedom of our country. If the Congressmen decide to accept office and work the constitution, they naturally become the enemies of those who wish to wreck the constitution and organise a genuine fight for the attainment of Independence. Thus even the Congressmen are going to be divided into two camps, one in favour of Imperialism fighting their own countrymen and the other against it fighting for the sublime cause of their country's freedom!

Under these circumstances is it right, is it just, is it proper to raise the slogan of acceptance of office in the Congress? Is Congress the institution that should lower its own cherished ideal and degenerate into a reformist camp of the deserters of our country's cause and supporters of Imperialism? With the acceptance of office, the prestige and glory of this institution will be at an end. It can only register a futile protest with the Governing class while

in office and if it is out, it can command the admiration of millions of our countrymen who took to it as an institution which has given them political life and courage to fight for their rights.

Madras city has an onerous task to fulfill. In the middle of this month the A.I.C.C is meeting here and the question of acceptance of office is sure to be raised here. Madras province in its various district and Taluk Conferences has given a reactionary lead in the matter of acceptance of office. But we fondly hope that the city which is going to be the storm centre of wordy warfare will not succumb to the evil, but alluring temptations of office, but will give a lead to the Nation to rouse itself from its temporary inertia with a view to launch a fresh and determined offensive for the realisation of our cherished desire, the complete Independence of our country. Freedom is intended for the masses and if their interests are overlooked freedom cannot be said to have been achieved.

Will Madras give a correct lead?

## The Madras Radical Youth Conference.

When one is becoming almost sick of reading newspaper reports of conferences passing resolutions of a stereotyped nature asking people to work the reforms, wear Khadi, speak Hindi and remove untouchability, it will be something extra-ordinary to hear of a Conference of Radical Youths of the Madras Presidency. This conference which is going to be held on 13th instant has Miss Maniben Kara as the President. Miss Kara's reputation as a well known public worker and a labour leader has inspired confidence in the minds of the organisers of this conference who have chosen her to preside over this conference.

Thus the sober and quiet atmosphere of Madras is going to be disturbed by some talk of radicalism and extremism in politics which may not be palatable

to the other deities of the Province. But we hope the Youths of Madras are sufficiently radical enough to give a clear lead to their elders who are now definitely tending towards a reactionary policy of surrender and compromise.

We wish the conference all success and hope that the youths who assemble in the conference will not stop their work as soon as the conference is over, but will carry the message of the Conference to every nook and corner of the Presidency.

#### The Labour Unity Board.

Various sections of the Indian labour movement have found the necessity for unity, as division among themselves is the most disastrous thing standing in their way of progress. Attempts were made to reach a common formula of work and carry on the labour activities from a common platform. At Bombay, a Unity Board was started representing the various sections in the labour

movement and work is carried on satisfactorily.

We realise the difficulties lying in the way for an organisational unity as many leaders belonging to the various schools of thought may find it imposssible to compromise their political ideals. But we believe that unity for the demand for the improvement of the workers' conditions, their wages etc. can be achieved without much trouble and the chief aim of the labour leaders ought to be the interest of the workers. But if certain self-styled labour leaders are clogs in the progress of the labour movement, they should be exposed and driven out of the labour field. An attempt is now made to co-operate with the National Congress, and if the two Organisations, the Trade Union Congress and the Congress combine their forces and work, surely the country has better chances for its salvation. We hope that the idea will fructify very soon.

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TO



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#### War on Abyssinia.

The sabre-rattling of the Duce has not been a mere bluster. He has already bombarded two defenceless Abyssinian towns and killed thousands of the civil population in contemptuous disregard of the entire world opinion that is definitely ranged against him. If no effective intervention takes place very soon it is most certain that the inevitable will happen.

All the members of the League, without a single exception have condemned in no uncertain terms the barbarous militarist venture of Mussolini. Most of them, not excluding France (the vacillating ally of Italy) have solemnly declared that they would stand by the League and its principles.

Mussolini has flatly refused even to consider the compromise proposals of the committee of Five, and has made it clear that he would be satisfied only with a juicy half of Abyssinia. He would brook no international aid or co-operation in the exploitation of the unfortunate Ethiopia and wants everything for himself.

It would be interesting to recapitulate what the offers were that the Duce contemptuously rejected as not even forming the basis for the ultimate realisation of Italian ambitions. The proposals of the Committee of Five were based on the British and French proposals made in August last.

"The document includes a protocol between Britain and France stating that they have informed the Committee of their readiness to facilitate any territorial adjustments by offering, if necessary, sacrifices in the region of the Somaliland Coast and also their readiness to recognise the special Italian interest in the economic development of Abyssinia.

Consequenty, the Committee looked favourably at the conclusion of economic agreements between Italy and Abyssinia on condition of the existing British and French rights being respected.

Provision is made for the reorganisation of the Public Service, including the Police and Gendarmerie, to ensure the application of the existing and future laws, for the suppression of slavery; and the regulation of carrying arms except by the Police and the Army. Organisation of Police centres are also to be attempted in districts where Europeans reside and for assuring security in the agricultural areas and for maintaining order in the frontier territories and to safeguard the neighbouring territories from raids.

The proposals further provide for the possibility for foreigners to participate in the economic development of the country, for equality of treatment, for reciprocity for foreign trade and for the reorganization of the public works and telegraphic and telephonic communications.

Under the heading "Finance" they provide for the budget and supervision of State expenditure, assessment and collection of taxes and fiscal monopolies and for studies in connection with loans required for the development.

There are also provisions for reorganizing the administration of Education, Health and justice, including organisation of mixed courts for cases between foreigners and Abyssinians.

The delegate to the League and his advisers and staff would be appointed by the League with the Emperor's concurrence.

The duration of the plan is five years and is liable to be extended by the Council for another five or two years."

Mussolini's rejection of even these degraded and imperialist proposals brought all the long drawn-out attempts at conciliation to an end. It was patent that war was inevitable. The Abyssinian Emperor with a pathetic faith in the League sent appeals after appeals to Geneva to stop the massing of Italian forces in East Africa. Even as late as September 29th, when he felt that it was his duty not to

postpone mobilisation, he requested the League to send forth a commission to satisfy world opinion that Abyssinia acted purely in self-defence. Before the League machinery could act, the Duce took time by the forelock and has started the much-dreaded war.

The League Council met in secret to take stock of the situation. It has declared Italy to be the Aggressor and very shortly the League has to consider the question of applying sanctions against Italy under article XVI of the Convenant. If the greatest experiment of modern times-the League of Nations, which was established to be the final and Supreme Court of arbitration for all the nations of the earth is not to have an ignominious end, it is up to the European powers to look ahead of the security of their borders, and see that Mussolini is prevented, at least now, in his most devastating campaign of human slaughter. Will this costly piece of machinery allow itself to be shattered to pieces by one man determined in his pride and arrogance to outlaw civilisation and the tenets of humanity?

Will the agonising spectacle of a powerful, fully-armed and scientifically equipped military force matching its strength against the puny forces of a weak but ancient nation and devastating hundreds of thousands of unarmed, civilians, be allowed to work to the bitter end?

It is no doubt true that Britain could have stopped Mussolini months ago from rushing troops to the frontier, if only she had put aside her imperialist but "enlightened self-interest" in East Africa, and not shamelessly admitted Italy's "need for expansion" in Abyssinia. The disease of selfishness and greed had taken root and stood against prompt intervention in the interests of humanity. But let that part. Is it too much to hope that at

least now, France would realise the grave threat to world-peace that has been encouraged by her vacillation and throw her weight with other Powers in giving the cold douche to Signor Mussolini? Whatever the motives of the intervening Powers may be, it is absolutely indispensable that Mussolini must now be stopped and coerced into submission to world opinion. When that is done, it is up to the Soviet Union and other radical Powers in the League, to fight for a solution of the problem in no way impairing the Sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ethiopia. Will the member states realise their paramount duty not only to the present generation, but to posterity and play their part?

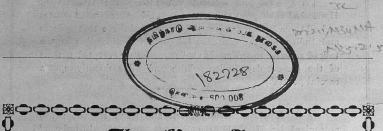
Two outstanding facts outlined by Sir Stafford Cripps at the Brighton Conference are undoubtedly unassailable. That "the great and profound force behind the British Government was the urgent economic interest of the capitalist" is hard to dispute. Even Sir Samuel Hoare had to admit that what animated British intervention was no doubt an "enlightened self-interest." The description of the League as "a tool of satiated imperialists led by France and Britain" is no doubt true to a large extent.

The League was styled, though a bit angrily as "the International Burglar's Union:" There is force in the argument advanced by the huge majority at Brighton, that if the sanctions are not applied against Italy, it would indirectly be helping the consolidation of Fascist Imperialism and virtually hand over weak and helpless Abyssinia into the hands of the Fascist dictator. Thus, though the intervention of the Powers may not be free from the Imperialist taint, it is the paramount duty of every right-thinking person to stand up four square against the barbarous campaign of murderous Mussolini.

Since this is written news is to hand that Adowa has fallen and the Italian forces are marching ahead in Ethiopian territory bombing the civil population and killing as many as possible. News is also to hand that the holy city Aksum has also fallen. It is no wonder that Italians are marching ahead with their latest weapons of modern warfare while Ethiopia is left in a precarious predicament. Unless the other nations belonging to the League come to the rescue of Abyssinia, the fall of Abyssinia as a whole is not far off.

The League Council has declared Italy as the Aggressor and the mem-

bers of the League are contemplating to apply sanctions against Italy. If Italy is boycotted by all the other nations, surely Italy will have to eat the humble pie. But Mussolini foreseeing all these things, has made sufficient provisions to stand alone and it is hard to say how long he can do so. If the other nations lift the ban of supplying arms to Abyssinia, then the smashing of Italy is not very difficult. We have to wait and watch how far the European Nations will respond to the request of Abyssinia in its present plight to resist against a formidable bully like Italy.



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# Whither Hyderabad?

(A brief discussion of some of the outstanding problems that confront the subjects of the Premier Indian State)

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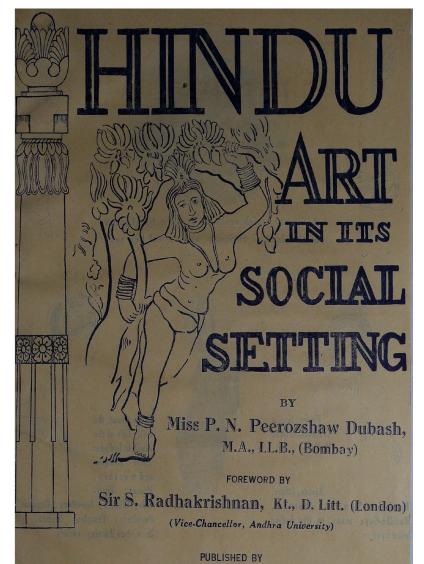
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