

# AGAINST COLONIAL OPPRESSION

## The Breakdown of the "Peace" Negotiations in India.

By V. Chatterpahayya.

The negotiations for a "peaceful" adjustment of differences, that began on June 20th between the Government and the imprisoned Congress leaders through the intermediary of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mr. Jayakar, broke down finally on September 5th. The two imperialist agents have issued a lengthy statement showing the course of the discussions during the last two months. The contents of the letters that passed between the leaders themselves, and between the leaders and the Viceroy are now made public, and we are told in some detail on what terms the Nationalist leaders were prepared to call off the civil disobedience movement. Those terms were

categorically rejected by the Viceroy as "impossible", and the leaders declare that "they see no meeting-ground between the Government and the Congress" and that "the Congress must continue to fight for freedom".

The failure of the negotiations has been hailed with delight by the so-called "European" Association—a deliberate imperialist misuse of the term "European" to describe the British—as well as by the radical elements in the Congress as represented in the Youth Leagues and the "War Councils". But in their final letter, written after the Viceroy's reply had been received, the Congress leaders themselves say that "there need be no disappointment at the **apparent** failure of the peace negotiations". (Italics mine.) As these leaders are all lawyers accustomed to weighing their words carefully, we may conclude that they regard the failure as temporary and that at a certain point the negotiations will be resumed. It is, therefore, essential to form a correct appreciation of the position now taken up by them, in order to estimate at what point the negotiations will be taken up again, and what the factors are that are delaying the compromise between the Indian bourgeoisie and British imperialism.

To begin with, it is interesting to record the fact that of the three leaders **Gandhi**, **Motilal Nehru** and **Jawaharlal Nehru**, it is Motilal that is the most conscious and consistent representative of the Indian bourgeoisie as a whole, while Gandhi voices the demand of the millowners and merchants of Gujarat and Bombay, and Jawaharlal puts up a feeble theoretical resistance, summing up his own attitude in a letter to Gandhi in which he says: "I realize that most people are not warlike and like peace, so I try hard to suppress myself and **take a peaceful view.**" Gandhi still adheres to his absurd "11 points" seven of which are merely a part of the demands of the capitalists, but he regards these 11 points as the "substance of independence", and would personally be willing to accept these as the basis of negotiation, although he admits in a letter to Motilal that his "position is inconsistent with the intrinsic Congress policy or **the present temper of the people**". As far as Gandhi is concerned, we may take it that his betrayal of the movement is being delayed by "the present temper of the people", that is, by the tremendous revolutionary ferment among the masses. But with Motilal there is another important consideration that weighs. He regards the whole mobilisation of the masses under the Congress flag as the only weapon for compelling imperialism to make the concessions demanded by the Indian bourgeoisie. Those demands have not yet been granted even in part, and there is therefore no reason to call off the civil disobedience movement, **so long as this movement is still under the influence of the Congress leaders and so long as the point has not been reached at which the growing revolutionary movement of the workers and peasants threatens to overthrow the Indian capitalists and landlords.** In other words, there is still a clash of interests between the Indian bourgeoisie and British imperialism, and the revolutionary labour and agrarian movements have not yet matured to the point of bringing about a complete identity of those interests. The language of the Congress leaders, representing the bourgeoisie, is therefore still anti-imperialist, and they are therefore still able to formulate the following "preliminary" conditions for calling off the civil disobedience movement.

1. "No solution would be satisfactory unless it were recognised that India had the **right to secede** from the British Empire."

2. A **National Government** responsible to the people, the National Government to have **control of the defence forces** as well as **full economic control**.

3. Recognition of the right to refer to an independent tribunal such British claims and **concessions**, including the **Indian public debt**, as seems unjust to the Nationalist leaders.

4. Picketing of **foreign cloth** and liquor shops to continue.

5. Illicit manufacture of salt to continue, but no raids to take place on the Government's salt depots.

6. Political prisoners **not found guilty of violence** to be released, and their confiscated property restored. This applies to the non-cooperation prisoners of 1920-21.

7. Village officers who had resigned to be reinstated.

8. All special ordinances to be repealed.

9. Composition of the Round Table Conference to be decided after the settlement of the above demands.

It is obvious that these are the maximum demands of the Indian bourgeoisie, for the satisfaction of their own interests as well as those of the educated and professional sections that are the appendages of the bourgeoisie. But even these demands—which are quite impossible from the point of view of British imperialism—do not use the word independence which was declared as the goal at the Lahore Congress in December 1929. They merely ask for a formal **recognition** of the **right** to secede, but not the secession itself. That formal recognition is regarded as necessary to emancipate them from the terrible mass pressure and to supply the phraseological cover for conducting the negotiations for a compromise against the masses. The demand of "full economic control" by the "National Government" and of the right of cancelling such British claims and concessions as seemed "unjust" (that is, as militated against the interests of Indian capitalists), are obviously a direct challenge to the monopolistic control by British capital of financial and fiscal policy, forest and other concessions. A compromise is inevitable on the question of the rupee ratio, of tariffs, etc., but it is absurd to suppose that British imperialism would be prepared to hand over "full economic control" or even the greater part of the economic control to the Indian bourgeoisie, or that the "control of the defence forces" would ever pass into the hands of the Indian bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie knows this, but is making a stand for more concessions and more power, while the spectre of communism is haunting them through their fight and driving them to the acceptance of fewer concessions and less power.

The factors that have hitherto favoured the Congress, that is, the bourgeoisie, are as follows:

a) The Congress, which has a certain tradition and prestige, took the initiative in launching the mass struggle on the slogan of national independence, that is, mobilising the revolutionary mass discontent along certain channels of activity, such as, breach of salt-tax laws, boycott of foreign cloth, picketing of liquor shops, boycott of schools and colleges, fight for the legalisation of the "National Flag", right of demonstrations, etc. (The strict observance of non-violence is regarded as an essential part of the Congress "programme".)

b) Through the combined efforts of the Nationalist leaders and the labour reformists, and latterly of certain adventurers working on behalf of the renegades of the so-called "Right Communist Opposition", the workers of important industrial centres like Bombay, Calcutta, and certain South Indian cities, have taken part in Congress demonstrations and are being exhorted to join the Congress and look upon it as their own political organisation.

c) The peasantry are still under the organisational influence of the Congress Committees, which are hindering the development of the general peasant discontent into an agrarian revolution.

d) The boycott movement, which is described by the Imperialist Government as the "only real success of the Congress", has so far had the moral and financial support of the millowners and merchants, — of textile and commercial capital, — and has enlisted the active support of large masses of middle-class women and youths.

e) The war on the North-West Frontier, and the events in Chittagong, etc. coinciding with the civil disobedience movement, though not a part of it, have stimulated the anti-imperialist struggle and indirectly enhanced the prestige of the Congress.

But changes are beginning to be observable that are bound to affect severely the bourgeoisie and therefore the Congress leaders. Firstly, the non-violent character of the movement is fast disappearing. The Congress control is still strong in Gujarat and parts of Bombay and the Central Provinces, but terrorism is gaining the upper hand in Bengal and in the Punjab, and the movement threatens to spread to other Provinces, owing to the increase of imperialist repression and of desperate unemployment among the middle-class youth, but partly also to direct Government instigation. The attitude of the Congress leaders is seen in the above mentioned demand that only political prisoners not guilty of violence should be released, while the victims of the anti-imperialist struggle in Lahore, Chittagong, Sholapur, etc. are deliberately excluded. Secondly, the textile manufacturers who joined and financed

the boycott movement because of the necessity of selling out old stocks, and in the hope of increasing production and sale, now find that they have to close their mills, because the inland market has no purchasing capacity. Similarly, the merchants are losing money, and both the millowners and merchants are now beginning to press the Congress leaders to give in. Thirdly, the condition of the peasantry, owing to the rapidly falling prices of agricultural produce, is becoming desperate, and in many districts they are passing out of the control of the Congress Committees and are taking to direct action. Fourthly, unemployment among the industrial workers, which has now become aggravated by the closing of the Bombay mills involving some 80,000 workers, and by the fact that 30,000 of the G. I. P. Railway workers who went on strike last Spring are still workless, is creating a situation which, as admitted by the Secretary of the Indian Merchants' Chamber and by the Vice-President of the Indian Chamber of Commerce, is becoming extremely dangerous to the capitalists.

It is clear therefore that industrial unemployment with its consequences, agrarian revolts, terrorism, failure of the boycott, diminishing trade, and other factors must soon compel the industrialists, merchants, landowners and professional classes, whose interests are being threatened with ruin, to put pressure upon the Congress to "call off" their movement. Individual leaders may discreetly retire rather than face the consequences of the collapse, but the bourgeoisie will be compelled then to accept terms very different from these now formulated by the imprisoned leaders. The trump card is in the hands of the masses.

## The Agrarian Disturbances in Palestine.

By Bob (Jaffa).

Whilst in Geneva diplomatic speeches on the Palestine problem are being made, in which "concern" for the well-being of the population is always placed in the foreground and the representatives of British social imperialism (Henderson, Drummond Shiels & Co.) at one moment appeal to the world to pity them in their "hard task" in this country, and the next moment praise their agents and officials (who are guilty of the worst acts of oppression and violence) on account of their cleverness and circumspection, the imperialist robber policy in Palestine is still being carried on.

The occupation army is being constantly increased. Almost every month fresh regiments arrive in the little country. The visits of the British fleet are becoming more and more frequent. The aerodromes which already exist are being extended and new ones are being erected. All this is to serve to arouse respect and fear among the population for British imperialism. The persecution of the revolutionaries, before all of the Arab and Jewish Communists, who have already been ten times "exterminated" and "liquidated" (if one is to believe the local press) and of which there are ever fresh "nests" to be discovered, and the ruthless throttling of the press and of the right of assembly serve the same purpose.

In addition, British imperialism, in spite of all past failures, is still endeavouring to set up a block with the Arab big landowners and big merchants. The "conciliatory" attitude of the Arab Executive Committee shows that the national reformists, in spite of stormy mass protests, is continuing to pursue the path of treachery.

Under the protection of the British bayonets, the Zionist adventurers now believe that the time has come to renew the campaign of conquest against the Arabs which was interrupted by the August revolt. The new acts of conquest of the Zionists have already resulted in serious agrarian disturbances — in fact even bloody collisions — whilst the excitement of the Arab masses is growing all round.

The scene of the disturbances is the district of Wadi Havaras. The Zionists want to drive out the 12,000 Arab Fellahin and Bedouins who inhabit and cultivate the soil in this district and settle thousands of Jewish Halluzim (pioneers) in their place. The Fellahin have nothing in the world beyond their land and cattle. Even after the big landowners (Effendi) bargained away their land to the Zionists, the Fellahin never recognised this commercial bargain concluded behind their backs between the Zionists and the big landowners. On the contrary, the British soldiers who came to drive the inba-