

The New Phase of the National Revolutionary Struggle in India.

By G. A. K. Luhan i.

It was during the immediately post-war period of 1920—21 that the social forces of the national revolution in India came to an initial trial of strength with **British Imperialism**. Objective factors combined with the conscious "defeatism" of bourgeois leadership brought the movement of 1920—21, rich with great promises, to a formidable collapse. After some years of recuperation, the national revolutionary struggle has now entered on a new and distinct phase, rich in greater promises than in 1920—21, because coming at the moment of a new conjuncture of objective factors and a different leadership.

This is abundantly clear from the rapid development of the situation in India, more particularly since the commencement, more than two months ago, of the **boycott campaign against the British Commission on Constitutional reform**. It is not precisely the anti-imperialist attitude of the bourgeois nationalist parties which gives its physiognomy to the new phase of the movement. The attitude of these parties is anti-imperialist, but

it is not necessarily revolutionary. The history of the last few years exposes the character of the national bourgeoisie of India as a social class which is combative against British imperialism but only up to a given point.

The boycott campaign is remarkable for its initial momentum and intensity. The Commission which is to be boycotted has not yet arrived in India and begun its labours; the full force of the boycott campaign has yet to be deployed. But already the situation in India is causing great anxiety in imperialist circles. According to a report in the London Times, the agitation in India has created "a profound impression in some quarters in London". The "Times" itself, in its editorial article regrets that Lord Birkenhead, the Secretary of State for India did not take the Indian bourgeois leaders into greater confidence at the time of nominating the commission.

Meanwhile, in India there is talk of the resignation of the Viceroy. The officially inspired Anglo-Indian press has been forced to note with unconcealed uneasiness that the Commission "does not command the degree of confidence necessary to make its work fruitful and its recommendations acceptable". It is even suggested that the actual work of the Commission should be postponed, to allow its President, Sir John Simon, to make a report to the British Parliament on the menacing situation that has developed in India.

If we simply confine ourselves to the attitude of the bourgeois Nationalist parties, it is difficult to see why there should be all this "profound impression" in England.

There is the tendency represented by the Nationalist Right wing which refuses to co-operate with the present Commission but does not contest the "principle" of a Commission appointed by the British parliament to "determine the constitution of India". As a matter of fact, it is suggested by some of the parties of the Right that, given another Commission, "with equal status" for Indian representatives, they would be willing to reconsider the question of boycott. There is certainly nothing in this "challenge" which may cause Baldwin the loss of a night's sleep.

There is the other tendency represented by the Nationalist Centre (principally the Swarajist Party) which, in addition to boycotting the present Commission denies the right of any Commission (with or without Indian representatives) appointed by the British Parliament to determine the constitution of India. But, while denying this "right" to an emanation of the British Parliament, it does not deny it to the British Parliament itself. Whatever Constitution the Swarajists or the National Congress may make by their unaided labours, it is intended to "submit", "forward" or "present" it — through a "round table conference of plenipotentiaries" or some other equally "legal" medium — to the British Parliament for "acceptance" or "ratification".

Far from being a "challenge" it is really an offer of direct co-operation with the ultimate authority, namely, the Executive Committee of the Imperialist bourgeoisie as represented in the British Parliament. It is another matter whether the British Parliament is willing at the present moment to waive its "rules of etiquette" and accept the parvenu Indian bourgeoisie to an equality of political intercourse. In any case the imperialists can lay the flattering unction to their soul that the most militant parties of the National bourgeoisie of India do not challenge imperialism as such but only its methods of "constitutional" procedure.

But perhaps the real challenge is concealed in the kind of constitution which the Indian National Congress is preparing for presentation to the British Parliament. There is the fact — quite historical in another sense — that the National Congress at its December session at Madras has accepted complete national independence as the basis of the coming constitution. It should have had all the significance of a challenging political act, if it were accompanied by an appropriate programme of action. It was not so accompanied.

On the other hand there are the utterances of the leaders of the Congress and there is the concrete proposal for convoking a national convention composed of the representatives of only two percent of the population, to be set up by the Congress for the discussion and the adoption of the constitution. If these are any guide, it is easy to foresee that the fundamental basis of the new constitution will not be the complete separation

from the British Empire but some sort of compromise between the interests of the native and the imperialist bourgeoisie, to be expressed in the political formula of "dominion status". There will be nothing new in it. The demand for dominion status — though, however, not in such a concrete form as a ready made constitution to be presented to Parliament, — has been put forward all these years by the National Congress; it has not caused any acute political discomfort to anybody concerned.

No, the real challenge of the situation lies elsewhere. The boycott campaign has opened up possibilities for the participation by **broad masses** in the fight against imperialism. The appeal to mass action in whatever form is thus the real challenge to the authority of the British Parliament trying to dictate to India what constitution it shall or shall not have.

Among the Nationalists, it is the unorganised left wing which has arrived at some comprehension of the importance of this fact. In the Swarajist organ "**Forward**" which, though committed to the official Swarajist policy, nevertheless expresses leftist psychology from time to time, we read:—

"If Indians had failed in the past to compel submission to their will, it was mainly because the problem of Swaraj had been approached more or less from the viewpoint of the upper classes, and the masses had practically remained outside the fold... The need of the hour is to bring into being an impressive movement such as the country saw during the closing months of 1921... A dynamic and comprehensive programme must be devised so as to rally throughout the whole country the teeming voiceless millions of India behind the boycott movement... No movement for National liberation has any chance of success unless it can bring the masses within its fold."

But what gives its distinction to the new phase of the national revolutionary struggle is not that there is an appeal to mass action from the side of the National bourgeoisie. What is really distinct and original in the present situation is that the broad masses are entering the arena of the fight for national independence as a conscious political factor. At their head and as their vanguard, stand the **organised workers and peasants**. Such a fact signifies the transition from one period of the national revolutionary struggle to another. It carries, with it a stupendous promise. It brings the National revolutionary struggle to a higher stage of development than it has reached up till now. It objectively poses the question: What social class or what coalition of social classes shall win for itself the role of the hegemon in the national revolutionary struggle which is now opening. It also indicates the answer.

The Federation of the Trade Unions of Bombay and the All-India Congress of Trade Unions have adopted resolutions demanding the complete boycott of the Commission. The action of the rank and file in the trade unions is still more significant. We have the example of the Union of the Municipal Workers of Bombay which has decided to come out on strike on the day when the British Commission lands in Bombay. The importance of such a decision can be gathered from the fact that already the British authorities have threatened the Municipal Workers of Bombay with dismissal and persecution, if they come out on strike. In response to this threat, the workers have repeated their determination to strike and have asserted their right to strike. Movements for similar strike action are extending to the dock workers of Bombay and the general body of railway workers throughout the country.

The leadership in this mass movement falls on the Workers and Peasants Party which has already for more than a year been functioning in the principal provinces of India as the legal political organisation of the proletariat and the peasantry. The Workers and Peasants Party has published a manifesto in which it says:

"The Workers and Peasants Party has no illusion about the Royal Commission and reiterates its conviction that, not through such Commissions but only by developing and bringing into action the basic force of the Nation, the dynamic action of organised workers and peasants, there can be any really valuable and vital political results.

"It therefore proposes to call on the organised and unorganised toiling masses of this land to demonstrate in

unambiguous and unmistakable terms (mass action including strikes and demonstrations) their active indifference for such Commissions intended to side-track the attention of the Indian people.

"Further the Party challenges the very right of British Imperialism to sit in judgment over the political destiny of this land and emphatically condemns the short-sighted policy in compromising tendencies of the other political groups who quibble over the personnel of the Commission and thereby fundamentally forsake the principle of Self-Determination, the inherent right of every Nation."

The action by the peasantry proper is confined at the moment to the important Northern province of the Panjab. The peasantry of this province took a very important part in the revolutionary movement of 1920—21. In the Journal "**Kirti**" (Toiler) which comes out with the emblem of the sickle and the hammer and which is the organ of the labour and peasant movement in the Panjab, we have a correct revolutionary appreciation of the present situation. The journal demands that the crisis which is developing should be utilised for the organisation of proletarian and peasant masses for striking a blow against imperialism.

Finally, the Communist Party of India as the Party of the revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat has put forward the slogan of the convocation of a Constituent Assembly for determining the constitution of India. The slogan has been chosen as the most appropriate for the given stage of the development of the situation. It is the most direct challenge to the authority of the British Parliament. It will bring the masses into the fight against imperialism on a nation-wide basis, and prepare the ground for militant mass action leading to eventual insurrection.

In putting forward the slogan, the Communist Party of India declares:

"The reply to the imperialist challenge should be: We spit on your Royal Commission whose authority we totally disregard. We do not recognise your right to determine the constitutional progress of India. That right belongs only to the Indian people who are determined to conquer that right at all cost and by all means. The demand should be the convocation by the National Congress of a Constituent Assembly which will be the supreme organ of the peoples' power and as such settle the questions as regards the form of government, relation with Britain, etc. The entire people must participate in the election of the Constituent Assembly. Committees for the election of the Constituent Assembly should be set up all over the country. Representatives of all the political parties, workers and peasants organisations and all other democratic bodies will sit on these committees. The election campaign must be carried on throughout the country over a period of at least a year. The largest possible section of the population should be drawn into the campaign through mass meetings, demonstrations, strikes, etc."

There is a great difference now from the similar situation in 1920—21. In the further development of the present crisis, the young and militant proletariat of India will not be without the guidance of its class Party, the Communist Party of India.

The Position in Western Ukraine and Western White Russia.

New Acts of Terrorism on the Part of the Polish Fascists.

By Karskiy (Lemberg).

Pilsudski's Fascist dictatorship, which aims at stabilising the rule of the landowners and capitalists at the expense of the workers and peasants, is at the present moment paying most attention to the western portions of Ukraine and White Russia. These regions form the reservoir of the revolutionary energies of the Ukrainian and White Russian peasantry, which is socially and nationally suppressed.

The Ukrainian and White Russian peasants suffer from a terrible lack of land. From 50 to 60 per cent. of the peasantry own no more than from two to five acres of land, while the remainder are devoid of any property and completely at the