

Problems of the Revolution in India.

By Karl Radek.

II. The National-Reformist and National-Revolutionary Camps.

(Conclusion.)

Why have the national reformists, whose class position impels them towards a compromise with English imperialism, and who fear the revolutionary movement of the workers and peasants, nevertheless adopted some fighting measures? We answered this question partly in our previous article, which pointed out that **the antagonisms between the interests of English imperialism and those of young Indian capitalism do not allow English imperialism to satisfy the needs of the capitalist development of India.** This forces the Indian industrial bourgeoisie into an **opposition** which intensifies, during certain phases, into attempts at fighting. At the present juncture such a necessity for active struggle has been brought about by **the differentiation in the camp of the nationalists.**

The working class, which followed the national reformists blindly in the period between 1919 and 1922, began to separate from them in the years from 1926 and 1927, and to withdraw from their influence. It began to remove the agents of the national reformists from the leading positions in the trade unions; during the enormous strike wave, which rushed far beyond the highest tide-mark of the strikes of the previous period, **the working class began to form as class,** for these strikes were not purely economic disputes, they were conflicts in which the working class began for the first time to feel itself as a separate power, and to oppose not only English imperialism, but **the so-called Indian society.** The workers who have refused the intermediation of the "holy man" Gandhi, the workers who have rejected the aid of the "sympathisers", for the reason that this aid was only intended for a part of the workers — the Mohammedans —, the workers who have now been carrying on the struggle for months, **are no longer the same mass which blindly followed the national reformists.** It was not for nothing that the reformists pushed forward in the trade union movement, their "very leftest leader", the younger Nehru, who decked himself with revolutionary feathers in order to gain control of the movement. It suffices to read the speech held by the younger Nehru at the **Conference of the Trade Union Central in Nagpur,** in order to grasp the **enormous political importance of the Indian strikes of the last three years.** Jawaharlal Nehru was obliged not only to declare himself in favour of complete separation from England, but to proclaim that the working class did not need an independence in which the rule of the Eng-

lish was replaced by the rule of the Indian capitalists. **The aim of the revolutionary movement can only be socialism, and this can only be realised by the seizure of power by the working class.** Therefore he, Nehru, was an enemy of the **II. International, the lackey of the bourgeoisie.** And therefore he was filled with enthusiasm at the rise of the Soviet Union. But . . . as he is not agreed with the **methods of the Comintern,** he begged for a postponement of the affiliation to the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat! Nothing more.

Jawaharlal Nehru, the son of Motilal Nehru, the actual leader of the national-reformist camp, came forward with Gandhi's blessing at the Trade Union Congress as a so-called "oppositional communist", one who is merely dissatisfied with the "regime". This fact in itself shows the enormous influence exercised by the strike wave on the petty bourgeoisie. It might have been expected that after such a speech Jawaharlal Nehru would have been expelled by the national reformists as deserter to the revolutionary camp. Gandhi, who proposed his candidature as president of the National Congress, substantiated his proposal as follows:

"No-one can surpass him in his love for his country: he is brave and passionate, and at this moment these qualities are very essential. But, although passionate and resolute in the struggle, still he possesses the reason of a statesman. An adherent of discipline, he has proved in deeds his capability to submit to decisions with which he is not in agreement. He is modest and practical enough not to rush to extremes. In his hands the nation is perfectly secure."

Did Gandhi alter his attitude towards Jawaharlal Nehru after his almost communist speech? Not in the least! And young Nehru, the "almost-communist", was elected president of the Indian National Congress, to the end that with his aid and through his intermediation the workers and the democratic petty bourgeoisie might be restrained from independent action.

Gandhi's words on the growing influence of the "part of violence" are to be attributed to the fact that **the example given by the struggles of the working class has awakened the democratic revolutionary tendencies of the petty bourgeoisie.** Externally, this is chiefly manifested in the **radicalisation**

the Youth League, which promotes the revolutionary mass struggle against imperialism, and in the activation of the terrorist movement. This we have learnt from the newspaper reports on the proceeding of the Congress at Lahore, where Gandhi was at times threatened with the loss of the majority. There can be no doubt that not one hundredth part of the facts have come to our ears which signalise the **beginning concentration of a national-revolutionary camp**, and its opposition to the national-reformist camp.

The national reformists, through their spokesman Gandhi, tell the plain truth when they declare that it would mean the **abandonment of the field to the national-revolutionary movement and to English imperialism**, were they to abstain from action in this situation. In other words: they would lose the leadership of the movement. The transition of the national reformists to fighting methods is not caused solely by the impossibility of coming to an understanding with English imperialism, but as much by the fear of losing influence over the petty bourgeois and proletarian masses now urging on the real fight. It need not be said that the national reformists, in taking up the struggle against English imperialism, had hoped that the English would be intimidated by the mass movement, and would make concessions before the struggle for the bourgeoisie could become dangerous. At the same time they took measures to prevent the revolutionary struggle from getting beyond their control.

When Gandhi began the salt campaign, he probably left himself be guided by the hope that he would thereby chiefly arouse the village, which suffers more than the city from the burden of the salt tax. It was to be a means of pressure upon the government. But at the same time it was to side-track the peasants from the struggle against the landowners. Gandhi intended to lead the national movement into the desert, pilgrimaging from Ahadabad to the sea. But before the news of his campaign had reached the villages of mighty India, all the cities had risen.

It is the city workers who suffer a hundred times more, for the foremen demand a month's wages from them for engaging them. They suffer a hundred times more through the system of arbitrary fines which robs them of the greater part of their wages, quite apart from the many other burdens imposed on the Indian proletariat. But the working masses and the democratic petty bourgeoisie urge on the struggle, and they realise that the salt campaign is an utterance of disobedience to the English laws, and that it represents that brick in the decaying structure of English imperialism whose removal may run a fissure from the top to the bottom of the building. The magnificent mass movement, the demonstrations, simple but taken part in by millions, converted the salt campaign into an important revolutionary fact, quite contrary to the intentions of the national reformists. A glance at the English press suffices to observe in its howls the alarm which has seized upon the English bourgeoisie. The difference between the reactionary "Morning Post" and the Liberal "Manchester Guardian", which represents the best traditions of English radicalism, is only one of tone. What is that article in the "Manchester Guardian" worth which defends Gandhi's arrest, which maintains that for such a holy ascetic prison is no punishment, and that it is excellent for his health to be removed from the scene of political excitement? Garwin, the representative of common sense among the Conservatives, who stood out against the die-hards during the Chinese revolution, and who is opposed to the rupture of relations with the Soviet Union, writes about Gandhi:

"In words the apostle of the renunciation of violence, he is however at the same time in actual practice the organiser of anarchy, an apostle of hate and a forerunner

of bloodshed". ("Observer", 4th May 1930. Retranslated from the Russian.)

The press of that "Labour" government which realises the wishes of English imperialism writes essentially the same. The common class interests of the English bourgeoisie appear to be touched on a very sore spot when the "Left" Brailsford comes forward with a despicable article in which he proves that what is going on in India is not imperialist robbery, but an antique tragedy. Both heroes — English imperialism and the Indian people — are therefore fighting for sacred rights: The people of India are striving for their independence, but England cannot simply thrust aside its responsibility in India, which would become the scene of great inner struggles after the withdrawal of the British army.

All the comic papers in world are publishing one and the same caricature which has sprung spontaneously into being with regard to the salt campaign: Gandhi strews salt on the tail of the British lion, but the lion roars, and it can be seen that its whole body is covered with sores; a handful of salt is enough to make the majestic animal roar and rear. It would be the greatest possible error to fail to grasp the objectively revolutionary importance of the situation created in India by the whole of the previous struggles of the working class, and by the policy of English imperialism, merely because the helm of the movement is outwardly in the hands of the national reformists. Had the counter-revolutionary trend of Gandhi and his intentions gained the upper hand of the objectively revolutionary importance of the movement, and had the really revolutionary elements therefore turned their backs on the movement, then they would have done the national reformists the greatest service. The masses of the workers and petty bourgeoisie, formally the followers of the national reformists, have been shown by facts to have imparted a revolutionary character to a movement which was initiated as a purely reformist one, and to have exceeded the limits drawn for the movement by the national reformists.

For those same masses who demonstrate today with a handful of salt, will tomorrow attack the salt stores and take up the fight against the soldiers of English imperialism. Under the influence of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat and of the city petty bourgeoisie, a peasant movement is beginning to develop, and the Indian army is beginning to crumble. The movement is beginning to get beyond the control of the national reformists. The national-revolutionary camp must place itself at its head. Such a camp will inevitably be formed. Every necessary social element exists. The history of the movement from 1919 till 1921 has not failed to leave its traces among the masses. The fact alone that Motilal Nehru and Gandhi have been forced to hide their policy behind Jawaharlal Nehru, the president of the Independence League, whose pseudo-radicalism has made him popular, proves in itself that even the leaders of the national reformists take into account the distrust of the masses, that is, their political experience. Every treacherous step taken by the national reformists adds to the political experience of the masses, and accelerates the separation of the national-revolutionary elements from the national reformists.

This situation sets the working class of India great tasks. It must create a proletarian mass party, it must conquer the hegemony over the peasantry and the city petty bourgeoisie. It can attain this aim by combining the social struggle of these strata with the political struggle for liberation from the yoke of English imperialism. The Indian communists are faced with the questions of an agrarian program, of the attitude to be adopted to the slogan of dominion status, the questions of the methods of revolutionary struggle, which they, aided by the experience gained in the Russian and Chinese revolutions, but taking fully into account the conditions in India, must solve. These solutions can have nothing in common with the Menshevist confusion of Roy.