

Indian Sell-Out Constitution

By M. N. ROY.

The Swaraji Hold Out Olive Branch to the Supporters of Imperialism and Finance

In December, 1927, the Indian National Congress declared the attainment of complete national independence to be its ultimate goal. It further decided to boycott the British Royal Commission appointed to examine the possibility of further constitutional progress for India. In view of the fact that during the forty-two years of its existence the National Congress had never demanded national independence, last year's resolution was hailed, inside and outside India, as the beginning of a new stage in the nationalist movement. It should be remembered that even in the stormy days of 1920-22, when the country was on the verge of a revolution, under the leadership of Gandhi the Congress persistently refused to demand national independence and declared its object to be self-government within the British Empire. So last year's resolution naturally raised high hopes, and it was believed that the nationalist bourgeoisie would still play a revolutionary role in the anti-imperialist struggle. Those with a better understanding of the situation and of the class composition of the Congress leadership, were, however, sceptical. In this resolution they saw only a manoeuvre of the bourgeois leaders to retain their control over the radical (politically) petty bourgeoisie and to harness the popular discontent in order to strike a favorable bargain with imperialism.

In the beginning of the year representatives of all the nationalist parties met in a conference to devise the ways and means of enforcing the boycott of the Simon Commission. The conference set up a committee to draw up a constitution. One might reasonably expect that the projected constitution should have for its fundamental principle the independence resolution of the national congress. Disappointment was in store for those who entertained such expectation.

Sell-Out to Britain.

After several months of deliberation, which was carried on behind closed doors, the committee has presented to the people the result of its labors. It has declared in favor of a self-governing India as a part of the British empire! And this not as a stepping stone to a further goal, but as the "genuine responsible government."

The committee which drafted this constitution had Moti Lal Nehru, leader of the Swaraj Party, as its chairman. Apart from Nehru, among the nine authors of the constitution, there are four more Swarajist leaders including Subhas Chandra Bose who is considered to represent the radical wing of the party. Bose was the trusted lieutenant of the late C. R. Das (the founder of the Swaraj Party), and was arrested in the beginning of 1925 on the suspicion of having connection with and sympathy for secret revolutionary organizations. After two years' detention in prison he was released at the beginning of this year. The remaining members of the committee are two titled ex-high officials representing the Hindu and Moslem bourgeoisie respectively and an ex-army officer representing the landed aristocracy. If Bose is considered to be the spokesman of the urban petty bourgeoisie, then this draft constitution should be accepted as embodying the demands of all but the proletarian and peasant masses.

In addition to the fundamental clause defining the relation with the imperialist overlord, the draft con-

stitution demands: 1. abolition of the ministry for India in the British government; 2. a sovereign parliament composed of the king (British), a senate (200 members indirectly elected through the provincial legislatures) and a house of representatives (500 members elected directly by universal adult suffrage); and 3. a council of ministers (nationality of the ministers not mentioned) responsible for every branch of administration to the parliament.

The British governor general will remain as the head of the government. "Emoluments, allowances and pensions" for the British officials of the public services are guaranteed.

Olive Branch.

The most remarkable and interesting point in the document is the following:

"We cannot see why men who have put great sums of money into India should be at all nervous . . . If there are any special interests of European commerce which require special treatment in the future, it is only fair that the Europeans should formulate proposals. We do not doubt that they will receive proper consideration from those anxious for a peaceful solution of the political problem."

This is an olive branch to those who, fearing that political self-government might encroach too much upon the privileges of imperialist trade and finance, would oppose the compromise constitution. This passage also contains the hint that in course of negotiation the Indian bourgeoisie would agree to imperial preference, thus admitting British monopoly over the foreign trade of India. A few days before the draft constitution was published the Associated Chamber of Commerce of India (British and European traders) issued its memorandum for the Simon commission in which it is energetically demanded that any new reform of the Indian government must provide so that no discrimination against foreign commercial interests shall be possible. The nationalist bourgeoisie, "anxious for a peaceful solution of the political problem," concedes this demand.

The draft constitution is not a surprise. As a matter of fact, much more is demanded therein than will eventually be accepted. It is not yet known how the nationalist movement as a whole has received the document. But it is sure to be accepted officially by the national congress, notwithstanding last year's

resolution. The petty bourgeois nationalist revolutionaries will grumble, but will hardly be able to change the course of politics under bourgeois leadership.

British Sympathetic.

How the demands will be received by the British is also still difficult to say precisely. The sympathetic tone adopted by the correspondent of the "Times" in transmitting the support of the document is, however, indicative. He makes such commentaries:

"The tone of the document is admirable. The possibility of a political existence outside the empire is not considered, but it postulates the disappearance of the Indian empire in a British empire."

Considering that the messages of the "Times" correspondent are often officially inspired and always reflect the views of the British circles in India, these commentaries can be taken as the straw showing which way the wind blows.

The comments of the Calcutta Statesman (organ of British commerce) also indicate that the document may be expected to receive a favorable consideration as a basis for negotiation. The paper writes: "It is a great advance to have the Indian demand stated with a precision it hitherto lacked, and in reasonable language."

Give Up Simon Boycott.

The boycott of the Simon commission, as far as the nationalist bourgeoisie is concerned, has practically broken down. Several provincial legislatures have passed the government motion appointing committees of elected members to co-operate with the Simon commission. In Bengal, the stronghold of the Swaraj Party, the government won with a majority of 72 to 50. It is almost a foregone conclusion that in its autumn session the central legislature will also agree to set up its committee to co-operate with the royal commission which will return to India in October. Then will begin the negotiations to strike the bargain, the imperialists conceding as little as possible, the nationalist bourgeoisie accepting as much as obtainable peacefully.

The appearance of boycott may still be kept up to save political faces and to create a smoke screen for the cooperation behind the scene. But it is certain the nationalist bourgeoisie is not going to encourage mass demonstrations as took place during the first visit of the Simon commission at the beginning of the year. Already then, towards the end, the bourgeois nationalist

leaders condemned mass demonstrations. So any real opposition to the Simon commission can now only come from the workers and peasant masses; and in case of a big movement the urban petty bourgeoisie will join in.

Ignore Radical Demands.

The possibility of a class differentiation in the nationalist movement, the petty bourgeois rank and file breaking away from bourgeois leadership, owing to the treachery of the latter, is still remote. The republican party formed by some of the left wing elements inside the congress when the independence resolution was adopted never functioned. Under the influence of the Communists, petty bourgeois radical leaders moved in the joint conference of all the nationalist parties that the projected constitution should be framed on the basis of the congress resolution. Some of the left motions were even accepted by the conference; but in actually framing the constitution all radical principles about a "Declaration of Rights" were brushed aside together with the congress resolution. Only the anxiety of the nationalist bourgeoisie for "a peaceful solution of the political problem" prevailed.

The grant of the draft constitution will be an improvement on present conditions; but obviously it contains the maximum demands of the nationalist bourgeoisie providing sufficient margin to climb down in course of the negotiations. It is altogether out of the question that imperialism will grant the maximum demands of the Indian bourgeoisie just for the asking. More than a parliamentary fight must take place before even self-government within the empire is conceded. The mass demonstrations during the first visit of the Simon commission showed that the country was prepared for such fight; but the nationalist bourgeoisie, while vituperating against the insolent challenge of imperialism, were reluctant to take up this challenge with courage. Imperialism knows the weakness of the Indian bourgeoisie, and will concede very little. Ultimately the nationalist bourgeoisie will accept responsible government in the provinces and some superficial reforms in general.

Bourgeoisie Unmasked.

The fight for real national freedom thus finally devolves upon the workers and peasant masses under independent class leadership. Although the petty bourgeoisie still remains largely under the control and influence of the treacherous reformist bourgeois leaders, the proletarian masses have broken away from them. The great strikes and lock-outs of this year are very distinct from previous mass movements in that they have clearly a class character. The development of independent political action by the working class is splitting the petty bourgeois radical nationalists into two ever diverging tendencies. One advances towards revolutionary alliance with the working class in the Workers' and Peasants' Party; and the other moves rapidly towards fascism. The radical leader Bose, who collaborated with traditionally reformist bourgeois leaders in framing the new constitution, represents the fascist wing of the petty bourgeoisie. This re-grouping of class forces is a pre-condition for a revolutionary anti-imperialist fight for national freedom. The unmasking of the bourgeois leaders and their petty bourgeois allies by the new constitution will hasten this process.

Fascisti Aviators Will Begin Propaganda Flight

HARTFORD, Conn., Sept. 14 (UP).—The big blue and yellow Bellanca sesqui-plane Roma will fly from Brainard field to Old Orchard Beach, Me., today with its complete crew. It will take off on the long road to Rome as soon as the weather will permit, Roger Q. Williams, pilot, told the United Press.

Williams, who with Peter Bonelli, navigator and radio operator, came here yesterday to supervise final tests, declined to discuss reports that he has displaced Count Cesare Sabelli as flight commander. Mechanics at the Pratt and Whitney hangar where the plane's Hornet motor was overhauled Wednesday, say Williams is in charge.