

INDIA

The Indian National Congress Against Revolutionary Development.

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During the last few weeks there has been no fundamental change in the main characteristics of the struggle between the Indian National Congress and the British Imperialist Government. Ever since the beginning of the Civil Disobedience movement, the country has been governed by a series of special viceregal *ukases* or Ordinances that override or supplement the existing imperialist "legislation" and that enable the executive authority to deal summarily, without the impediments caused by normal judicial procedure, with various kinds of political "offences".

The latest addition to these *ukases* is the "Unlawful Associations Ordinance" issued on October 10th which was primarily intended "to enable the Bombay Government to cope with the new campaign for the non-payment of taxes in Gujarat",—a campaign that was naturally to be expected in connection with the yearly collection of land revenue which begins after the autumn harvest. Under this Ordinance, when an association is declared "unlawful", the Provincial Government is authorised to seize "any place, including a house, building, tent or vessel which, in its opinion, is used for the purposes of the unlawful association". The Ordinance was immediately applied to the Indian National Congress in Bombay and all its extensive network of organisations—no

less than 38 in number—including the Youth Leagues, the Seva Dal (National Militia), the War Councils, the Boycott Committees, the "Desh Sevikas" (Women Volunteers), the Publicity Department, the Nationalist Muslim Party, the "Labour" branches, etc. The Congress House has been confiscated, every room set up as a Congress Committee Office has been raided and closed down, all the members of the "War Councils" established in quick succession have been arrested, the editors of the "Congress Bulletin" which appears daily, notwithstanding the Press and other Ordinances, are sent to jail one after another. In this way hundreds of persons, mostly young men and women, have been arrested every week, and all Congress demonstrations of protest continue to be broken up by increasingly brutal *lathi* (baton) charges of the police.

Over 40,000 Congressmen are now in the already overcrowded prisons, and the only important leaders that are not imprisoned are Pandit Motilal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose. **Jawaharlal Nehru**, who was set free on October 11th, was again arrested on October 19th and has been sentenced to two years rigorous imprisonment.

The reports of arrests, confiscations of newspapers and property, prosecutions, police attacks, prison torture, firing upon demonstrations, etc., fill up whole pages daily of the Indian newspapers, and would be almost monotonous reading were it not for the valuable evidence they supply of the deep and widespread character of the mass discontent that is seeking organised expression but that has still to be liberated from the ideological morass of the National Congress, whose leaders are endeavouring to bring the workers and peasants under their influence and to pose as spokesmen of their interests. In the reports published in the nationalist as well as in the imperialist Press it is the Congress that it is assumed to be the leader of the Indian liberation movement. The Imperialist Press—Tory, Liberal, Labour and I.L.P.—all declare, that the Round Table Conference in London is "unrepresentative" without the participation of the Congress leaders, who alone are regarded as being capable of "delivering the goods". The same Indian Liberals as are now taking part in the London Conference declared only a few months ago that they would not cooperate without Gandhi and the other Congress leaders, and although they are now doing so, they still assert that any agreements they may make with British imperialism would be futile without the imprimatur of the Congress leaders.

As for the Government itself, although the Sapru-Jayaker negotiations failed and the Congress has since been declared illegal, it is an open secret that negotiations are still being carried on with Gandhi, who is still interned, and Motilal Nehru, who is in a sanatorium. A Quaker named Alexander, a member of the Society of Friends, had several interviews with Gandhi last month in order to try and bring about a settlement between the Congress and the Government, and he has been in touch with the Viceroy in connection with these interviews. And now Mr. H. N. Brailsford of the I.L.P. is in India on behalf of the I.L.P. Secretary of State for India, Mr. Wedgwood Benn, and he is actively engaged in winning over the Congress leaders in order to complete the betrayal of the Indian masses.

By all these means the Congress has placed itself and has been placed by British Imperialist policy in the forefront of public attention, and the general impression created in India itself as well as abroad is that the Congress is leading the anti-imperialist struggle. But the **real struggle that is going on is not between the Congress and British imperialism but between the Congress and the Indian revolutionary movement.** This truth, which was implicit in the very structure and programme of the Congress itself, has emerged into greater clearness during the Congress campaign of the last six months, and should be borne in mind in order to form a correct appreciation of the situation.

In its latest weekly summary of the Indian situation the Government of India describes the outlook as "bright", and declares that the Congress Campaign is waning in almost all the provinces, that the boycott of foreign goods is gradually failing, that the picketing of shops and educational institutions is declining. There is some truth in this statement. Not only have the extremely severe repressive measures of the Government decimated the ranks of the Congress, but a strong process of differentiation has been going on in the Congress itself and there is a general dissatisfaction especially among the youth with the purely negative slogans hitherto

adopted by the Congress. In the earlier stages the programme of the Congress was completely dominated by the millowners and merchants of Bombay and Allahabad, and it was natural that in their own interests they should lay the greatest emphasis upon the boycott of British cloth as the main activity of the Congress. Old stocks were sold out, production was stimulated for a time and the industrialists and their commercial agents hoped, by supporting the Congress, to establish themselves as the dominant factor. But their calculations were upset by the catastrophic fall in the prices of agricultural products even below the cost of production and the consequent diminution in the purchasing power of the peasantry, and by the enormous increase in unemployment among the industrial workers resulting in enhanced revolutionary discontent. In the meantime during the last three months, since the older leaders are almost all in prison, the **Youth Leagues** have acquired an important position in the shaping of Congress Policy, and these bourgeois Youth Leagues are demanding that the Congress should adopt an economic programme, based upon the immediate minimum needs of the workers and peasants, and that the workers and peasants should be drawn into the Congress organisation. The Congress leaders have not committed themselves to any such definite economic programme, but they have welcomed the activities of the Youth Leagues in trying to bring the industrial workers under the Congress flag.

There is now the closest cooperation between the National Congress, the Trade Union Reformists and the Trade Union Leftists in order to break up the revolutionary unions of the working class and to get the workers to look upon the National Congress as the only political organisation standing for the demands of the working masses. This move receives the whole-hearted support and financial help of the millowners of Bombay and Allahabad. In the same way, the District Committees of the Congress, which are dominated by the Zemindars, are preventing the development of the campaign among the peasantry for the non-payment of taxes. In fact, the present policy of the Congress is to become a Kuomintang, with the object of establishing an Indian Nanking with the blood of the workers and peasants.

But in spite of the machinations of some Trade Union leaders who acquired influence among the workers by their radical phraseology, the vast majority of the workers—especially railwaymen, textile workers, jute workers—have not allowed themselves to be misled by the counter revolutionary propaganda of the Congress agents. Among the railway workers there is a very strong revolutionary ferment caused by the refusal of the G.I.P. railway authorities to take back the tens of thousands of workers who were thrown out of employment after the great railway strike in the spring of this year on the pretext that their places had already been filled. There is a rapidly growing discontent among the railway workers on all lines, and a general railway strike is expected as soon as the signal is given by the G.I.P. railway workers going on strike in solidarity with their dismissed comrades. Among the textile workers of Bombay, the Congress united front propaganda has made a definite attempt to destroy the Communist influence in the **Girni Kamgar** (Red Flag) Union, and in this respect it has been helped by the treachery of its president Khandalkar who is making active propaganda against the Communists and against the Young Workers' League, and has been stating at public meetings "that the interests of the workers and the country in general would be well served by working in cooperation with the Congress". Nevertheless, at the annual meeting of the Girni Kamgar Union held on October 2nd, the 15,000 workers who were present refused to listen to Khandalkar and even threw stones at him, and gave their support to Comrade Deshpande, the General Secretary of the All-India Trade Union Congress.

In spite therefore of the spectacular achievements of the Congress leaders, it is the growing revolutionary movement among the workers and the increasing discontent among the peasantry that are the characteristics of the present situation and that are the determining factors in the struggle against Imperialism. Those who have been in intimate contact with the Congress Committees and the "War Councils" declare that the leaders are on the verge of capitulation. The liberation of the working masses from Congress leadership will be an important step forward in the development of the anti-imperialist struggle.