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NEW AGE

(Political Monthly)

Editor: Ajoy Ghosh

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Dear Reader,

In the present issue we are printing the full text of the Political Resolution adopted by the Third Congress of the Communist Party of India held in Madurai from December 27, 1952 to January 4, 1954. The Resolution embodies the Communist Party's understanding of the problems facing the Indian people today and points out the direction which the democratic movement must take and the tasks it has to fulfil to bring about the solution of these problems.

The leading article of the issue on the New American Danger by Ajoy Ghosh elaborates one of the most urgent problems facing our country, and may, therefore, be taken as explaining one of the key tasks laid down in the Political Resolution. We intend to publish a series of articles by him in the subsequent issues dealing with some of the other important aspects of the Political Resolution.

We have, in the past, made repeated references to the urgent need for getting articles on problems of the mass movement written by the leaders of such movements. The response so far has been extremely poor, and here again we warn our readers that unless they make a determined effort to overcome this lag, the journal will not prove half as useful as it should and *could* be made. The deliberations of the Communist Party Congress made it quite evident that the leaders of the mass movement have been actively facing complex situations and by their own experience are trying to find the way out. It is precisely such issues that the *New Age* must reflect in its pages if the experience of some is to be made the common property of all. We trust that now after the Party Congress we shall be getting more response from such quarters.

We have received some more replies to our questionnaire published in the November issue last year. But the vast bulk of our readers seems to be indifferent to it. We appeal to them once again to send in their replies so that we may be assured of their active co-operation in the improvement of this journal.

Greetings,

EDITORIAL UNIT

NEW AGE ★ Vol. III, No. 2. February, 1954

The New American Danger

Ajoy Ghosh

The military alliance that America has succeeded in imposing upon Pakistan constitutes a dangerous turning point in the political set-up in South Asia.

For the people of Pakistan, this alliance that their reactionary ruling clique has secretly forged with the warlords at Washington means the clamping down upon them of the shackles of a new slavery. The experience of the last seven years clearly shows that wherever American arms aid has gone, the country has come under the jackboot of US domination; even powerful countries like Britain and France—at one time strong in the defence of their own freedom—could not escape the onslaughts on their sovereignty and had to kow-tow to American overlordship once they let the American guns, planes and bombs within their borders. Pakistan, a much weaker country, ruled by a junta that has always accepted imperialist domination, cannot escape such a fate.

American imperialism, soundly beaten by the prowess of a free people in Korea, who were sustained by the magnificent comradely aid of the Chinese People's Volunteers, had to look out for a new prey in Asia. For, the declared policy of the American Government—as expressed in Eisenhower's classic definition of the cannon fodder: "make Asians fight Asians"—has been to hunt out new countries whose freedom could be destroyed and from whose soil could be unleashed the third world war against the socialist world. It is, therefore, no accident that when US imperialism was forced by its military defeat and the people's offensive for peace all over the world to agree to an armistice in Korea, they foisted a military dictatorship on Iran and a military alliance upon Pakistan.

But the military alliance does not menace the security of Pakistan alone. There are many in India who think that, snubbed in Kashmir, the USA has realised that she can make no dent upon Nehru's India and has, therefore, turned to Pakistan and found in her an easy prey. It would, however,

be a mistake to conclude that the American military alliance with Pakistan is merely an index of Pakistan's weakness and India's strength. While it is no doubt true that the strength of the democratic forces in India and the attitude of the Indian Government on a number of issues have led the USA to turn to Pakistan first, it is necessary to realise that the US-Pak Pact is one more round in America's desperate struggle to grab India.

The threat that the USA holds out to India today is not that of a large-scale military invasion right now—though one does not rule out that the Pentagon experts would attempt to provoke border clashes between Pakistan and India as part of this game of keeping up tension so that the blackmail may easily succeed against India. The real threat that the USA is planning today against India is a *political* threat; its diabolic objective is to pin India down by a multi-pronged offensive—economic, diplomatic and even military pressure — so that New Delhi may finally capitulate as Karachi already has. It is precisely for this reason that the Political Resolution of the Third Congress of the Communist Party of India states:

> "Entrenching themselves in Pakistan with the help of its reactionary and corrupt leaders, building military bases there and securing control over its economy and political life, over its armed forces, its manpower and resources, the American imperialists want to bring pressure on the Indian Government to compel it to line up with them and give them similar concessions in India also."

It is not without reason that the US imperialists calculate along these lines. For, the Government of India has so far allowed US inroads into our economy, our administrative machinery and even in our defence apparatus. The TCA personnel and the Ford Foundation specialists even today enjoy semi-diplomatic privileges. In the very debate in Parliament last December, where the US-Pak alliance was denounced, Nehru defended the export of strategic raw materials to the USA against Communist warnings. While Nehru calls for national mobilisation in the face of this US menace, the Indian Navy uses the American code in its signalling.

Together with this comes the wide range of fifth column activity that US imperialism carries on in this country. Corrupt politicians are bought over and many newspapers subsidised while American literature and films, breeding vice and decadence, flood the market. A campaign of lies and slanders against the Soviet Union, People's China and other

People's Democracies is carried on unfettered. Right-wing Socialist leaders come out in support of US imperialism and are trying to divert the popular indignation against the American alliance with Pakistan by raising the scare of "Red Danger across the Himalayas". Through such agencies as the Society for Defence of Freedom in Asia and the Democratic Research Association, a continuous barrage of lies is kept up not only against the USSR and China, but also against the democratic forces in our own country, the latest being the crude forgeries of Purshottamdas Tricumdas about the Communist Party Congress. The game behind all these reactionary pro-American agencies is to attack the democratic forces, discredit them and cripple them so that the resistance against US inroads may be broken.

It is, therefore, unpardonable complacency to think that the American danger is not serious so far as India is concerned or that the Nehru Government can be relied upon to do the job of saving India from the American menace. The Resolution of the Kalyani Congress, which Congress critics themselves have called mild in its condemnation of US imperialism, gives no guarantee to the country that the Congress Government is prepared to take up the struggle against US attacks on India's freedom. The Congress Government has also abetted US imperialism on such vital issues as letting off Korean POWs for conscription in Chiang Kai-shek's and Syngman Rhee's armies.

It is, therefore, clear that although the Nehru Government has on occasions taken steps and made declarations in favour of peace, which has rightly evoked the support of all democratic and progressive people, its record, taken as a whole, is not one that proves its *bona fides* as a consistent and relentless fighter against US imperialism.

This weakness of the Nehru Government in the international field is intimately related to its internal set-up and policy. The collaborationist deal by which the Nehru Government keeps up the tottering feudal elements and also the stranglehold of British capital over our economy, has helped to perpetuate India's backwardness. And a weak and backward country is bound to whet the appetite of any imperialism, not to speak of American imperialism. This way, too, the very fact of India's enchainment to British capital has heightened the danger to her freedom and sovereignty. Explaining this, the Political Resolution of the Third Congress of the Communist Party of India states:

> "It must be further realised that the defence of India's freedom and sovereignty and the prevention of

imperialist efforts to drag India into war cannot be effected by mere denunciation of American imperialism and its intrigues. The example of Korea shows the immense strength that even a small country can acquire in a short time on the basis of abolition of imperialist rule and feudalism, a strength against which all the power of the warmongers proves of no avail. If today, more than six years after the transfer of power, India, a country with vast resources and manpower, is being made the object of Amercian pressure and blackmail, that, to a great extent, is due to the fact that the American imperialists hope to achieve success by taking advantage of the backwardness of India's economy, the serious crisis in her agriculture and industry, the utter dependence of India on foreign imperialist powers for her defence requirements and capital goods and the British stranglehold over our economy and our foreign trade. Also they want to use as their tools the feudal elements — traditional traitors to India's freedom—who still occupy important positions in the economy, political life and military apparatus of India."

Thus, the very character of the present Indian Government forms a major factor in the matter of national defence. The American threat cannot be met by merely building up national unity behind the Government, as Nehru has tried to make it out in his address before the Kalyani Congress. It is more serious than that. It enjoins on the entire Indian people the imperative task of destroying the twin fetters of feudalism and British capital so that our country can be strong enough to build up its own defence and ward off all enemies of freedom.

With remarkable clarity, the historic Programme of the Communist Party of India, drove this point home three years ago:

> "We cannot be a strong and prosperous country until we are industrialised on a wide scale; but industrialised to such an extent we shall never be as long as British capital exists in India, for the profits of British enterprises are taken out of the country and we are unable to use them to expand our industries, as long as the big national capitalists, their collaborators, keep us tied to the Empire."

The equally urgent necessity of destroying feudalism is also enjoined by the Programme:

> "The agriculture and the peasant problem are of primary importance to the life of our country.

> "We cannot develop agriculture to any considerable extent and provide the country with food and raw materials because the impoverished peasantry deprived of land is unable to purchase the most elementary agricultural implements and thus to improve its farming.
>
> "We cannot develop our national industries and industrialise our country to any considerable extent because the impoverished peasantry constituting 80 per cent of the population is unable to buy even a minimum quantity of manufactured goods.
>
> "We cannot make our state stable to any extent because the peasantry living in conditions of semi-starvation receives no support from the Government, hates it and refuses to support it.
>
> "We cannot improve the conditions of the working class to any considerable extent because hundreds of thousands of hungry people forced by poverty to leave the countryside for towns swarm the 'labour market', lower 'prices of labour', increase the army of unemployed and thus make the improvement of the living standards of the working people impossible.
>
> "We cannot work our way out of cultural backwardness because the peasantry, living in conditions of semi-starvation, constituting the overwhelming majority of the population, is deprived of any material means to give education to its children.
>
> "In order to get rid of all these evils and get our country out of cultural backwardness, it is necessary to create human conditions of existence for the peasants, it is necessary to take land from the landlords and hand it over to the peasants."

From this it is clear that any real improvement in the condition of the people and the strengthening of national economy are dependent on the success of the struggle against feudalism and imperialism. And precisely on this also depends the strength and stability of the state, based on popular support. It is on this that the defence capacity of the country depends. The carrying out of anti-feudal and anti-imperialist tasks, therefore, assumes supreme importance both in improving the lot of our people and in defending the freedom of our country.

It is the failure to grasp the significance of this that leads to the drawing of mechanical parallels with conditions prevailing in advanced capitalist countries.

In the countries of Western Europe, for instance, national freedom is threatened by American imperialism, which wants

war. Also the worsening of economic conditions of the masses is directly linked with American domination: the military alliance, the arms programme dictated by America, the American fiat on trade—all these have led to the crisis in their economy. Therefore, in these conditions, the struggle for national freedom, the struggle against war, the struggle for immediate relief to the people, all merge together and become a single struggle—the struggle for a Government of Peace, of struggle against American imperialism and its allies in the country.

But in India it is not the imposition of US military burdens that has ruined our economy and impoverished our people, though the war preparations and war tension have undoubtedly worsened our economic condition. Our economic ruin is due primarily to the British stranglehold and feudal relics and without a struggle against these, neither can the people get any real relief nor can the country rally its strength, in material and personnel, to defend itself. Therefore, in our case, the struggle against British capital and feudal fetters—the struggle for our complete liberation—is the *basic* struggle before our people today, since it holds the key not only to the prosperity of our people but to the defence of our freedom as well.

Hence the basic attitude of the democratic movement towards every party or organisation in the country will have to be determined by the attitude that it adopts towards the national liberationist and anti-feudal asks.

It is this very criterion that has to determine our attitude towards the Nehru Government. The feudal-imperialist set-up in India is not propped up today by the might of the British army of occupation, as in the past, but by the support and protection that the present Indian Government extends to these exploiting elements, without which, in fact, they could not have survived so long.

As such, the fight against British capital and feudalism assumes, above all, the concrete form in India today of a struggle for the removal of this very Government and the establishment of a Government which will break the British stranglehold and carry out agrarian reform.

At the same time, it will be nothing short of a crime to ignore the tremendous importance of rallying our people against the US menace, against the danger of war that it wants to unleash. To think that US imperialism is not yet a serious threat to our freedom or to think that though it is a menace, we can do nothing about it now, that we shall fight it *after* we have freed ourselves from the British hold—to

think like this is to ignore the importance of our peace movement and the need to defend national sovereignty by rousing our people. We have to rouse our people for ending of wars, for preservation of peace and for lessening of international tension, for defence of sovereignty against the American threat, for friendship with the people of Pakistan *here and now* and develop a powerful campaign for this purpose. For this it is necessary also to eschew all sectarianism and build unity with Congress masses by emphasising in mass meetings held for the purpose that which is part of the common consciousness of all democrats who want to resist the American menace, viz. the need for resistance to America, the need for strengthening the struggle for peace, the need for building friendship with the people of Pakistan. If this is not understood, we shall commit the deviation of thinking that only by fighting for freedom do we strengthen the fight for peace and that only by fighting British domination do we fight against the American threat.

It can be seen therefore that the struggle for full freedom from the British hold, the struggle for the liquidation of feudalism, the struggle for ending of all wars and for preservation and strengthening of peace, the struggle for defending freedom against the American threat—all these struggles have to be carried on *simultaneously*. The weakening of any of them will weaken the entire democratic movement.

From this we have to heed to the warning that the neglect of any of these struggles would lead us to dangerous pitfalls. For instance, if we concentrate on the specific features of the Indian situation and carry on the basic national struggle against feudalism and British capital forgetting our struggle for peace, against extension of US imperialist domination, we will be led to wrong conclusions and total neglect of the peace movement and even the threat to our own freedom. Similarly, if we concentrate on the immediate international task and forget the basic national struggle then we shall land ourselves in support of the present regime which keeps up the backwardness of our country, which jeopardises our very defence, which because of the penetration by US imperialism that it has itself permitted cannot take even a firm line against US domination.

While therefore carrying out the basic national task, we have to understand the significance of the peace movement in our country.

Our people have so long accepted Nehru's claim of "non-alignment with either of the two Power Blocs" as the expression of a peace policy. But now that the cold war has

come to our very doorstep, it is necessary and possible to break that illusion about Nehru's policy and to show to our people the real face of the American menace.

The US Government makes no secret of its aim of destroying the states in the socialist world, the states where the toiling masses have come to power, because these countries stand in the way of American world domination. It is therefore no ordinary war for the toiling millions of every country, including our own, and it is not a difficult job to rouse our working class and the peasantry against such a war. If thirty-five years ago, the working class all the world over could warn the imperialist interventionists and foil their attempt to destroy the newly-born Soviet State by the campaign of "Hands Off Russia", how much more powerful the voice of the working class in our country could be after these years of gigantic growth in the socialist world and the rapid awakening of political consciousness of the masses.

It should also be noted that the actual wars which have been waged since the end of the Second World War and which are being waged today are wars against the national freedom of the peoples of Asia and Africa because the freedom of the colonial peoples threatens the whole basis of imperialism. By strengthening the fight for peace we directly help the freedom battles of the colonial peoples.

Further, the US imperialists are desperately trying to launch a world war by roping in the entire capitalist world. Because of the weakening of the capitalist world today, the USA can attack the Soviet Union or the People's Democracies only by drawing every country into its war plans, for without that its war plans cannot succeed. Hence the freedom of all countries, including India, is threatened directly. In such a situation, it is necessary for us to realise the strategic significance of India in the US war plans and, for that very reason, the key role of India in the fight for peace. To our people thus falls a great responsibility and it is for us to rouse them to the sense of that responsibility. By discharging this responsibility we also save our own sovereignty and freedom.

Also, the fight for peace, the fight against the American danger has a direct bearing on the fate of the democratic movement in our country. The war-makers in Washington very well know that India could not be shackled to the American war chariot unless and until the powerful democratic movement here is smashed up. So, the attack on our democratic movement, on our growing working-class movement, on the influential communist movement, should be regarded as one of the top items in America's plans for domination over India. It is thus imperative for us to bring this danger home to the democratic forces in India.

This way we have to build up a mighty mass movement for peace and against the US danger. Those who neglect this task stake the very fate of the democratic movement, leaving it exposed to the menacing shadow of America. Those who think that to defend ourselves against the American danger, we have to line up behind Nehru and build "national unity" also fail to save the country. For both leave out the supreme task of mobilising our millions against the American danger and, in that very context, against the Government that by its alliance with feudalism and British imperialism, keeps our defence weak and offers tempting prospects to America.

The Communist Party, in the decision of its Third Congress, has set before itself these twin tasks so that the struggle for the betterment of the conditions of our people may be carried on along with the struggle against the American danger; the struggle for the unshackling of British grip must continue side by side with the struggle against the dangers of the new slavery that America seeks to impose.

Political Resolution of the Communist Party of India

(Adopted by the Third Congress of the Communist Party of India held at Madurai, December 27, 1953 to January 4, 1954.)

1. The signing of the Armistice in Korea on July 27, 1953 was a mighty victory for the heroic Korean people and their allies, the Chinese People's Volunteers, for the forces of world peace, a great success for the peaceful policy of the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China and other democratic states, and a heavy blow against the aggressive imperialists led by America and their plans for world domination.

2. The American imperialists, when launching the war of intervention against the Korean people, had expected quick victory, which, they hoped, would facilitate extension of the war against the People's Republic of China. They had hoped that the demonstration of their military might would consolidate the aggressive alliance they had forged, cow down opponents, shatter the patriotic resistance of the freedom-loving peoples and compel the vacillators to line up behind them, thus making possible the undertaking of new military ventures against peace-loving and democratic states as well as against colonial peoples struggling for independence.

These hopes were shattered by the heroic people of Korea and their allies, the Chinese People's Volunteers. Their success has exploded the myth of American invincibility, caused panic and confusion in the imperialist camp and heightened the courage and confidence of the freedom-loving peoples. It has been rightly hailed as a great victory for the peace forces in every country. The truce in

Korea, concretely demonstrating the possibility of defeating the plans of the warmongers, has given a powerful impetus to the world peace movement.

3. The growing might and the powerful peace policy of the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China and the People's Democracies, the smashing of the much-vaunted monopoly of the U.S. imperialists in the field of atom and hydrogen weapons, the increasing power and sweep of the struggles of the colonial peoples, the scotching of the American-inspired fascist provocations in Berlin, have further strengthened the struggle for peace.

4. The world peace movement, the independent mass movement of hundreds of millions in all countries, has grown into a powerful and vital force of great importance in the struggle against the outbreak of a third world war. The appeal of the World Peace Council that all disputes should be settled by negotiations and peaceful means is being endorsed by vast numbers of people in every country. The demand for the cessation of the war in Viet Nam, the demand for the freedom of the colonial peoples, the demand for the abandonment of measures to rearm German imperialism and for peaceful re-unification of Germany on a democratic basis, the demand that the Chinese People's Republic should be accorded its rightful place in the council of nations; above all, the demand that the Great Powers should meet and resolve all differences peacefully —these are becoming the demands of vast masses in every country.

5. As a result of these developments, as well as the increasingly rapacious demands made by American imperialists who, because of the fiasco of their policies and the growing crisis of their economy, are resorting to more and more desperate and provocative tactics, conflicts and contradictions are sharpening inside the imperialist camp, particularly between American imperialism and the British, and in the relations between the imperialist powers and dependent countries. The American move to form the so-called European Defence Community with a re-armed Germany as its core, the attempt to convert the UNO into a docile instrument of its aggressive policy, the blatant sup-

port to the gangster methods of its henchman, Syngman Rhee, the effort to sabotage the Korean peace negotiations, the exclusion of neutral Asian nations like India from the Political Conference on Korea, are meeting resistance not only from the mass of people but even from a number of bourgeois governments. In defiance of the American ban, a number of governments have established trade relations with the USSR and with other democratic countries.

6. Significant in these respects is also the role played by the Indian Government on a number of important international issues in the recent period—a role appreciated by the peace-loving masses and states. The Indian Government's denunciation of the atom bomb, its help in ending the hostilities in Korea, its condemnation of the tactics of Syngman Rhee, its opposition to the American move to transform Pakistan into a war base, are factors helping the cause of peace.

The cause of peace has been further strengthened by the growing bond of friendship and of cultural relations between the people of India on the one hand and the USSR and Chinese People's Republic on the other. The conclusion of the recent trade agreement between India and the USSR on mutually advantageous terms carries forward this process and can also help to reduce India's dependence on imperialist powers.

7. While there has been in recent months a certain amount of relaxation of international tension and a considerable extension of the possibility of maintenance of peace, it would be a dangerous mistake to believe that the policies of the warmongers have been totally defeated or that the war plans have been abandoned, even temporarily. The fact is that efforts to sabotage the Korean peace negotiations have intensified; the re-arming of Germany is being speeded up, creating a centre of aggression in the very heart of Europe; the policy of atomic blackmail is being continued. Further, foiled in Korea, the American imperialists have redoubled their efforts in other parts of Asia as seen in the military coup in Iran and in the increased support to the French imperialists against the Vietnamese people. Above all, the intrigues in Kashmir and the proposed military alliance with Pakistan have brought the preparations for acts of aggression to the very threshold of India.

8. Rightly resented by all sections of people in India, including Congressmen, this alliance has far-reaching reactionary aims directed against the USSR and the Chinese People's Republic and also constitutes a serious menace to India. It is also a serious threat to the peace and national independence of Pakistan itself. Entrenching themselves in Pakistan with the help of its reactionary and corrupt leaders, building military bases there and securing control over its economy and political life, over its armed forces, its manpower and resources, the American imperialists want to bring pressure on the Indian Government to compel it to line up with them and give them similar concessions in India also. The success of American attempts in this sphere would inevitably mean India's sovereignty and freedom being reduced to a fiction, colossal war burdens on the Indian people, a ruthless attack on the forces of democracy and peace in India. Further, it will aggravate the relations between India and Pakistan, will encourage chauvinistic communal sentiments, will be a perpetual threat to the democratic movements in each country and will facilitate the strengthening of the imperialist grip over both. American moves in Pakistan, therefore, constitute a grave menace to the Indian people, a menace against which the entire country must be mobilised.

9. Hence a most important task before the Communist Party and before every patriotic party, organisation and individual today is to expose the manoeuvres of the American warmongers, to rouse the people against the menace that threatens them, to bring about the broadest unity of popular forces on this issue and on its basis develop a powerful campaign to defeat American intrigues against the Asian peoples, to defend the cause of freedom, democracy and peace. Mass organisations, especially organisations of workers and peasants, whose part in the struggle for peace has hitherto been extremely inadequate, have to play a big role in this task. For, it is the active participation of broad masses on which will depend the strength and sweep of the movement. While conducting this campaign it is necessary to guard against the danger of

reactionary elements utilising the situation for fomenting Hindu-Muslim hatred, for sowing hostility against the people of Pakistan and giving such slogans as trade war against Pakistan. It must be emphasised again and again that it is not the people of Pakistan that are responsible for the Military Pact, that, on the contrary, they will have to bear heavy burdens as a result of the Pact, that democratic forces and elements in Pakistan are opposing the Pact and their own reactionary leaders who are leading them into it, that, therefore, the task of the Indian people is to develop their own campaign in such a way as strengthens the forces of freedom and democracy in both countries and thus defeat the plans of the American imperialists.

10. The rapid penetration of American imperialism that is taking place in various spheres of our economy and political life also constitutes a grave danger. The American imperialists are not merely seeking to exert pressure on India by creating a base in Pakistan; they are also linking themselves up with extreme reactionary elements both inside and outside the Congress and with Right-wing Socialist leaders. They are buying over corrupt politicians, securing control over a number of newspapers, poisoning cultural life with decadent literature and films. They are carrying on a virulent campaign of lies and slanders against the USSR, China and People's Democratic countries through agencies like the "Democratic Research Service" and "Freedom of Asia Societies" and the "Anti-Communist Front". They are also penetrating into some vital sectors of Indian economy and are trying to get a foothold in strategic industries. The importation of a large number of American "specialists" in India, although there is no dearth of suitable Indians for the work, the granting of diplomatic immunity to them, enhances the danger. Exposure of all these and rallying of people against them have to be undertaken as part of the struggle to defend peace and freedom.

11. Another menace to India comes from the continuation of foreign pockets on Indian soil, some of which, especially Goa, are being fast built up as war bases. Here again can be seen the hand of the aggressive imperialists of America, who, as part of their aim to secure world domination by means of threats, blackmail and war, are striving to secure footholds in every part of the world and transform them into bases of aggression against the freedom-loving peoples. Similarly, the French pockets on our territory are being used for the transport of troops and supplies for the dirty war against our brother Asian peoples of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Further, French imperialism in India is directly recruiting Indians to its army for fighting the liberation forces in Indo-China.

12. All these developments and the position of key importance held by India in international affairs today bring out sharply the vital significance of the struggle for peace for the people of our country, the imperative need to broaden, extend and strengthen the peace movement, the necessity of India playing a positive role in the effort to end and prevent wars and the need to intensify the campaign for a Pact of Peace between the Great Powers, for prohibition of atomic weapons of mass destruction, for settling of all international disputes by means of negotiations, for liquidation of aggressive military bases maintained in a foreign country by any power and for recognition of the right of every nation to full freedom. It is evident today that in view of the aggressive aims and policies pursued by the imperialists, who are trying to secure mastery of the world, no country can preserve its freedom or prevent aggression by a mere declaration of a policy of neutrality and non-involvement in wars. This lesson must be brought home to our entire people. It must also be pointed out that India's freedom cannot be defended by relying on British imperialism against American imperialism.

13. Certain acts and declarations of the Nehru Government in the recent period, particularly since the defeat of the Americans in the Korean war, have been helpful to peace and all peace-loving people have appreciated and supported these acts and sentiments. This must continue and all acts of the Government which help the cause of peace should be firmly supported. Yet, the situation does not warrant that democratic forces should give general, overall support to governmental policies even in the international sphere. This is because the Indian Government

does not follow consistently a policy of peace and democracy. The foreign policy of the Government is subject essentially to the influence of British imperialism and is not averse to making concessions to them and also to the Americans in practice, several times even where in words the Government expresses disagreement with them, as in the case of the Korean war prisoners. On certain matters, it even goes further. It rebukes those who openly denounce American intrigues in Kashmir. Arch-warmongers like Dulles and Nixon are allowed, under the plea of diplomatic usages, to broadcast their message of hatred against the Soviet and Chinese peoples. Above all, the Government of India says little about the colonial wars that are being waged by the British imperialists in Malaya and Africa, about the military dictatorship established in Guiana by the British in violation of the Constitution framed by themselves, about the war against the Vietnamese people. It continues to give transit facilities to the Gurkhas who are being recruited by the British for the suppression of the valiant Malayan people. Therefore the necessity, while supporting all the positive measures, to intensify pressure on the Indian Government in order to make it pursue a consistent policy of peace remains and even acquires greater importance than before.

14. It must further be realised that the defence of India's freedom and sovereignty and the foiling of imperialist efforts to drag India into war cannot be effected by mere denunciation of American imperialism and its intrigues. The example of Korea shows the immense strength that even a small country can acquire in a short time on the basis of abolition of imperialist rule and feudalism, a strength against which all the power of the warmongers proves of no avail. If today, more than six years after the transfer of power, India, a country with vast resources and manpower, is being made the object of American pressure and blackmail, that, to a great extent, is due to the fact that the American imperialists hope to achieve success by taking advantage of the backwardness of India's economy, the serious crisis in her agriculture and industry, the utter dependence of India on foreign imperialist powers for her defence requirements and capital goods and the British stranglehold over our economy and foreign trade. Also they want to use as their tools the feudal elements—traditional traitors to India's freedom—who still occupy an important position in the economy, political life and military apparatus of India.

15. Thus the question of defeating the war plans of the American imperialists and India's struggle for peace is closely linked with the question of India's struggle for full and unfettered national freedom, which means, first and foremost, freedom from control of the British who continue to be the dominant imperialist power and of liquidating feudalism. This demands a break with the British Empire, removal of British officers from India's armed forces, breaking of the British stranglehold on India's economy by the confiscation of British capital and the intensification of the struggle for the complete liquidation of landlordism—through which alone conditions will be created for the rapid economic, political and military strengthening of India. A fully independent and powerful India will be a mighty bulwark of freedom, peace and democracy. Also the serious weakening of aggressive British imperialism, the partner of America and oppressor of the colonial peoples, the building up of a fully free India outside the Commonwealth and outside all imperialist influence, will be a great factor for world peace and the freedom of all Asian and colonial peoples. Hence the necessity to intensify the fight against British imperialism, for quitting the Commonwealth and for the confiscation of British capital; hence the necessity of opposition to every manifestation of subservience to British imperialism like participation in economic, political and military conferences under its aegis; hence the necessity of mobilisation of people against British atrocities against the colonial people and the creation of a mass demand that the Indian Government must openly condemn them. Any slackening of this struggle, any failure to conduct it with vigour and determination will mean weakening the movement for freedom and peace.

16. Linked with Britain and America, our country has already felt the impact of the growing crisis in the economies of these countries. There can be no doubt that

the effect will be all the more disastrous as that crisis deepens.

Despite every effort made by the imperialist powers headed by America to avert the crisis of their economy by means of militarisation, the artificial boom produced by the Korean war has definitely ended. Stocks are accumulating in America, where the decline in production is no longer confined to consumers' goods alone but has also affected some of the heavy industries. International trade shows symptoms of stagnation and decline. Already, a number bourgeois economists and political leaders are making gloomy forecasts about an impending depression.

With the deepening of the world capitalist crisis and the shrinking of the capitalist world market, the exploitation of colonial and dependent countries by imperialists has been intensified and they have become arenas of sharp conflicts among the imperialist powers, above all, between Britain and America. India, where British imperialism continues to hold a dominant position and where American imperialism is effecting fast penetration, is one of the main arenas of this conflict.

17. As a result of India's trade and economy being linked with imperialist powers which are interested in keeping her backward and dependent, India is ruthlessly robbed and plundered. Through British investment in key sectors of India's economy, through British exchange banks, insurance and shipping companies, through imperial preference and India's membership of the Sterling Bloc, Britain continues to drain away the wealth of India. The weapon of unequivalent trade is wielded both by Britain and America to further impoverish the Indian people, deny them capital goods and ruin even their few established industries. Our export market for raw materials being totally at the mercy of the British and American monopolists, they play havoc with it by manipulation of prices and stocks to suit their interests and the consequent ruin falls mainly on the shoulders of our peasant producers who are the worst victims of the imperialist manipulations of the market as was seen in the April, 1952 crisis. Huge quantities of raw materials have to be exported at ruinous prices to meet the interest and profit charges of British capital in India, to pay for the food imports from America,

to pay for military equipment, rolling stock and other goods which India has to buy. This is leading to an ever-widening gap between exports and imports, squandering of the Sterling resources and increasing dependence on foreign powers.

As a result of this unequivalent trade, denial of much-needed capital goods, increasing ruination of national industries due to foreign competition and growing penetration of foreign capital in fields where Indian industries already exist, contradictions between imperialism and the Indian bourgeoisie are becoming sharper and even sections of the big bourgeoisie have begun raising their voices on these issues.

18. The crisis manifests itself in practically every industry, especially industries producing consumers' goods which constitute the bulk of our national industries. All these years, the Government of India, controlled by landlords and monopolists collaborating with imperialism, argued that the crisis of India's economy was a crisis of *under-production*, that there was scarcity because there were not enough goods, that the way to India's prosperity lay through "harder work," that what was needed was not basic social changes but more sustained labour. "Produce or Perish" was their slogan. All these myths are being exploded by hard reality.

As is admitted by both Government and employers, production went on the up-grade and in textiles and in sugar reached the targets of the Five-Year Plan. But the result was not abundance of goods for the consumers but accumulation of stocks of unsold goods. Like the textiles and sugar industries, every consumer industry—engineering, soap, edible oils, etc.—faced a crisis of the market, despite millions being in want of these goods. A crisis of "over-production" in the midst of poverty has come. As a result, mass unemployment has become the characteristic feature in all industrial centres, affecting not only the industrial workers but also the middle classes.

19. Instead of forcing the monopolists and large-scale industries to reduce prices and take less profits in order that the consumer may buy goods and the factories may be able to keep production and employment going,

Government permitted the monopolies to cut workers' wages, reduce employment, carry out rationalisation and closures. While big business got relief in the form of reduction of export and excise duties, the consumer was left at the mercy of the market. Even the small fall in the prices of their goods was done away with by the abolition of food subsidies, causing price rises in the market and starvation to many. The Government has not even shown courage enough to take measures to prevent foreign monopolists who have invested capital in India from competing with and killing Indian industries. It has permitted a free flow of foreign goods which are ruining many Indian industries—not only small-scale and cottage industries, but also several large-scale industries. All this further deepens and intensifies the crisis.

20. At the root of the crisis of "over-production" lies the catastrophic crisis in our agrarian economy. The production of foodgrains per acre has sharply declined, according to the Report of the Planning Commission itself. Famine conditions have become chronic in many parts of the country. Scarcity conditions prevail in vast areas. With the fall in prices of commercial crops added to the ruin of subsidiary industries like handlooms, the distress of the peasant masses has intensified. Indebtedness of the peasants has increased to colossal proportions. Tens of thousands of peasants have sold away and are selling away their land, their cattle and all their belongings at incredibly low prices due to scarcity and famine conditions. Their properties are passing into the hands of rapacious landlords and money-lenders. On top of this, the Government in many States resorts to coercive measures and sells away by auction the lands of peasants who are unable to pay arrears of land revenue and debts.

21. All over the country, the ferocious eviction offensive of the landlords continues, resulting in concentration of land in their hands, dispossessing the peasants of lands and swelling the ranks of the agricultural workers. The Government which pretends to be the protector of peasants and whose Ministers give their blessings to *bhoodan*, refuses to take adequate steps to stop the eviction offensive. Unemployment among agricultural labourers has

increased to colossal proportions and it has led to depression of the wage levels of agricultural labourers in the countryside and pressure on the employed workers in the towns. The demand for land for cultivation has also increased tremendously. All this has given the landlords greater opportunity to exploit the tenants and agricultural workers, thus accelerating the process of pauperisation of the rural masses.

All this has meant a rapid shrinking of the home market and the complete collapse of the market in many areas. The fact that food prices continue to remain relatively high due to shortage of production, the fact that the mass of the people have to spend the bulk of their income to purchase food, the fact that the prices of manufactured articles are kept at a high level—all these further intensify the crisis.

22. The agrarian crisis has grown into a national crisis. It has meant shortage of food for the nation, shortage of raw materials for the industries, a widening gap between exports and imports, increased dependence on foreign powers and an increased threat to our national freedom and sovereignty. It has facilitated the penetration of aggressive imperialist powers into our country.

23. The ruling classes in India had hoped that by means of the Five-Year Plan prepared in collaboration with imperialism, they would be able to solve the crisis at the cost of the people, stabilise their economy as well as strengthen their political position. While the foreign and Indian monopolists have reaped colossal profits as a result of the operation of the Plan, their basic aim has not been realised. The failure of the Plan is evident to all today, including the framers of the Plan who now announce that it will have to be "revised". Abandonment of a number of projects earlier undertaken, deficit budgets in most States, a mounting volume of unemployment all over the country, signalise the fiasco of the attempt to strengthen or even stabilise the economy of the country within the framework of the imperialist-feudal system.

24. It is obvious today that *abolition of landlordism and removal of the burden of debts* by freeing the vast pea-

sant masses of our country from the heavy exploitation of the landlord and usurious moneylender alone will smash the fetters on our agricultural production and release the creative energies of India's millions of peasants. That alone will assure for the national industries a vast expanding market and ensure capital formation on an ascending scale. Abolition of landlordism and handing over of land to peasants and agricultural workers are thus the prerequisites not only for the development of our agriculture but also for the industrialisation of the country.

The *confiscation of British capital* will not only free our economy from the grip of the British imperialists and ensure the possibility of independent development unhampered by the fetters of imperialist monopolists, but will place in the hands of the state a powerful public sector with vast resources, which will ensure the possibility of effective control over the entire economy and thereby secure the possibility of successful planned development.

A *democratic State* alone will be able to unleash the immense creative energies of the millions of our peasants, workers and the intelligentsia, and utilise the economic power and resources of the public sector obtained by the confiscation of British capital for a planned development in the interest of the entire people.

The experience of the last three years has fully demonstrated that the prerequisites of planned development of our economy in the interest of the people are the smashing up of feudal relations in our agriculture, confiscation of British capital and the establishment of a democratic state.

25. It is, however, precisely these basic economic and political changes that the Nehru Government, dominated as it is by monopolists and landlords, refuses to undertake. It tinkers with the problems confronting the people, imposes heavier and heavier burdens on the masses and abandons, when confronted with the opposition of vested interests, even such moderate measures as fixation of ceiling on existing landholdings. All this leads to intensification of the misery of the people, intensification of the crisis.

26. In every sphere the Government continues the

reactionary policies of the past. It refuses to abolish the States headed by Rajpramukhs and reconstitute the states on a linguistic basis on the false plea that this will lead to the break-up of the unity of the country. It refuses to concede the demand of Part 'C' States for responsible government and even refuses to set up legislative assemblies in Tripura, Manipur and Kutch. It increases the cost of education, compelling many students to discontinue their studies and making it impossible for the poorer classes to receive education. Medical and public services are severely neglected. It is not implementing even the restricted social security schemes. It permits foreign concerns in India to discriminate against Indian personnel and treat them as inferiors in relation to Whites. It refuses to undertake or shelves the enactment of social reform legislation. It spends colossal sums for the military and police and gives repeated concessions to big business but has no money for the upliftment of the people. It imposes new burdens on the people on the plea of financing its plans and projects. It re-enacts the security measures in the teeth of popular opposition and wants to set up, as in Bengal, special tribunals to try political cases. It resorts to ruthless terror to suppress the people whenever all other methods fail and the masses refuse to take the new burdens lying down.

27. Against these policies of the Government, against the growing offensive of the landlords and monopolists, mass resistance has grown rapidly during the last two years. With the living conditions sharply deteriorating as a result of the growing crisis of Indian economy and with the weakening of the political influence of the Congress, people throughout the country have been coming out in struggles against every attempt to impose new burdens on them. This was seen in the sharpest form in Calcutta when the struggle against the increase in tram fare imposed by the British-owned company developed into a mighty united battle of the entire people. The new phase that has opened in the people's opposition to the reactionary policies of the Government and the offensive of the feudals and monopolists has certain specific features which should be noted.

(a) The struggles are mainly taking place on is-

sues affecting the day-to-day life of the people, such as taxes, food subsidy, wages, bonus, retrenchment and victimisation, evictions, rent, famine relief, etc. and are motivated by concrete demands against the State, the landlords and the monopolists.

(b) These struggles are taking place not only in Provinces and areas which are politically advanced and where the Congress is weak, but embrace areas and provinces which have been the traditional strongholds of the Congress and areas which had seldom before come out in big struggles against the Congress Government. The anti-sales-tax struggle in Saurashtra, the struggle in Rajasthan against Octroi Tax and the students' struggle in U.P. are examples.

(c) Not only does this new wave of mass struggles embrace new areas hitherto untouched by the mass movement, but it has drawn in new classes and sections of the people as well, such as teachers, traders, Government servants, etc. However, despite this extension of the struggles to new areas and classes, the general character of great unevenness of the level of the movement still remains.

(d) A new feature in this period is the growing participation of women not only in the struggle for existence but in the political fight also.

(e) The struggles, even when they embrace only one section of the people, evoke the sympathy of other sections and sometimes, especially against repression, the entire people of the area move into action, as was seen in the U.P. university students' struggles, thus transforming it into a militant anti-Government struggle.

(f) The Congress masses do not remain unaffected by these mass struggles. Even sections of Congressmen break away temporarily from the leadership under pressure of the people to join the struggle. The continued failure of the Congress Government to solve people's problems, the growth of mass unemployment and distress in the life of the people, the repression and attacks on the working class, peasantry and other sections of the people, the failure to implement a land policy in the interest of the peasants, etc. are all leading to a critical examination of the policies of the leadership by rank and file Congressmen, which makes possible the widest mobilisation and struggles on concrete issues.

(g) The new wave of struggles is remarkable for the urge for unity among all sections of the people. Anti-communism is no longer able to divide the masses where the issue is understood by all, is concrete and well-justified and where the Party is able to take correct steps to forge the unity of the people.

In spite of the split in the trade union and student movements, in spite of the fact that large masses of peasants are outside the AIKS, workers, peasants and students are uniting among themselves in factories, villages and educational institutions, regardless of their political affiliations.

The growing urge for united action and united organisation is making even disruptionist leaders and groups move in the direction of unity in the trade unions, kisan sabhas and united committees on specific issues. All this was seen in the glorious struggles of the working class (defence workers, Burnpur, Assam tea gardens, etc.), in the struggle of the Saurashtra people, in the anti-sales-tax struggle in Bombay, in the anti-tram-fare-enhancement and food struggles of Calcutta and Bengal.

(h) The working class plays an increasingly important part in the new wave of struggles. The struggles of the working class have been the most numerous in the country as a whole. Province-wide and even country-wide struggles of different sections of workers have begun to take place, as in the case of all sections of workers for Puja bonus in West Bengal and of the defence workers, teachers, bank employees etc. Doggedly fought struggles have been conducted by workers in small industries also. On several occasions, the working class has also gone into action on general issues affecting all classes as in Bombay against the withdrawal of the food subsidy, but this has not yet become a general feature.

(i) Although, as yet, the struggles are mainly taking place on the immediate day-to-day demands of the people, struggles for political demands have also developed and are developing. Several big actions have taken place on the issue of civil liberties; in Tripura a powerful movement has grown for a democratic government. The victory of the Andhra people has not only given

an impetus to the movement for linguistic states, but has led to many Congressmen coming out openly against the policies of the Congress Government and leadership.

(j) These struggles are being reflected in and carried into the chambers of the legislatures also. Determined opposition to the reactionary policies of the Government put up by the central core of democratic opposition inside Parliament and the State legislatures, when backed by the struggle of the masses outside, is often making sections of Congress legislators support the demands and sentiments of the fighting people. This has led to situations in which struggles outside have had their inevitable impact on the legislatures and sometimes led to ministerial crises. Rajaji's Government in Madras being compelled to give up many of the taxation measures it proposed in 1952, the veritable revolt that threatened to break out inside the Congress Legislature Party in Bombay over the issue of surcharge on land revenue in 1952, the differences in the West Bengal Cabinet that came out openly over the issue of the policy to be adopted towards the agitation against the enhancement of tramfare, are but some of the examples of the tremendous impact of the struggles of the masses on the legislatures and the ruling party.

(k) Due to the unity and militancy of the people and the weakening position of the monopolists, landlords and government, many of the struggles succeed in winning concessions—concessions which, though not big in themselves, heighten the confidence of the masses in their own strength and further weaken the Government.

l) The Communist Party has played an important part in leading these struggles, which has resulted in the growth of the influence and prestige of the Party.

Under the impact of these developments, mass political consciousness is rapidly growing and the Congress is losing ground even in those areas where its influence was preponderant only a few years ago. This can be seen in the results of the Municipal Elections in Uttar Pradesh and in the mass actions that are taking place even in the strongholds of the Congress.

As a result of all this, as a result of the growing fiasco of the Government policies, as a result of the increasing strength of the mass movement, contradictions sharpen inside the Congress, Congress organisations get increasingly split into warring factions, conflicts develop between Congress Ministries and Congress Committees—each blaming the other for the growing isolation of the Congress—conflicts develop inside Congress Legislature Parties and even inside Congress Ministries, conflicts develop between the Congress and its allies, leading, especially in States where the Congress is weak, to governmental instability and even ministerial crisis. The defeat of the Government in Travancore-Cochin sharply reveals this process.

28. All these make it unmistakably clear that what we are witnessing today is not merely the maturing of an economic crisis but, along with it, the initial stages of the development of a political crisis. The results of the general elections were not merely an expression of the loss of faith of the people in the present Government, of the process of people starting to consider it their enemy and of its being returned as a minority party in some legislatures, but also contained the possibility of the growth of a political crisis —a possibility that is growing into a reality as the result of the deepening of the economic crisis, the failure of the Government's economic and political policies and the growth of the wave of mass struggles.

29. Faced with this situation, sections in the leadership of the Congress strive for coalition with such a party as the Praja-Socialist Party but as yet these moves have not succeeded.

The attempts made by Nehru to strengthen the Govment by forming a coalition with the Praja-Socialist Party have ended in a fiasco because the PSP leadership is finding it more and more difficult to carry through its reactionary policies in the face of the growing opposition of the rank and file, and even sections of middle leadership, as a result of the growing struggles of the people and their growing urge for unity with the democratic forces. In these conditions, the persistence by the leadership of the PSP in its policies of disrupting the democratic movement, of manoeuvres to bring support to the Congress rule as against the unity of the democratic parties, is bound to lead to the PSP as a party meeting with further fiasco.

The development of the mass democratic movement has meant also a weakening of the influence of the reactionary communal parties. In Kashmir, they suffered a serious defeat. In the Punjab and PEPSU, the strengthening of the democratic movement has led to a split in the Akali Party—an influential group, having broken away, is co-operating with the democratic forces on democratic issues.

30. It will be wrong, however, to think that the Congress is already a spent force or that it is no longer capable of sowing illusions among the people. It has still great influence, great reserves and great manoeuvring capacity. In particular, we should not ignore the considerable strength that Pandit Nehru's personality brings to that organisation. Note should be also taken of the fact that although the internal policy of the Government is getting rapidly exposed among the people as an anti-people policy, through its foreign policy it is still able to gather considerable support. Moreover, the powerful influence that Gandhian ideology is still able to exercise over masses of people, including sections of the working class, an influence which expresses itself in various ways such as a belief among some sections in the efficacy of *bhoodan,* resort to satyagraha forms of struggle as a substitute for mass action, acts as a fetter to slow down the process of mass awakening, restrict struggles and dissipate energy.

The PSP leadership also is still able to create illusions among sections of the people disillusioned with the Congress. Under the cover of "anti-totalitarianism" and neutrality, the right-wing Socialist leadership slanders the Land of Socialism and the People's Republic of China and the People's Democratic Republics of Eastern Europe. Under the cover of anti-communism, it tries to disrupt the united movement of the working people and to prevent a broad alliance of the people against feudalism and imperialism. It tries to stem the tide of growing struggles and the mass urge for unity by launching struggles as in Pardi and Azamgarh, but restricting them to the satyagraha form.

Equally wrong will it be to think that communal forces have lost all influence. By raising communal slogans, as on the question of Indo-Pak relations and the question of full accession of Kashmir to India, they were able to utilise the discontent of the masses against the policies

of the Congress and divert the masses from the democratic movement. Similar attempts will be continued and it will be a mistake to under-estimate their danger.

31. Nonetheless, the objective conditions are such, the crisis is so deep and the mass urge for unity so great today that these retarding influences can be overcome by the Communist Party playing its role correctly as the bold leader of mass struggles, as the champion and defender of the rights of the people, the unifier of the democratic forces in the country.

Already the Party has played a most important role in the last general elections and emerged as the spearhead of the democratic opposition to Congress rule. By putting forward and working for the unity of the trade union, peasant, student and other movements, by its role in the struggles that have developed in every State since the elections, by the determined and consistent opposition that its members have put up in the legislatures, the Party has influenced considerably the course of development since the last Party Conference in October, 1951. In the crisis that has developed in Travancore-Cochin State leading to the dissolution of the Legislature, in the crisis that has developed in Hyderabad, in PEPSU and in many other States, the role of the Communist Party and the struggles that its members have led outside the legislatures have been of decisive importance.

32. In order that the Party can play its role in the developing situation, it is necessary that there is a clear understanding of the perspective and direction of the movement. In every struggle, even though the demand might be a simple economic demand affecting the day-to-day life of the people such as evictions, rent, wage, bonus, rationalisation and retrenchment, the masses engaged in the struggle see by their own direct experience that the struggle has got to be carried on against the determined opposition of the Government which comes out as the defender of the existing social order.

Not only do the people fight for their immediate day-to-day demands against landlords and monopolists, but they are also coming out in struggles against unjust taxes and levies imposed by the government, i.e. on demands that are

directly addressed to the Government. Also the consciousness grows among the people that this Government which comes to the aid of the exploiters whenever the people rise in struggle, this Government which imposes new burdens on the people, is a Government which has already lost the backing of the majority of the people.

It is the maturing crisis and the growing consciousness and militancy of the people which must determine the slogans and tactics of the democratic movement.

33. With the development of the crisis and the struggle of the masses against the attempts to shift the burdens of the crisis on to the masses, the Congress Governments are more and more resorting to heavy repression as was seen in Calcutta during the struggle against tramfare increase and in the agrarian struggles throughout the country. Democratic and civil liberties are being more and more attacked. The Congress does not flinch even from establishment of President's rule, dissolution of legislatures and crushing whatever democratic rights the people had won. Events in PEPSU and Travancore-Cochin are clear pointers of the determination of the Congress to maintain itself in power by every means at its disposal—including an attack on democratic forms. There can be no doubt that as the crisis deepens and the economic and political difficulties facing the Government increase, the tendency to resort to such methods will also increase. There can also be no doubt that the imperialists will utilise this situation to strengthen their grip over the country and the Government.

In these conditions, the struggle for day-to-day demands, the struggle against taxation and high prices, against evictions, against mass unemployment, the struggle for the preservation and extension of civil liberties and democratic rights, the struggle for defence of freedom and sovereignty —all get more and more interlinked and can grow into the common struggle for the replacement of the present Government by a Government of Democratic Unity, a government formed by a coalition of different democratic parties and groups on the basis of a common minimum programme to be decided according to the circumstances, which will give immediate relief to the people. Already in States like Travancore-Cochin, Andhra and Tripura it is possible to raise this as a practical slogan. With the strengthening of the mass

movement, with the maturing of the crisis in different ways in different areas, situations will arise when this can be raised as an immediate slogan in state after state. It is this perspective that has to guide our activity. Achievement of a Government of Democratic Unity is the objective towards which all struggles of the masses have to lead.

34. It must be remembered that the slogan of a Government of Democratic Unity is a slogan which demands the organisation and unleashing of mass struggles on the widest scale. It will be realised only in the course and as the result of determined struggle to defeat the economic and political policies of the ruling classes and by repelling their attack on the standard of life, rights and liberties of the people. Hence the most important task today is to unfold such a movement on the basis of the struggle for the immediate, concrete demands of the workers, peasants, students and other classes and sections and build powerful mass organisations and strengthen the Party. The importance of the struggle for economic demands led by mass trade unions and kisan sabhas acquire far greater importance than ever before precisely because of the growing crisis. It is through these struggles, as the history of the last two years proves, that the strength will be generated and the unity forged which alone can be a guarantee of victory. Then only, even the conflicts in the Congress can be utilised to the advantage of the masses. Failure to see this will lead to the giving of abstract slogans, diverting mass attention from immediate tasks, reliance on top negotiations and manoeuvres and weakening of the mass movement.

35. The three inseparable tasks on the carrying out of which will depend the success of the democratic movement are: the building of the Party, the building of the mass organisations and the building of the Democratic Front. In the measure that these tasks are carried out in an integrated and co-ordinated manner, the attempts of the Government and the ruling classes to shift the burdens of the crisis on to the people will be defeated, the mass movement will get strengthened, grow and achieve its aim.

36. The growing burdens on the people, the worsening condition of their lives, the increasingly anti-popular

policies of the Government as well as the growing threat to the freedom of India demand that all democratic forces are united. The possibilities of such unity are immense and are growing and a key task of the Communist Party is to progressively forge this unity. For this, it is necessary to attain clarity on the nature of the unity that has to be forged and the method of forging it.

37. The Democratic Front is the united front of all classes and elements whose interest can effectively be furthered only by the elimination of imperialism and feudalism. It can be built only by developing the broadest mass movement on the basis of struggles for immediate economic and political issues confronting the people. It is obvious that at a time when the masses are under the influence of different political parties, when even the working class is split, united front agreements between parties and organisations regarding demands and slogans of struggle on each issue are powerful factors in drawing people into common action. Such united fronts help in bringing even masses following the Congress into common struggle. Hence, it is necessary for the Communist Party to continue and intensify efforts for such agreements on each issue.

38. Experience has also shown that the formation of united committees for the specific purpose of conducting of such united struggles, as was formed for example to conduct the struggle in Calcutta against increase in tramfare, committees whose constituents are the various parties, organisations and elements, and where decisions are taken by common consent, help the strengthening and further unfolding of the mass movement. It also helps the building and growth of united mass organisations of workers, peasants and others. It is this coming together from issue to issue and jointly leading the mass struggles and the working in common mass organisations that will create conditions for a closer united front.

39. Further, united front does not mean merely the united front of the Communist Party and left parties but, above all, united front of the masses, including masses still under the influence of the Congress. Hence the development of the united front movement demands the drawing into

struggles and common activity of the large mass of Congressmen, Praja-Socialists and progressive individuals. The tendency to look upon all Congressmen and all PSP members as reactionary because of the reactionary policy of the Congress leadership and disruptive policy of the PSP leadership must be combated. With the growth of the crisis, with the growth of mass struggles and growing disillusionment of the masses about the policies of the Congress and PSP leaderships, possibilities already exist for drawing disillusioned Congressmen and PSP followers into struggles and common activity and these possibilities will develop in future.

40. While developing such common activity and while resorting to all forms of mass struggle, it is necessary to guard against one deviation. Instead of endeavouring to transform satyagraha struggles into mass struggles where this form is resorted to by others because of the backwardness of the masses, there has been a tendency among some Party comrades to themselves limit the struggle to satyagraha as an alternative to mass action. This tendency is harmful and dissipates mass energy and should therefore be combated.

41. The development of the united front and unity through the widening of the mass movement is often hampered because of the abstractness of our agitation, the habit of substituting concrete exposure by general denunciation, the indulgence, quite often, in stereotyped speeches in Assemblies, Parliament and from public platforms, stereotyped writings in our papers and, above all, the failure to distinguish between the platform of the Front and the Party forum. Too often we speak only for those who are already convinced that the present Government is a reactionary Government. Too often we fail to make use of existing legislation—Tenancy Legislation, the Social Security Act, the Payment of Wages Act, etc.—to ameliorate the conditions of the masses and secure concessions for them, forgetting that this legislation has been enacted as the result of mass struggles and is a weapon in the hands of the people. Too often the tendency is to narrate only the hardships that the people are suffering and to ignore the successes that their struggles have won in the mistaken belief that reference to such successes will breed "reformist illusions",

while the reality is that, in order to inculcate confidence in the masses, confidence that unity and struggle can win demands, it is essential that each success won by the people, no matter how small, is widely publicised and made the basis for further advance. There is also the tendency to pay scant attention to such work as adult literacy, cultural and sports activities, co-operatives, medical relief, etc.—work which is absolutely essential, work which can mobilise vast sections and enable the Party and mass organisations to forge close links with the people.

42. In areas where famine conditions prevail, not only is it necessary to demand relief from the Government and organise relief on the basis of unity of democratic organisations, but it is also necessary to mobilise the people for such work as deepening of wells, repair of tanks, etc.

It is necessary for every Provincial Committee to undertake a critical examination of the plans and projects undertaken by the Government in the Province, make a factual assessment of their effects in consultation with the people directly covered by them and put forward the demand for their correct implementation or amendment or replacement as will help the people and mobilise the masses for their implementation.

43. Despite the various laws that have been enacted, the untouchable masses are in practice denied equal rights even now. It is necessary not merely to agitate for more comprehensive laws against untouchability but also to wage a concrete battle against all forms of discrimination and utilise all the existing laws.

Similarly, despite the equality of treatment guaranteed in law, the Muslim minority is, in practice, being discriminated against in various matters. It is necessary to fight against this and champion their just demands.

Special attention is to be paid to the questions of the tribal people, and concrete demands for their economic rehabilitation and cultural upliftment, for democratic liberties and for local regional autonomy are to be formulated and campaigned for.

44. The rapidly deteriorating situation on the agrarian front demands that utmost attention is paid by every

Provincial Committee to the task of strengthening the Kisan Sabha organisation and forming agricultural workers' associations wherever necessary. Broad peasant unity has to be built in action against evictions, against unjust taxes, for reduction of rent, for moratorium on debts, for adequate wages and for employment, for relief against famine and drought, for fair price for agricultural produce, for specific irrigation projects and similar demands. The Provincial Committees must immediately undertake a concrete study of the question of distribution of land held by landowners above ceiling and put forward concrete demands.

45. In order to save their profits being affected by the crisis of their landlord-capitalist economy, the big monopolists have launched an attack on the wages and working conditions of the workers. With the help of the Government, they are thwarting the gains of social security legislation reaching the workers. With the help of ILO experts and foreign advisers, they are introducing rationalisation methods to increase the work-load and reduce the total earnings of the workers. With the help of Tribunals, they are freezing the payment of bonuses and wage-increases despite rising living costs. They hope to break the resistance of the workers by using the pressure of the unemployed rushing to the towns from the countryside. They hope to use the division in the trade union organisations to disrupt the workers' struggles. When everything fails, they use terror and violence.

Under such conditions, the unity of the trade union movement, unity in conducting struggles to defend the workers must be worked for and achieved. The struggle for trade union unity is hampered on our part by the remnants of sectarian understanding. Though trade union unity is accepted in principle, it is looked upon as a temporary tactic and not a fundamental principle of the trade union movement, without the realisation of which the working class is disarmed before its enemies.

Formal acceptance of the principle of unity and continuation of sectarian understanding results in characterising the unions of the INTUC and the HMS, even where they are mass unions, as gangsters' unions and just agencies of the employers. It is not realised that many of the leaders of the INTUC and the HMS are often compelled to take up

positions of struggle because of the pressure from their own following, whose most elementary demands the leaderships are not able to satisfy. This attitude has even led to our comrades remaining indifferent to the struggles called by the INTUC and the HMS leaders in certain instances and has affected the merger and unity of trade unions even where genuine feelings for unity have been expressed in common mass actions.

A firm struggle against sectarianism must be carried on and work in all unions, wherever the masses are, must become the regular feature. The tendency to undertake such work with a view to "exposing" the leadership, as the primary objective, must be combated as it leads to disruption of the trade union. Instead, our comrades working in all mass unions must ceaselessly strive to activise the mass of workers around their immediate demands. Failure to activise the mass of workers, failure to bring even the minimum of trade union consciousness to every worker by enrolling him in a union and mere concentration on verbal "exposure" of the leadership often leads to our comrades demanding the formation of rival trade unions and keeping the unions as closed groups. There is the most harmful tendency that thinks that the building of the Party and realising the Party Programme require separate trade unions, directly functioning under Party members who make the policies of the unions according to their own Fraction decisions, irrespective of the will of the majority in the unions. Such an understanding has led to unions being reduced to Party groups, to absence of democratic functioning and, ultimately, to loss of mass basis. All these manifestations of sectarianism must be firmly combated.

The setting up and functioning of united factory committees is part of our work for the development of trade union unity. The existing united factory committees must be strengthened, and such factory committees must be organised wherever possible, in the setting up of which even the works councils should be utilised. In the struggles that are breaking out more and more, the question of united resistance to the offensive of the Government and employers will come to the fore and must be fully utilised by the setting up of joint elected committees for the conduct of struggles and negotiations. The question of recognition of unions, in present conditions, ceases to be merely a question of the working class. With the State forces interfering in strikes, meetings and demonstrations, the struggle for the right to strike and recognition of unions becomes a vital part of the struggle for the democratic rights of the people as a whole. The struggle develops into one of combating reactionary Government laws such as the Industrial Relations Acts in Bombay, Madhya Bharat and Madhya Pradesh. The development of a wide movement against the Acts in these States in particular and in the country generally is a major task of the working-class front and in the discharge of that task the working class not only defends itself but leads in the defence of the whole people against all reactionary laws, for their rights and living.

46. Working-class struggles, especially struggles in major industries, against the offensive of the monopolists, acquire increased significance in the present situation. Vigorous defence by the working class of its rights, vigorous struggle by the working class against retrenchment, wage-cut and other forms of attack encourage all classes and sections to wage their own battles. Also, mass action by the working class gives form and direction to the growing radicalisation of the people as already seen in several States.

With the development of the crisis, the monopolists and the Government resist to the utmost the conceding of even the most elementary demands of the working class. The struggle for the demands of the workers requires, therefore, that these struggles must be mass struggles, struggles of the people in the sense that large sections of the people understand and support them. The mobilisation of the support of other sections of the people for working-class struggles is of great importance for the success of these struggles. That this is possible has been demonstrated in recent months where whole cities and towns came out on hartals in support of the resistance of workers to retrenchment.

In order to make this possible, it is equally necessary that trade unions take up the demands of other sections—of peasants, middle-class, merchants, etc.—which are hit by the offensive of the landlords, monopolists and the Government. They must struggle along with the rest of the population and be in the forefront of the struggle against the imperialists who threaten the cause of peace, of national freedom and sovereignty. The working class

must come out for the protection of national industries against the competition of the imperialists.

All this requires intense political agitation among the workers, enabling them to see that their own problems, the attack on their wages and living standards, mass unemployment, etc. are inseparable from the larger problems facing the entire people caused by the feudal-colonial social order. The working class must be imbued with the consciousness that there can be no stable improvement in their own living standards and working conditions unless this colonial-feudal set-up is broken up and freedom and democracy for all people are ensured.

The task of building the alliance of the working class and the peasantry is of great importance. This alliance can be realised through the working class boldly championing the demands of the peasantry and coming to the assistance of the peasantry through its own action.

There is a widespread tendency to neglect important and vital industries in industrial areas and to concentrate on small and diffused industries. This tendency must be given up and Party units must immediately undertake planned work in major and important industries.

The problem of combating mass unemployment has become a key problem before the working class. The development of a wide movement by means of rallies and conferences, marches and demonstrations, hartals and strikes is the most important task. United committees for fighting retrenchment and unemployment must be organised. Such a wide movement cannot unfold itself fully unless the organised working class employed in factories is brought into the movement. Apart from mobilisation, it is of utmost importance that relief and solidarity campaigns are organised.

47. The powerful movement for the formation of linguistic states which gathered further momentum after the formation of the Andhra State has now resulted in the appointment of a Commission by the Government of India to "examine the question of reorganisation of States". This undoubtedly is a popular victory and it demands further strengthening of the struggle for the constitution of linguistic states by the abolition of States, headed by Rajpramukhs,

the disintegration of multi-national States and the redrawing of State boundaries.

In this connection, special attention should be paid to the just demands and rights of the national minorities, the tribal peoples and of predominantly tribal areas within each linguistic State. These latter must be drawn into the movement and close links must be forged with them, which can be done only by championing their demands boldly.

While conducting this movement, it is imperative to guard against the danger of disruption of the unity of the working and toiling masses of various nationalities. All tendencies of bourgeois nationalism, tendencies of whipping up national hatred and animosity, tendencies of concentrating on the so-called disputed areas in order to build up a case for their incorporation in one's own "homeland" will intensify with the appointment of the Boundary Commission and the ruling classes will utilise them to disrupt the struggles of the masses. Hence all such tendencies are to be specifically combated and the banner of proletarian internationalism upheld.

48. Each struggle, each campaign, each mass action must be used not only to popularise slogans but also and, above all, to build organisations—of workers, peasants, students, youth, women. It must be remembered that one of the main reasons why the growth of the mass movement is lagging behind the growth of mass discontent is that such organisations are still weak and in many places non-existent.

In the past, a key weakness of organisations of workers, peasants and other classes has been the weakness of the basic units like factory committees and primary kisan sabhas. The strength of mass organisations depends not only on their total membership but on the manner in which this membership is organised—above all, on the firmness and organised functioning of the basic units. Without them, neither the mass base of the organisations can be expanded nor even the existing bases activised. Hence the necessity to focus attention on this work and draw into organisational work rank and file workers, peasants and agricultural labourers.

49. The work of our comrades in the State Legislatures and Parliament has strengthened the mass movement.

Nevertheless, the role our work in Parliament and State Legislatures can play in the development of the mass movement outside has not been fully realised either by the comrades inside the legislatures or outside them. The existence of a powerful mass movement outside helps to make work in Parliament effective. But experience has also shown that in some areas where the Party and mass movement are weak, our work in the legislatures has helped to draw towards the Party and enthuse new sections and organisations whom we could not touch before. Comrades in Legislatures therefore have to act in such a way as to strengthen the movement where it exists and also help its growth where it is weak or as yet non-existent.

Our work in the Legislatures has to:

i) reflect the mass movement outside;

ii) popularise the policy of the Communist Party on a nationwide scale and make common knowledge, on an all-India plane, the struggles and victories of the masses in different areas, thereby helping forward the political consciousness of the entire people;

iii) take steps to win concessions for the people, improve the existing legislation in favour of the people and initiate new legislation;

iv) aid the struggle and carry forward the movements of the workers, peasants and all sections of the people. For this purpose, it is necessary not only to undertake exposure of the policies and legislative and executive measures of the Government but utilise all other parliamentary forms such as demand for parliamentary delegations and committees of enquiry and their visits and tours, so as to make them the rallying-point of wide agitation and mass mobilisation in support of them;

v) develop unity with sections within legislatures who are getting rapidly disillusioned and help in the development of the united front outside.

In order to improve our work in legislatures, it is necessary that there be:

i) closer co-ordination between parliamentary activity and the mass movement outside;

ii) extension of the limited-area outlook and knowledge of our comrades in the legislatures to a national outlook so that they may effectively reflect not only their constituencies, states and fronts but also the areas from which none has been elected;

iii) a serious effort by comrades in legislatures to develop and master the art of parliamentary work in order to forge out of it a powerful weapon to be wielded in defence of and for winning the rights of the struggling masses;

iv) an effort to see that our work in the legislatures is widely publicised and popularised and that our journals use the activities in Parliament to strengthen the movement outside;

v) development of closest links by comrades in legislatures with the masses outside, so that they can effectively act as the tribunes of the people and prove worthy of the faith and trust reposed in them by the people and by their movement.

For this, it is essential that the CC and the PCs should give the closest attention and guidance to the work in the legislatures. Together with this, the weaknesses of the mass organisations must be overcome and co-ordination between them and legislature work established.

50. Our comrades have been returned in large numbers to many municipalities, local boards and panchayats. A correct understanding of our tasks in the municipal and local bodies is of great importance. The municipalities and local boards, in spite of their limited powers and spheres of action, but because of their proximity to the very people who elect them and the day-to-day constant contact with the local executive machinery, can be used for the direct benefit of the people by our representatives in many small ways. As such the limitations that are being sought to be imposed on the powers and rights of these bodies should be resisted and every effort should be made to expand them.

The people expect us to use these limited powers to give them some amenities of health and hygiene, roads and water supply, elementary education and such other things as lie within the purview of these bodies. The bourgeois-land-

lord leadership of the Congress wants these bodies to put additional taxation on the peasantry to pay for these benefits and even the proceeds of this small taxation are mulcted by the local exploiters. It is our duty to see to it that this game is defeated and that these local centres of municipal authority, wherever they are under our guidance, are rid of corruption and graft, that the harassment of the peasantry is stopped and that the dues realised are used for rendering real municipal aid to the people.

However poor and meagre be the powers, these can be used to do good to the life of the people. Our representatives must learn the art of running them properly. They are surely not speech-broadcasting houses only. Local self-government must become the platform of strengthening the people's solidarity through the partial services that are possible within the framework of even the existing legislation.

Hence we have to see that our approach in these bodies is even more positive than in the legislatures and that our cadres in these bodies do get serious education in the running of these bodies. The Provincial Committees must help in the drawing up of programmes for the implementation of which our comrades must fight.

51. Despite the growth of the general influence of the Party, our effective organised influence is confined, in almost all States, to a few areas and districts. Without a countrywide Party, without a wide kisan sabha, without a firm base in the most important working-class areas, it is not possible to grow into a countrywide national-political force. While strengthening our position in the areas where we are already a force, it has become urgently necessary to spread to new areas and sectors. Provincial units must carefully and urgently plan out and execute this task.

It is necessary to create mass political literature and transform our newspapers into national-political journals.

The fulfilment of all these tasks demands the rapid strengthening of the Party and the undertaking of political education as a key political task. For, the development of the Party is the key factor in determining the growth of the mass movement. It is of utmost importance that the entire Party be armed with the perspective of the fast

maturing of a profound economic and political crisis, of the struggles that are looming large and of the perspective of co-ordinating them into the political struggle for the replacement of the present Government by a Government of Democratic Unity. The Party must acquire a correct understanding of the direction in which things are moving, a sense of urgency, revolutionary zeal and passion and give up all complacency and sense of self-satisfaction.

The Party must become the decisive national force—politically, geographically and in a class sense, i.e. by Party units in each area and State acting as the leader and organiser of the people, by the Party spreading to new areas, and by its basing itself and drawing its main strength from the working class and the toiling peasants. Advance is to be measured no longer, as in the past, in terms of our "general political influence" nor even in terms of mass mobilisation on specific issues only, but in terms of the growth of organisation in general and growth of the Party in particular, in terms of circulation of literature and newspapers, in terms of collection of funds, in terms of the strengthening of mass organisations and the Party itself.

It is only through such all-round growth that the Party will be able to discharge its duties and responsibilities to the people.

Against the Preventive Detention Act

[The Congress Government has all along claimed to be a democratic government. But throughout its regime it has continued to enforce one of the most hated measures of the British rulers, namely, detent.on without trial. In December 1953, the Government brought forward a bill before Parliament extending the life of the Preventive Detention Act. The Communist Members of Parliament, together with members from other Opposition part.es, fearless'y fought against the bill which was passed by the block voting of the Congress majority. Below we print the speeches delivered in the House of the People by two Communist M.Ps which effectively expose the character if this undemocratic measure.—Editor.]

SPEECH BY SADHAN GUPTA

On behalf of the Communist Party — and I believe in this matter I am reflecting not only the views of my Party but the views of the entire Opposition and the views also, if not the views at least the consciences, of most the members on the other side—we wish to record our emphatic opposition to the further continuance of the Preventive Detention Act. We oppose the continuance of this Act on the ground of principles as well as on the ground of abuses to which this Act has been put; on the ground of principles no less than on the ground of abuses, and on the ground of abuses no less than on the ground of principles.

Before I come to the principles and before I come to the abuses, may I deal in brief with a few of the arguments advanced for continuing this Act in operation. It has been stated in the report that has been circulated that we should not do away with this Act because there are supposed to be certain constitutional responsibilities which should not be lightly interfered with. Secondly, because the State Governments have all, without exception, asked for its continuance. Thirdly, because the Act is supposed to be fairly abuse-proof. And, lastly, because the Hon. Home Minister has by personal examination found out that the continuance is entirely justified, that the request of the State Governments is not unreasonable.

The second and third points, namely, the requests of the State Governments and the Act being abuse-proof, I shall discuss when I come to the administration of the Act itself. But, let us examine the two other points first. What are the constitutional responsibilities which will be interfered with by discontinuing the Preventive Detention Act? Is there anything in the Constitution which requires the enacting or the continuance of the Preventive Detention Act? We do not accept the proposition that the Constitution requires the Preventive Detention Act. But, even if we take it for granted, the Centre would not interfere with any constitutional responsibility by discontinuing it because the States have ample power to provide themselves with their own Acts. So, the argument of constitutional responsibility is an absolute fallacy.

What about the Home Minister's personal examination of the matter? He has not placed anything before us as to why and how he has satisfied himself, on a personal examination, that the Preventive Detention Act is justified. He has not said anything in his report. He has said something in his speech, which I shall deal with when I come to the administration of the Act itself. But apart from that, apart from vague allegations of violence, apart from allegations of crimes, he has not given any other material, concrete material, on the basis of which he has found that the request of the State Governments is justified. The two other points, as I said, I shall deal with later on—the request of the State Governments and how far the Act is abuse-proof. But, I can just now show that the request of the State Governments is to perpetuate a reign of terror in the States, to suppress every kind of progressive movement, every kind of movement against exploitation and to use the Preventive Detention Act for that purpose.

I shall come to the principles upon which we object to the continuance of the Act. As regards the principles, I was very pained to find that the Home Minister thought it proper to scoff at them, to scoff at what he called copy-book maxims. I think what he meant was the maxim that no person should be detained without trial, that no person should be imprisoned without being heard. That principle we choose to follow and, if it is a copy-book maxim, we choose to copy it from the book of his own leader, the Prime Minister, who had solemnly declared that a Government which could not govern without such Acts had no right to exist. We naturally agree with him, with him as he was. Now, we take our stand on it and for very good reasons. After all, you know that every civilised society is revolted at the idea of detention without trial, that

a person should be placed in prison without being heard in his defence. He might be innocent and there may not be anything against him, but he would not be heard, and without being heard, he would be put in detention; he would be kept in jail for days, weeks, months or even years. That is what we definitely object to and that is what we definitely stand against. When he has this contempt for the so-called copy-book maxim, we can easily understand his fear of the state of the law in other countries. He said that it is no use quoting the instances of America, Holland and Brazil or whatever it is. He wishes to distinguish the position in our country by the fact that our Constitution provides for a Preventive Detention Act. May I remind him that there is nothing in the constitutions of other countries to debar preventive detention? The only question is not whether the Constitution allows it, but whether the conscience of society allows it. The other countries respect the conscience of society; in our country they do not respect the conscience of society; they do not respect the conscience of civilised society. That is the fault with us; the fault is not really with the Constitution. The fault is with our Governments who wish to tyrannise the people of the country.

He has also tried to minimise the effect of the operation of the Preventive Detention Act. He said only 117 persons out of 36 crores were in detention on the 30th September this year. Now, the question is not whether the number was 117 or 1,017 or 10,017. You know while we were fighting the British, I think there was no time in which there were more than 50,000 or 60,000 in jail on a single day. 60,000 out of 40 crores is a very small number and it is nothing at all, but did we go by mere numbers or did we take into account the principle behind the oppression? Why should all these people be put in prison—because they were fighting for freedom? Here too we are not concerned about whether the number is 117; what we are concerned about is what are they being kept in the jail for and why are they being kept in jail without being heard. That is the stand we take and we maintain that stand in spite of all that the Home Minister has to say.

The arguments of the Home Minister in defending the course followed by the State Governments, I shall deal with presently, but subject to that, we are now on the principles and the principles are that not a single person should be put into detention except for the gravest emergency. What can that grave emergency be? It is accepted by every civilised society that the only grave emergency that can justify detention without trial is a paramount threat to the security or

defence of the country—a threat so grave that by giving a detenu a hearing, vital information might go to the enemy and thereby an instant danger to security may come. That is why preventive detention has been accepted only in wartime and we do not know any country where preventive detention has taken place in peace-time, because in peace, such an emergency is inconceivable and even in wartime, the power has been very sparingly used.

Let us take the instance of Britain. During the last war there were very few persons in detention there without trial, although we know that in Britain Hitler had an extensive spy ring, which all along was subverting the security of Britain. Yet, only in extreme cases where there could be no hearing given without giving vital information to the enemy, was detention resorted to. And what does the Home Minister say? Why is detention necessary? Because there are hunger strikes, because there are labour troubles at other places, because there are student troubles elsewhere. Now, what is all this? Can't you deal with these troubles? Suppose they are very numerous. Can't we deal with those troubles under the ordinary law? If we cannot, if they are permitted under the ordinary law, we oppose their being prevented under the Preventive Detention Act.

Let us now come to the argument that the Act is abuse-proof. What is the Hon. Home Minister's argument about it? Quite simple, namely, that there is really no abuse, because the Governments have the power to release persons *suo motu* [at its own initiative—*ed.*]—that is in the report. Secondly, because the Advisory Board is there and it is supposed to give a better relief than a trial court. Thirdly, because the High Courts and the Supreme Court are there to release the detenu. What is the power of *suo motu* release which has been made so much of? Can we receive any consolation from the fact that a Government, which has put us in detention, will sometime release us *suo motu*? In the report, he has pointed out that so many were released *suo motu*. The reason for such a large number of releases is presumably that they were put in detention without any cause, that they were put in detention *mala fide*. When it was thought that the things that the Government did not like would no longer be troublesome, they were released, or when they found that the people's pressure could not be resisted, as in Bengal where they had to give in, they released the detenus. That is how *suo motu* release took place.

What about the Advisory Board? I know there are three Judges on the Advisory Board. Is that a sufficient protection?

Materials would be placed before the Judges—reports by certain police agents, I believe—but there is no right to cross-examine these police agents. How can we prove the falsity of the reports without having the right to cross-examine the police agents? There is no such right. Now, even assuming that the Advisory Board was a much better court than an ordinary law court, what is the protection after all? For 70 days, not for one or two days, but for 70 days, Government could keep us in detention without any Advisory Board at all. 70 days is bad enough. Why should we agree to remain in jail without getting any hearing at all?

Now, about the High Courts and the Supreme Court. Unfortunately, the Home Minister could not conceal the chagrin at the releases granted by the High Courts and the Supreme Court. I should think it is very improper even to suggest anything against the High Courts and the Supreme Court here in releasing detenus. We, as practising lawyers, know it full well—I think although the Hon. Home Minister was an eminent lawyer in his time, as regards these Acts, as regards the constitutional remedies in respect of the Preventive Detention Act, I can claim to have more experience than he has— I can say from my experience that it is extremely difficult to get a release from the High Court or the Supreme Court. The High Court or the Supreme Court may be perfectly aware that the grounds may not be correct, but unless they can be convinced that the grounds were dishonestly given, were given *mala fide*, it is impossible to release the detenus. Now, that is a thing which is impossible. How can we prove what is working in the minds of the Government? Well, every politician knows why detenus are being held but when it comes to being proved by legal evidence, we cannot do it for the simple reason that the law of evidence requires that hearsay evidence is no proof, opinion is no proof: only your personal knowledge. And how can we have a personal knowledge, for instance, that the Home Minister of Bengal has detained a certain person because he had a conversation with the agent of the police? Now that is the difficulty in getting release even though everyone knows that the detention order, from top to bottom, is illegal.

It has been stated in the report—a misleading statement—that High Courts and Supreme Court release detenus when grounds are insufficient or unjustified. Nothing of the kind. The High Courts and the Supreme Court are precluded from considering the sufficiency of the grounds—whether the grounds are enough to put one in detention, whether the grounds justify preventive detention. What the High Courts

and the Supreme Court can look into is whether the grounds are such as are covered by the Preventive Detention Act, whether the grounds are not too vague to enable the detenu to make representation. Obviously, the Hon. Home Minister would not like even that protection. Obviously, what he would like is that the grounds are such that the detenu may not be allowed to make any representation at all, and yet the High Courts and the Supreme Court must uphold it. Obviously, the Hon. Home Minister would like that the grounds may be absolutely irrelevant to the Preventive Detention Act, and yet the High Courts and the Supreme Court must uphold the detention, because the Government has chosen to detain the detenu.

That was about the argument that suitable machinery has been provided in the Preventive Detention Act. What about the actual administration of the Act? The Hon. Home Minister has waxed eloquent on the moderation with which the State Governments have applied this Act. I do not know where he got this idea. I do not know what materials he has studied in order to arrive at this conclusion that the State Governments have been moderate, that the State Governments have been reasonable.

I shall in a moment tell you about our experience in different States. But before that, from the report itself, you will find that there is no question of moderation. The report of course puts the ground so as to justify the detention. The statements in the report contain many serious and grave charges, doubtless with a view to showing up before this House how eminently necessary this law is. But what do we find even from a perusal of this report? If you look at statement No. 3 attached to this report, we find in the grounds column, that one of the grounds given for detention is anti-sales-tax agitation: that is to say, people who would agitate against sales tax are liable to be detained. One other ground given in the case of UP is inciting labour trouble. Mind you, it is not inciting violence but inciting labour trouble. A strike is a labour trouble; a tool down strike would be labour trouble; "satyagraha" in order to get some trade union rights would be a labour trouble; and for that we are supposed to be detained. Another ground given in respect of UP is kisan agitation. That gives an inkling into the exact way in which this Act is administered. Every State Government is not a fool like the UP or the Saurashtra Government. They know how to shield themselves. The Saurashtra or the UP Governments have, in a moment of forgetfulness or in an unguarded moment, given out some of the real motives—anti-sales tax agitation,

labour trouble, kisan agitation. Now, if these are the rights in our country that we cannot agitate like this, we cannot agitate for the peasantry, we cannot agitate against an unfair sales tax without being detained, then, heaven help us.

That is not all. From an examination of the report we find that there have been flagrant abuses. People have been put into detention without any justification at all. We think that even if one or two cases in the whole of India have occurred where detention has taken place without any justification, where a man has been kept in prison without trial, without any justification whatever, it is sufficient to condemn this Act. But what do we find? It is not one or two cases. 374 cases have occurred during the last year where there has been no justification for detention.

If we look at the statement which gives the releases by Advisory Boards, High Courts and the Supreme Court, what do we find? We find that in the past year 224 detenus have been released by Advisory Boards. That is to say 224 people were locked up, in whose cases the Advisory Board found that there was no sufficient material to lock them up. Sixty-four persons were released by the High Courts and 86 persons were released by the Supreme Court, because there were no materials to justify their detention. Now, can we really look with equanimity at this flagrant abuse of the Act, whereby hundreds of our citizens are likely to have their liberties deprived only because it suits the Government, it suits the different State Governments and it suits the interests which they serve to put persons in detention?

I now come to the allegations of violent activities, indulging in violence, preaching violence, goondaism, dacoity and all the serious charges, all the frightening charges that have been thrown at us to justify this Preventive Detention Act. It is quite clear that if this had been the real motive for enacting the Preventive Detention Act, the Preventive Detention Act would not have been necessary at all. If I indulge in violence, if I assault someone, or kill someone, or hurt someone, or commit an offence, I can certainly be proceeded against under the Indian Penal Code. There are the sections which the Hon. Home Minister is well aware of—147, 323, 325, 302, 304 and all the rest of it, which give ample powers to meet different forms of violence. If I preach violence I can be proceeded against under the abetment sections of the Indian Penal Code. If I harbour dacoits, I can be proceeded against under Section 110 of the Criminal Procedure Code. If I carry on communal agitation, threatening the breach of the peace, I can be proceeded against, I can be prevented under Section 107 of the

Criminal Procedure Code. Now, therefore, all those pretexts—pretexts I call them—are really meant to cover up, to screen, to smoke-screen, the real object behind the Preventive Detention Act, the object of checking every progressive movement, the object of preventing, of suppressing, every movement for the betterment of our lives, every movement against poverty, hunger, misery and squalor.

Let us look at a few examples. I have already told the House about the anti-sales-tax movement in Saurashtra. And what was that movement? Some sales tax was imposed which was considered to be unfair, not only by Communists, but by Praja Socialists and even by Congressmen. In fact, all sections of the Saurashtra people complained against it. So terrific was the pressure that the Government had to yield: they had to postpone the levy of the sales tax, and yet for that movement people were detained. Not only Communists, not only Socialists, even Congress people were detained.

Now, what happened in the tramway fare enhancement resistance movement? We find from the report that there are so many persons being detained in connection with the tram fare enhancement resistance movement. The Tramway Company decided to enrich its pockets, to rob the poorest class of tram passengers, the second class passengers, by increasing their fare by one pice. Every right thinking man objected. The tramway company is a foreign company. It had made huge profits and it had no right to rob our poor people of lakhs of rupees. Deputations were taken to the Government. They said it was quite right, they were justified in increasing the fares. A movement was launched, an entirely innocuous movement, a non-violent movement: the aim of the movement was that unless the tramway company agrees to withdraw the enhanced fare no passenger would go by tram. Everyone would either walk or go by bus. Millions of Calcutta's office-goers walked or went by bus. And that was too much for the Government. Everyone who preached this boycott of the tramway company was clamped in jail. First some case was started against them, and when they found that the case could not stand, they were put under preventive detention.

Let us take the example of Jyoti Bose, the Leader of the Opposition in the Bengal Assembly. He was advocating boycotting tramways in a certain Calcutta street. He was taken over to a police station. The police officer who took him was writing down that he was charged with assaulting. When the police officer was asked by him: "What is that? Why do you say I am charged with assaulting?", the police officer replied:

"Don't you realise that if I write that you were preaching for boycotting tramcars, then there would be no case against you? That is what I have to do". Well, I cannot blame him. They were the instructions given to him by the Government. What could he do, poor man? Now that is what is happening. Even that charge did not hold good and yet he was placed under preventive detention.

The same thing has happened as regards the food movement. The movement was for the reduction of price of rice, for good quality rice and under mass pressure Government agreed to reduce the price to seven annas from nine annas. They had raised the price to nine annas. Repeated deputations were taken to them. They did not agree to reduce it and when a day later many peasants and Calcutta citizens demonstrated they reduced the price by two annas. In spite of that people who organised the movement were put under preventive detention.

The same thing took place as regards trade union rights in Burnpur, where members of the Indian National Trade Union Congress, Congressmen all of them, were put in detention, because the trade union led by one section of the Indian National Trade Union Congress did not suit the employers of the Indian Iron & Steel Company at Burnpur. This kind of thing has happened not only in West Bengal. I have quoted the example of Saurashtra. In Bombay the followers of the Akhand Karnatak Raj Nirman Parishad have been detained for advocating a united Karnatak State. There are places, for instance, in Travancore-Cochin, where they do not even want to utilise the Preventive Detention Act. They think implication in false cases is better, and thousands have been implicated in false cases. But many States think that the Preventive Detention Act may be a better substitute and so they resort to it.

I can say from the experience of our State that the persons who have been detained had not been concerned in any violence. If violence has occurred, it has occurred not because of any activities of the detenus. It has occurred on account of the activities of the police. The tramway movement was entirely peaceful. There was no violence at all till the police, in order to suppress the movement, began to enter into houses, to lathi-charge people inside the houses, to commit vandalism and molest women inside houses. There is a limit to tolerance, and that is how some violence occurred. The leaders of the movement have always asked the populace to be peaceful in spite of all provocations. It is only the police, by lathi-charging and shooting down innocent persons, that provoked violence.

And there was very little of it; it was nothing compared to the police violence.

Why this talk of violence, why this bogey of violence? The State Governments do not believe it. The reason is simple. They want to trample down our movement against British exploitation and against capitalist exploitation. They want to check our movement for bonus. They want to check our movement against bad food, bad quality of rice and high price of food.

We as Communists are proud to have borne the brunt of the abuse of this Act, but other political parties have not escaped. They have got their share also. In West Bengal, Communists and former Socialists (Praja Socialists) and others have equally borne it, and even Congressmen have been detained.

In conclusion I appeal to all sections of the House to realise the pernicious character of this Act. It puts our country to shame before the conscience of civilised society. It has become a perpetual menace to every honest and right-thinking individual—to Communists and Socialists, to Forward Blocists or Revolutionary Socialists, even to Congress people—whose motive is to stand by the millions of our oppressed people against a handful of persons who oppress them. It is a menace to our workers, peasants and middle classes. Whoever wants to strive to get rid of the present life of hunger, misery and squalor is menaced by this pernicious Act. Therefore I would appeal to every section of the House to voice their opposition against this pernicious Act.

SPEECH BY RENU CHAKRAVARTY

I have heard with very great interest the speech of the the Home Minister. It is about the stripling of democracy that he has spoken and I find that that stripling of democracy, during the last few years, has been responsible for firing 1,982 rounds of ammunition, for 3,784 people killed, for 10,000 people injured and 50,000 citizens jailed. That is the stripling of democracy we have to deal with.

But, coming nearer home, within the scope of the Bill, we find that whilst Dr. Katju has been at pains to tell us with what great moderation he has been using the Preventive Detention Act, he has said that the Judges have been forced to give the benefit of doubt (arising out of some clerical error as he might call it) to the anti-social elements. In all, we have a very small number of people under Preventive Detention. But, I think, because the number of people who are coming

under preventive detention is decreasing, therefore I find that the number of people who have been shot dead in my province has increased. In 1952, there was 1, but in 1953, there were at least 21. I suppose this is a new form of moderation which we are to see in the future.

I would also like to point out that not only is Preventive Detention sought to be canalised into different methods, we also find not only in Malabar but also in other parts that people are being harassed under various pretexts and a large number of cases have been brought forward. These cases are cases of harassment. This is quite clear from the fact that after being detained for some time, they had to be released because the necessary evidence was not forthcoming. That, we have seen again and again.

In West Bengal, Dr. Katju has talked about the tram meetings. What was it against? Was it against the security of the State; was it going to overthrow the Congress Government in power? Or was it against the taking away of 20 lakhs of rupees by the one pice increase in tramway fares? What the people were fighting was against exploitation by the taking away of 20 lakhs of rupees by the British capitalists. It is just there that the Congress Government came and helped them to attempt to crush that movement. There was a general strike; there was complete peace up to the moment of the general strike. If any one gave a provocation, it was the Congress Secretary, who said, "We will come out on the streets; my volunteers will come out on the streets and they will bring down the general strike". After that, who marched the Army across the streets of Calcutta? Was it the ordinary people or was it the Government? Who was preaching ahimsa and who was preaching violence? Eleven rounds were fired on the day. I remember a young boy who died. I have seen the mother of the boy; she is a widow; she lost her only son. He was standing on the roadside. I saw the wife of the school teacher who was shot dead. He was not a communist; but he died because you let police vandalism run riot in Calcutta. Is that ahimsa, I ask.

I would also like to endorse what Acharya Kripalani said, that we are prepared on our side to abide by law and order. After all, we do not want bullets on our chests; if it does not give way to violence, certainly nobody else will do so. And, it is no use talking about violence and putting people in detention by bringing charges of violence against them.

I will give specific cases of detention which have taken place in Bengal. I have before me certain charge-sheets. In these charge-sheets you sprinkle a few words about "violence"

and "secret meetings" and on that you build a mountain of falsehoods. I will come to the case of Mohammed Ilyas. There were five charge-sheets against him which are before me. I will give the specific charges. The charges were:

> "On 23-5-53, through your speech at Begari Bazar in Domjur you tried to spread disaffection among the Muslims."
>
> "You were behind the sit-down strike of 3,000 workers at Guest Keen Williams in protest against the retrenchment notice on 6 workers."
>
> "You were present at the closed door meeting of the Calcutta District of the Communist Party on 21st June, 1953, from 2 to 4 p.m. The Secretaries of local committees and other leading workers were present. It was decided at this meeting that in connection with the resistance to increment of tram fare movement, a strong movement must be developed through picketing of trams and tram gumties."
>
> "As a member of Howrah Committee for Resistance of Tram Fare Increment Committee, you took a leading part in organising the strike at Port Engineering Works and Shalimar Works Ltd. and as a result of this the workers of Port Engineering came out on strike on 15th July."
>
> "The authorities of Shalimar Paint Works of village Nazirganj of P. S. Sarkrail, Howrah, refused to give the keys of the Union office to the workers. In protest the workers decided on a sit down strike on 31-7-53. You gave leadership to this action."

I want to show that in each one of these cases it is the British Companies that are involved whom the Government goes out to support. This is one example which I would like to bring before the House of the way in which preventive detention is being used in order to put people behind the bars so that British imperialism may escape scot-free.

I will give you other charge-sheets. There is a case of Biswanath Mukherjee. In that it is said:

> "On 29-9-53, you addressed a meeting at the Calcutta Maidan under the banner of the West Bengal Kisan Sabha and the Communist Party. In this meeting you demanded a decrease in the price of rice and an increment in the quota of ration. And, you called upon the people to build a strong movement in order to force Government to concede this demand."

Is this a crime? This is the crime for which he was put

behind the bars and kept there almost to the last possible day that is allowed under the law and the fantastic nature of the charges were borne out by the fact that the Advisory Committee, on the very morning they were produced, allowed them to go free. Even the Advisory Committee, which has such limited powers, was forced to grant immediate release to them.

Then there was the case of Indrajit Gupta. The charge against him was:

> "On 16-9-53, as Secretary of Bengal Chatkal Mazdoor Union, you demanded puja bonus and asked them to surround the offices of the Indian Jute Mills Association on 26-9-53."

Here I would like to ask, was there one example of violence in these cases? It was a food movement that took place. There was not an iota of violence. There could have been violence when one lakh of people were there and there were only a handful of policemen. There could have been violence if they wanted it. In spite of all this, we find that these people were kept behind the prison bars and it was only on the last day possible that they were produced before the Advisory Committee and they were allowed to go free. There was not one single piece of evidence that could be produced so that they could be put behind the bars.

The Hon. Minister, who spoke before me, said that there have been many instances of violence. I shall give you a few more examples where there have not been actually any violence—there are hundreds of such examples, but I cannot bring them all here within the limited time at my disposal. Now let me bring before you another type of case—it is the case of those who have been detained under the Akhand Karnataka Rajya Nirman Parishad agitation. They are not at all Communists—far from Communists. What has the Supreme Court got to say in this matter? The allegation in this case was that the petitioners addressed a public meeting on 23-7-53 and urged the starting of "satyagraha" on 9-8-53. We have heard the Hon. Minister's big exhortations on "satyagraha" that is allowed and "satyagraha" that is not allowed. We are not good followers of Mahatma Gandhi and therefore, I am not able to accept all the interpretations which the Hon. Minister has given, but this is what the Hon. Judge said:

> "The mere fact that a meeting was addressed asking that 'satyagraha' be started is in itself innocuous."

There was no talk of violence. Violence is bad, satyagraha is

bad, but what is good, I would like to know, except being on the Treasury Benches? In this case, the argument of the State was that Chinnayaswami urged the audience to start satyagraha like 1942. This is what the learned judge said:

> "It is well known that there was considerable violence in 1942. Accordingly, this ground means that he urged violence and disorder". The judge says in reply: "In our opinion that cannot follow from what was said. Many things occurred in 1942, some good, some bad, and it is too vague to say that because a man urged an audience to start satyagraha 'as in 1942', he thereby means that the satyagraha should take a violent form . . . ."

There are cases after cases I could give you about such violent movements as the Government describe—You attended a meeting where a resolution was put and it was discussed and because of that discussion, there might have been disorders, and therefore, you could be put behind the bars. This is preventive detention gone wild, if I may say so.

Then, again, there is one other case of Ramnath Mallappa Belwadi of Salvagi, Dist. Bijapur. He was actually the Managing Editor of *Navasakti* and he was a respected man. He was the owner of the press, "Kannada *Navasakti* Weekly". What is the charge against him? It is this:

> "You have joined the movement for the unification of Karnatak and that in pursuance of the movement by you, some breaches of the law are likely to occur. This is clear from the following particulars of your activity:
>
> "a) that you are an active member of Akhand Karnatak Rajya Nirmana Parishad;
>
> "b) that you are reputed to be a violent criminal and you are organising a gang for commission of offences."

I don't think I need go further into it. It is quite clear as to what exactly is the intention of the Government and I am grateful to the Hon. Minister for saying that the people know 'who is who' and 'what is what'—and what is the main intention of Government for putting the people behind the bars,—to crush the people's movement. Therefore, I would like to ask—Is it a crime to ask for cheap food? Is it a crime to organise demonstrations and speak at meetings for development of a movement, which is not banned? Is it a crime to organise strikes against the oppressive British firms in India? If it is not, then I say that there is absolutely no justification for the Preventive Detention Act and I strongly object to it being in existence any longer.

Basic Education—A Critique

Sabira K. Zaidi

The scheme of Basic Education is a Gandhian concept, popularised by Gandhiji not only as a critique of the existing educational system but as a means by which India's appalling educational backwardness could be liquidated. The scheme in its entirety thus bears the imprint of Gandhism, and as such, it is not sufficient to treat it as a purely practical educational measure; it needs an analysis that delves deeper to discover its philosophic roots along with its practical implications. However, within the limits of this article, it is not possible to examine all the basic tenets of the Gandhian philosophy. Hence what is proposed here is only to study Basic Education in relation to its causes and consequences.

There need be no quarrel with the authors of Basic Education in their condemnation of the prevalent system of education. No educator with any insight can honestly defend the hodge-podge that passes as primary education in India. A cheap imitation of the British elementary school, our primary school has proved a dismal failure, being equally oblivious of the pulsating lives of the children and the variegated practices of the community of which it is a part and product. Its unresponsiveness to the changing demands and the expanding needs of Indian society on the one hand, and its insensitiveness to the interests and inclination of childhood on the other, has rendered it incapable of playing any significant role in the building up of Indian society.

Subject-matter — elaborately and rigidly arranged in watertight compartments, bearing no relation one to the other —absolutely dominates the educational scene. Isolated bits of information—usually no more than an inert mass of irrelevant facts, unrelated to the surrounding social practice—are forced down the throats of the pupils. Such mechanical, atomistic teaching can hardly contribute towards the development of the child into an able, intelligent and rounded individual, capable of judiciously exercising its rights and conscientiously discharging its duties as a full-fledged member of a democratic society on attaining adulthood. This glaring divorce between knowledge and experience, theory and social practice, has made the school a cold, isolated and artificial place. The rigid routine, the mechanical discipline, the artificial instruction and the complete compartmentalization of knowledge— all these make imperative the need for a drastic reorganisation of the whole system of education.

Another grave defect of the present primary education—of all types of education in our country, for that matter—is its implicit, at times, even explicit, contempt of all manual activity. Like all schools in a class society, the Indian school also pays homage to this dualist conception of man's activity, places an unwarranted premium on 'intellectualism', and banishes all manual activity from its precincts. This has been a great emasculating influence and has hindered a healthy development of the school as a living, vital and integral part of the whole social organism. Hence, all progressive educators will heartily agree with any castigation of this attitude on the part of the traditional school. However, Basic Education itself does not provide any satisfactory solution, as it fails to understand and attack the basic factors which are at the heart of the problem.

Though agreeing with some of the criticisms levelled by proponents of Basic Education against the prevalent primary education, we have to understand that even as a critique it has only a partial and limited usefulness. It does not, as a rule, attack the basis of the system from a correct, rational viewpoint. As a positive system of educational reconstruction, it suffers from many fundamental flaws which stem from its faulty theoretical basis. It reveals a more than dubious understanding of the dynamics of social change and progress relying on the Gandhian belief that the solution of social problem is possible only through the salvation of the individual. It does not visualize any basic change in Indian society as indispensable to the satisfactory solution of the evils of poverty, ignorance, unemployment and injustice. Not only is there no frontal attack on the moribund social order, the system of Basic Education even acts as an indirect prop for it. Not only does it not recognize any need for a complete overhauling of the decadent feudal set-up, it aims through devious means at preserving the existing social relations. Not only does it not orient itself towards an industrialized, scientifically organised society, it is an apologia for the predominantly agricultural bias of the present socio-economic organisation of Indian society.

As regards the practical proposals of the scheme, the one that stands out most prominently is the basing of all educa-

tional activity on a 'basic' craft, like spinning, weaving or agriculture. This is supposed to infuse all education with a living, dynamic force; but the sponsors of the system seem to fight shy of facing the question as to how exactly it is going to be achieved in practice. The mere introduction of a craft is no guarantee against the rigid, mechanical and soulless teaching common to our educational institutions. Whether education is imparted through a book or a *takli* does not make any fundamental difference in the spirit, process and outcome of teaching. Unless education is reorganized on the basis of an intelligent understanding of child psychology, a profound grasp of fundamental social needs and a correct assessment of the role of the school in social life, unless it is re-oriented along scientific lines, it cannot become a living, vital, socially significant activity. The principle of learning through doing, the interlinking of manual and mental activity, and the dignity of labour—all these will remain pious wishes and pompous declarations if education does not gear itself to the needs and requirements of a progressive, forward-going society. And this is precisely what Basic Education fails to do.

Then, too, the emphasis on crafts as a pivotal point of all educational activity is bound to result in a narrowing down of the mental horizon of the learner. If every single aspect of education is dependent on a craft, if the latter determines the boundary line of the entire teaching and learning process, the pupil can hardly acquire the desired knowledge and understanding. It is difficult to imagine how 'operation takli', however profitable and purifying, can, for instance, supply a scientific presentation of Indian history. The Gandhian answer to this pertinent problem is simple and prompt: leave out all aspects of knowledge which cannot be conveniently covered by the central craft. But this innocent promptness of the answer is not only naive but dangerous, for it implies that the masters do not want the masses to be in possession of too much knowledge; it may very well be a camouflage for their desire to keep the children of the common people tied to their drab and dreary existence, devoid of all light and learning.

The mechanical manipulation of material, instead of intelligent enquiry, is bound to result in a narrowness of vision and in an absence of scientific outlook in the children thus taught. And this ignorance of a broad scientific outlook and the scientific method is perhaps the most serious gap in the overall education of the pupils in the craftcentred schools. An education dependent wholly and solely on a craft can hardly provide any deep and real understanding of nature or society, as it is not possible, within this narrow framework, to present

a fullblooded, multicoloured picture of the physical and social climate surrounding the child. The essence of the social reality, its movement and its direction, all this is bound to escape both the teacher and the learner, if the spinningwheel is the sole centre of attention in the school. Thus, it is neither practical commonsense, nor social insight to run the risk of sacrificing an all-round, broad-based, scientifically organised education to the interest of the supposedly almighty craft. The craft is not a magic wand the waving of which will immediately exorcize all educational and social evils.

However, stripped of its sentimental, idealistic trappings, this idea at least may have some usefulness for the reorganisation of educational programmes in the schools. But mighty little has been achieved so far as regards the translation of this ideal into practice. The overwhelming majority of what are known as the Basic Schools, today, hardly differ from the traditional primary schools—the same rigid regime, unnecessary subject-matter and the complete absence of a sense of social responsibility are as much the hallmark of these newfangled Basic Schools as that of the old system of education. Only in a few States are some earnest educational experiments conducted to some advantage. But, by and large, the Basic Schools have fallen into the same old rut, where the craft is a mere adjunct to the otherwise orthodox curriculum and all that is new is the hallowed name of Basic Education.

Another very important cornerstone of this system is its 'self-supporting' principle. In the words of Mr. Parulekar, an admirer of Gandhi: "Mahatma Gandhi has expressed his firm conviction that the *self-supporting aspect is the life and soul of this Scheme.*" (Emphasis added).* This idea was criticised at the time on the ground that this may amount to an exploitation of young children and to turning the schools into sweatshops where children are required to produce "saleable goods". Gandhiji waxed indignant and retorted that he would tell the ministers that *"they would make children helpless by doling out education to them. They would make them self-sufficient and brave by their paying for their education by their own labour."* (Emphasis added.)

This is surely a choice piece of demagogy. If free education is equated to a 'dole' or charity—then surely it is the duty of the State *not* to sponsor and finance any educational projects. Thus the Gandhian philosophy of education is, in essence, opposed to all the strivings of the humanitarian and progressive forces throughout the ages to establish for all

* Parulekar in his article "The Cost Factor in the Sargent Scheme" in **A Symposium on Post-war Education in India** by T. K. N. Menon.

children the right to a free, decent education. If children of tender age are required to become self-supporting in relation to their education, there is no earthly reason why they should not also be required to earn their daily bread by the sweat of their brow. If this Gandhian argument is reduced to its logical absurdity, then the Gandhian philanthropist should heartily eulogize the present exploitative system which provides such wonderful opportunities for the cultivation of bravery and self-confidence by forcing many children to work for their livelihood; they should also sing paeans of praise to the employers of young children for being their fathers' benefactors.

It is thus necessary to underline the sinister implication of this apparently humanitarian philosophy. Bread, education, peace and happiness are the inalienable rights of all children, and it is a strange humanitarianism indeed that militates against the opportunities for the realisation of these rights. It is an accepted tenet of all democratic social theories that it is the bounden duty of society to ensure, through its state machinery, a free education to all children—the promise of their country's future. But according to the Gandhian philosophy, it is rather the duty of the poor child, if he desires any education at all, to engage in a *"profit-yielding occupation"*, so that he can *"pay for his tuition through the product of his labour."* (Emphasis added.) Otherwise, he is regarded as being on the dole, hence to be pitied and despised.

Lest it may be thought that this notion is dead, let us examine some of the recent utterances of the responsible leaders of the country on this subject. The Governor of Assam in his inaugural speech delivered at the last Basic Education Conference held at Titahar, characterised the present educational system as a "spending proposition" which produces only "unemployables". "Have we any other alternative except to make our education productive?", he asked rhetorically, and then provided the answer: "This drives us inevitably to Basic Education.... *The student must make his education self-supporting."* (Emphasis added.)

Aryanaikam, Secretary, Hindustani Talim Sangh, emphasised the need to introduce the same principle in the Secondary schools. He even specified the exact amount—Rs. 20— to be earned each month by every pupil.

Pandit Nehru does not lag behind his colleagues in his nostalgia for the good old days when "it was thought that Basic Education could be organised in a simple way"—meaning, along the self-supporting lines. Horrified at the prospect that the new educational schemes may involve large expenditures, he declares with finality *"it is patent that we can't get that money"*, and turns wistfully to the idea of making the school completely self-supporting, so that the burden of responsibility for the educational expenditure may be shifted to the shoulders of little children.

Nehru's recent tirades against university students, his repeated threats to close down the universities and his praises for Basic Education in the same breath—all these are rather significant as they betray a lurking desire on the part of the ruling circles of our country to apply the Gandhian principles of Basic Education also to higher education with a view to curtailing expenditure on it and producing an army of docile students. Thus we see that this idea of self-supporting education has gripped anew the imagination of the Congress rulers as it is a good excuse for condoning the criminal neglect on the part of the Central and State governments, of their sacred duty of providing education of a desirable quantity and quality for all children.

However, the scheme provides a rationale for the existing class stratification and class differentiation. Gandhiji made it very clear from the outset that he opposed the present educational system because through it *"most of the boys were lost to the parents and occupations to which they were born"*. A little further in the same article, he said: *"Those born to certain professions ... were lost to the countryside."* This throws a revealing light on Gandhiji's social philosophy—a philosophy which implies a tacit approval of the social and economic inequalities and pleads for unquestioned adherence to this system. The accident of birth, according to this philosophy, should be the decisive factor in the choice of vocation —for a village person, it should be noted. He should be regarded a traitor to his home and community if he abandons the occupation of his father. If this is not a calculated attempt at strengthening the present inequalities, it is incredible naivete!

The 'modified scheme of Elementary Education', so undemocratically imposed on the village communities of the Madras State by Rajagopalachari is a still more dangerous version of this scheme. Under this new scheme, "There will be two sessions, three hours each, and children will be kept inside the schools for three hours a day. *The rest of the time, they will be given back to the lap of the home, the village and the community."* (Emphasis added.) This will mean an extra burden for the teacher who will have to teach for six, instead of five hours, a day and for six, instead of five, days a week without the benefit of overtime pay, of course. On the other hand, it will mean a still further reduction of the school hours

for children. Four years of such inadequate, miserable schooling is hardly a guarantee against an early lapse into illiteracy after the school period. This unwarranted reduction is justified on the ground that it will provide education for more children *without any increased cost,* which only shows the niggardly attitude of the Congress rulers towards education. It is also extolled as a progressive and positive measure as it is supposed to provide simultaneous training for hand, heart and head; these and other similar high-sounding aims are shamelessly paraded by Rajaji, author of the Scheme.

However, one should not be blinded to the real intent and purpose of this scheme which is sought to be hidden behind the bright facade of these hypocritical phrases. It is an ugly attempt to force the village children to keep to their ancestral crafts, so that they do not get too much education and start demanding jobs which are conspicuously absent. Although it is generously said that it is not "compulsory" for the children to learn the parents' craft, there is every attempt to achieve precisely this purpose. "The most important element . . . is that the parents who belong to occupational groups and wish to have their children with them will be allowed to do so." It is made more explicit a little later on. *"The first step is to allow the parents. . . to have their children for such help as the children can give in the homes. This will absorb a good percentage of children."* Thus escapes a sigh of relief from those who are mortally afraid of a well-educated village community. *"In the case of girls, it is expected they will generally find enough scope for activities in their homes"* —not a far cry from the Hitlerian ideal for womanhood! In other words, the village child is to lead for ever an ignorant shabby life, without any colour or culture.

Thus the desperate anxiety, so often expressed by Messrs. Munshi, Govind Singh (the Education Minister of U.P.), Rajagopalachari himself, as well as Nehru, as to what to do with the army of the "educated unemployables" is allayed by curtailing the existing educational facilities. This problem, they do not propose to solve by means of a planned expansion of the national life, and a technical, scientific education for the country's youth, so that they can be effectively harnessed to nation-building activities. Instead, they want it to be solved in the patently Gandhian way—by helping the poor to reconcile themselves to their inferior social positions, by exhorting the downtrodden to submit meekly to their lot in life, by preaching to the exploited to live in harmony with the exploiters and consider them their "brothers". It is not difficult to see that this is only a cover to curb the growing

strength of the popular masses and to keep them under the heel of their present rulers.

Once the basic nature of the philosophy underlying Basic Education is understood, it is easy to realise why its claim to resolve the contradictions between manual and mental labour, between town and country, is an empty claim. The counterposing of intellectual work to manual labour and looking down upon the latter is a reflection, on the ideological plane, of the basic social contradictions, the division of society into two conflicting classes, the exploiting and the exploited, the parasitic and the productive. Just as the former appropriate all material fruits of the latter's labour, they also monopolise the fruits of man's spiritual endeavours, leaving for the toiling millions the right to work, as beasts of burden. Afraid of the dire consequences of the enlightenment of the masses, the ruling classes have always tried to deny them an access to the citadel of culture. Hence the creators of material value were painted as incapable of intellectual and spiritual activity which was claimed as the prerogative of the elite, the leisured class. Thus intellectual activity came to be regarded as infinitely superior to the manual work which was associated with the toiling masses. This dichotomy in practice increased with the further deepening of the exploitation of labour and reflected itself in all social institutions and ideologies.

Reflecting the interests of the ruling classes this ideology gained supremacy in all fields of social life, including education. Such is the origin of this attitude and no amount of crafts and manual work can wipe out the contradictions between the two activities if the root cause for these contradictions is not removed. Instead of focusing its attention on the basis of this dualism, Basic Education visualises a resurrection of the 'idyllic' life of the ancient Indian village. This amounts to an attempt at turning back the wheels of history and bringing back a social order which is unsuited to the needs of present-day India. The exponents of the scheme of Basic Education fail to realise that the contradictions between town and country will only deepen if rural culture is not brought on a par with urban culture by incorporating in it the superior technique and other advanced elements of urban civilization and that their proposed solution can only touch the fringe of the problem.

This brings us to the vital question of the relationship of this Scheme to the problem of India's socio-economic reconstruction. The feudal-cum-colonial set-up which has kept India under bondage has to be replaced by a healthy, rational and independent economy, free of feudal fetters and imperia-

list restraints. Such an economy must, of necessity, be a socially planned, productive economy. And it is only logical that all social and cultural schemes should be expected to serve this overall aim. But this Scheme of Basic Education is rather a hindrance than a help in the path of India's economic development, as it aims at keeping the old order intact. Its insistence on the village children sticking to their ancestral crafts, its bias towards village occupations, the absence of any scientific outlook, all these prove beyond doubt that any far-reaching social change is anathema to the exponents of this Scheme. It can, at the most, suggest partial reforms within the existing feudal set-up which can only try to prop up the decadent system. That is why, though some of its minor details may seem to be attractive, the overall practice and the fundamental philosophy of Basic Education cannot be acceptable to those who would like to see India embark upon an independent road of social, cultural and economic advancement. The Scheme commends itself, in its entirety, only to those who see in it an instrument for the preservation and perpetuation of the *status quo*.

Preface to "Rural Investigation"

(March 17, 1941)

Mao Tse-tung

[In the recent period there has been a growing feeling that investigation and research has to be done into the socio-economic conditions of India, both present and past. Certain articles have appeared in **New Age** (Monthly) on a variety of topics, such as trend of wages, history of tea garden strikes, the indigo cultivators' revolt, investigation of agrarian conditions in Assam and Orissa, etc. This is a welcome sign. But it may be necessary to point out that research into books is only one—and not necessarily the more important—aspect of investigation work. It is clear that Mao Tse-tung found investigation meetings one of the best of universities. It is necessary to avoid a more subtle form of dogmatism—turning to books alone for knowledge. Again, it must be emphasised that this is not to deprecate the useful research work which is being done.

A point clearly emerging from the article printed below is the link between the work of investigation and the practical struggle. This is of crucial significance. Investigators should go to the trade unions and kisan sabhas to gather materials. At the same time trade unions and kisan sabhas should themselves do investigation work systematically, as well as give assistance to others engaged in research. The link between theory and practice has to be established **through work and struggle itself.** This is not only a question of the means of investigation but of the target of investigation itself. The needs of the movement should dictate the object of research.

A second point, equally significant, emerging from this article is **the link between investigation and ideology.** The idea that before investigation one has no right to speak not only acts as an effective antidote to dogmatism and acting in an authoritarian manner, but is also a stricture against what the Chinese Party has termed the "idle-gossip tendency". At the same time, this article shows that investigation will not automatically produce good results. To paraphrase a remark of Marx—the investigator must investigate himself. For fruitful investigation such things as a firm class stand, a good mass line, an absence of conceit and the presence of genuine humility, are the essential pre-requisites. And investigation has to be conducted in the spirit of collective discussion and cooperative effort.

This article, therefore, should be useful not only to those specifically engaged in research but equally to all who are active participants in the struggle of the masses.

The translation given below is an unofficial one.

—EDITOR.]

The present agrarian policy of the Party is not the agrarian policy of the period of the 10-year Civil War, it is the policy of

the Anti-Japanese National United Front. The entire Party should carry out the directives of the Central Committee of July 7, 1940 and December 25, 1940; it should carry out the directives of the forthcoming 7th Congress. This material is being printed to assist comrades to find out the method of investigating problems. At present many of our comrades still retain a crude style and so fail to seek a thorough understanding. They are even completely ignorant of the situation below, yet still assume the responsibility of guiding the work there. This is an extraordinarily dangerous phenomenon. We cannot have a truly good leadership without a correct and concrete understanding of the actual situation of the different social classes of China.

In order to understand the situation, the only way is to investigate society, to investigate the living conditions of the different classes of society. The most basic method in understanding conditions is, for the person taking up the responsibility of guiding the work, to pick out with plan some cities or villages and make a thorough investigation, using the basic viewpoint of Marxism, namely the method of class analysis. Only in this way can we actually gain the most basic knowledge of the problem of Chinese society.

If we want to do this, the first thing is to direct our eyes downwards and not merely to raise our heads to look at the heavens. If we do not have the interest and determination to direct our eyes downwards, we can never really understand Chinese affairs.

The second thing is to hold investigation meetings. If we pick up "a little knowledge here and there", speak about what we have heard on the roadside, we certainly cannot obtain any complete knowledge. The materials I obtained by employing the method of investigation meetings—some from Hunan, some from Chingkangshan—have all been lost. What is being printed here is principally an investigation of Hsiang-kwo, Changkang-hsiang and Ts'ai-chi-hsian. The holding of investigation meetings is the simplest, easiest and also most trustworthy and reliable method. I have derived very great benefit from using this method, it is even better than any university. Participants in the meetings should be middle or lower level cadres, or the common people. In my investigation of five counties in Hunan and two in Chingkangshan, I sought out the responsible middle-level cadres of the different counties. In the investigation of Hsiu Wu, those I sought out were middle-level cadres, lower-level cadres, a petty official, a bankrupt Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce, a petty officer who had already lost his job, a tax collector in the county office. They all supplied me with many facts which I had never heard of. The one who made me understand for the first time the wholly corrupt condition of jails in China was a petty prison official of Heng-shan county of Hunan when investigations were being made there. In the investigations of Hsing-Kuo, and the two sub-districts of Changkang and Ts'aichi the persons sought out were comrades working at the sub-district level and the ordinary peasants. These cadres, peasants, petty officials and the prison officials were my respected teachers. As their student I had to be respectful and industrious and had to adopt a comradely attitude; otherwise they would not have believed me, would not have spoken what they knew, or would have said only a part of what they knew. It is not necessary to have many persons at each investigation meeting, three to five or seven to eight persons are enough. It is necessary to give sufficient time, to have an outline for investigation, and we ourselves must ask questions, take notes and open discussions with the participants in the meeting. Thus, if we are not completely sincere, if we are not determined to turn our eyes downwards, if we do not have a thirst for knowledge, if we do not give up our stupid airs, and adopt the spirit of a primary school student, we can definitely do nothing, and also what we do cannot definitely be done well. This must be understood: it is the masses who are the real heroes, we ourselves are frequently ridiculously childish. If we do not understand this point, we cannot obtain the basic knowledge.

I again wish to make clear that the principal aim of the publication of these reference materials is to indicate the method for understanding the conditions of the lower levels, and not for comrades to remember the actual materials or their conclusions. Speaking generally, the infantile Chinese bourgeoisie, unlike the bourgeoisie of Europe, America and Japan, has not yet prepared, and will never be able to prepare even the minimum materials required by us concerning the social situation. Hence there is nothing to be done but for ourselves to do the work of collecting material. Speaking in particular, practical workers must constantly understand the changing conditions. In no country can the Communist Party rely on others to do this for it. Therefore, all practical workers must investigate the lower levels. This kind of investigation work is specially necessary for those who only understand theory and do not understand actual conditions; or else they will not be able to connect theory with reality. "Without investigation you do not have the right to speak." Although this phrase has been ridiculed as "narrow empiricism", I have not given it up to this day. Not only have I not

rejected it, but I still insist that without having made an investigation it is not possible to have the right to speak. There are many persons who " as soon as they alight from the carriage" noisily make suggestions, raise opinions, criticise this, point out that. Actually ten out of ten such persons must meet with failure because these suggestions and criticism, not having been arrived at through thorough investigation, are baseless nonsense. It is not possible to count the number of times that our Party has been damaged by these so-called "imperial envoys". And such "imperial envoys" still fill the heavens with their flight, and are to be had anywhere. Stalin stated correctly: "Of course, theory becomes purposeless if it is not connected with revolutionary practice". Again obviously his saying is correct that: "practice gropes in the dark if its path is not illumined by theory". Apart from those practical workers who are blind, without perspective and a far vision, it is not possible to call anyone else a "narrow empiricist".

At present I still deeply feel it is necessary to do thorough research on Chinese and international affairs. This is because I am still inadequately acquainted with the Chinese and international affairs. This does not mean that I understand everything and only others do not. Together with the comrades of the whole Party to study from the masses, to continue to be a primary school student—such is my wish.

Peasant Struggle in Pabna 1872-73

Sunil Sen

The peasant struggle in Pabna in East Bengal in the year 1872-73 was preceded by the Indigo Revolt of 1859-62 which swept like a tidal wave over Lower Bengal. The Indigo Revolt was mainly directed against the European planters, but the Pabna struggle was fought against the zamindari system itself. The Pabna peasant struggle brought to the fore the horrors of the Permanent Settlement precisely at a time when foreign imperialism and internal reaction were glorifying the new land settlement. The struggle bore such an organised character that it forced the Government of India to take note of the problems created by the Permanent Settlement, the Royal Commission on Famine was instituted in 1880-81, and the Bengal Tenancy Act was passed in 1885.

The peasant struggle in Pabna was rooted in the new land system created by Permanent Settlement, its growing abuse in the hands of the new class of landlords. These "Gentlemen Proprietors"—whom Karl Marx has described as "a group of City Capitalists"—had replaced the old benevolent zamindars. In the two decades between 1850 and 1870 this new class of rapacious landlords had developed into absentee landlords, who became more and more mere rent collectors and did little towards the improvement of agriculture. Henceforth enhancement of rent and imposition of *abwabs* (illegal exactions) became a regular feature.

To what extent the situation had deteriorated was revealed in a contemporary document prepared by "A Native" —who has remained anonymous—and published by the Midnapur Ryots' Association in 1856. This Ryots' Association, incidentally, probably was the first peasant association in Bengal. "A Native" writes:

> "The right of enhancing rent at will and the consequent fluctuation of tenure as well as the formidable power of distraint and of compelling the attendance of

ryots, nominally for adjustment of accounts, but in reality to increase rent by taking forcibly written engagements, have made the zamindar omnipotent and have reduced the poor cultivator to a degraded state, worse than slavery.

"How shall I describe the thousand wanton atrocities that the zamindars and their myrmidons, encouraged by the inefficiency of the police, commit in moffusil: villages burnt, crops plundered, ryots put to the most ingenious and cruel tortures?"

—*Tracts: 1848 - 1856,* A Government of Bengal Publication.

"Villages burnt", "Crops plundered", "Ryots put to the most cruel tortures'—this was not only the story of Midnapur in 1856, this was true of other districts of Bengal as well.

This experience of the "Native" of Midnapur is corroborated by L.S.S. O'Malley, Census Superintendent of 1911 and author of many District Gazetters, who writes in his book *Modern India and the West* published in 1941:

"The Permanent Settlement also failed to give Security to the tenantry.... In 1819 the Directors of the East India Company lamented that the object of the Permanent Settlement, in so far as it concerned the security and happiness of 'the most numerous and industrious class of the community', had been so imperfectly attained that instead of their rights being maintained they had not yet been ascertained. Tenants were rack-rented and evicted by their landlords, to whom Government gave extraordinary powers with the two-fold object of safeguarding the revenue and preventing estates being broken up or sold. The landlords were given authority *to evict tenants, distrain and seize their property, and even seize their persons, without recourse to the courts of law.*" (Italics mine.)

— O'Malley, *Modern India and the West,* pp. 705-709.

This open indictment of the Permanent Settlement refutes the arguments of some of our nationalist historians and economists ranging from R. C. Dutt, economist-historian and Congress President in 1890 down to Dr. R. K. Mukherjee, the well-known economist and member of the Bengal Land Revenue Commission, 1940, on the beneficent results of the Permanent Settlement. It is unfortunate that our own economists and public leaders should be the defenders of a system so brutal and iniquitous to the peasantry, which even

a British historian like O'Malley could not but indict in unmistakable terms!

Enhancement of rent, evictions, imposition of *abwabs*—these were "the beneficent results" of the Permanent Settlement on the Bengal peasantry. When the peasants failed to meet the demands of the zamindars they were evicted from their land, their crops were plundered and they themselves were taken to the *kutchery* (zamindar's house) to be beaten up! It was against these conditions that the peasants of Pabna revolted.

The immediate cause of the Pabna revolt was the enhancement of rent from Re. 1 to Rs. 1-8 per bigha (one-third of an acre).

What was remarkable about the struggle itself was that its strength lay in organisation. Even in those early days the peasants combined in a kind of land league to resist the zamindars' exactions. They also formulated their demands: No enhancement of rent, No eviction. Their leader was one Ishan Roy, known as "the rebel king". Hindu and Muslim peasants united under this "rebel king". Ishan Roy was, of course, not a king, but the peasants made him the king of their struggle. The movement spread to 280 villages, and took the form of refusal to pay rent at enhanced rates and of burning of *kabulyats,* written engagements forcibly taken from them by the landlords. One is reminded of the famous *jacquerie* of the French Revolution.

At the peak of the Pabna struggle came the drama, *Zamindar Darpan* (Mirror of the Zamindary System), written by a village poet, Mir Musharaf Hussain. It was a popular drama written in a language which the peasants could understand, and when it was staged, it so moved the peasants that they broke into tears and solemnly vowed never to forgive the zamindars.

The nineteenth century intelligentsia was sharply split in their attitude towards this popular struggle.

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, hailed as a pioneer of nationalism in Bengali literature, wrote in his paper *Bangadarsan,* condemning the movement:

"We have felt sick and sorry to hear the reports of the oppression of the ryots in the district of Pabna. It is useless to put fire into the frying pan. We advise that the sale and distribution of such a book [the drama, *Zamindar Darpan*] should be stopped at this moment."

—*Bangadarsan,* Bhadra, 1280. (Translation mine.)

It is clear that Bankim Chandra, whose song "Vandema-

taram" became the anthem of the nationalist movement was positively hostile to the peasant struggle which was raging in Pabna. He even suggested that the sale and distribution of a popular drama which moved the people and led them to action should be banned! It is not surprising that this drama by an ordinary village poet, has not been preserved in the face of the hostile attitude of such stalwarts of modern Bengali literature.

Fortunately for Bengal there were people among the intelligentsia who took a different stand. *Somprakash* and *Sadharani*, two Bengali journals of the period, ranged themselves on the side of the Pabna peasants, and in doing so they were only carrying forward the glorious traditions of militant journalism set by the great Harischandra Mukherjee and his *Hindu Patriot* during the days of the Indigo Revolt. Akshay Chandra Sarkar wrote in *Sadharani:*

> "The fire lighted by the Pabna peasants is not extinguished, it is burning.... We are for revolution. Revolution alone is the life of society.
>
> "....Witnessing these things [the peasant actions] certain sociologists get alarmed, they shiver. Our hearts are filled with joy, our whole being is electrified."
>
> —*Sadharani,* May 9, 1875. (Translation mine.)

The Pabna struggle was gathering momentum. The Government calculated to put it down with terror. Peasants were arrested and put in jail, suits were brought against them. But the movement continued, and was spreading to the neighbouring districts of Bogra. Not only "certain sociologists" were getting alarmed, even the mighty British Government felt shaky. The Administrative Report of Bengal for 1872-73 referred to it as "a violent and threatening outbreak". At last the Government beat a retreat and passed the Bengal Tenancy Act in 1885. That behind this Act was the agrarian movement of 1872-73 is acknowledged even by the Bengal Land Revenue Commission, 1940, commonly known as the Floud Commission after its Chairman Sir Francis Floud, which refers to this movement as "agrarian outrages". (Bengal Land Revenue Commission, 1940, Vol. I, Section on Early Tenancy Legislation.)

The peasants won a partial victory. The Tenancy Act gave tenancy rights to such peasants who held the land for twelve years, and made *abwabs* illegal.

The Pabna peasants' struggle marks the end of an epoch in the history of Bengal, an epoch that saw a series of peasant revolts. The Kole outbreak of 1831-32; the struggle led by

Titi Mir in Baraset in 1831, and by Didu Mir in Faridpur in 1847 during the Wahabi movement; the Santal insurrection of 1855; and the Indigo Revolt of 1859-60. To the peasants must go the glory of heading militant struggles, sometimes assuming the nature of armed rebellion, against British domination and the feudal landlords whom the British had set up under the hated Permanent Settlement. The popular upsurge swept the countryside. A section of the new intelligentsia lent their support to these struggles. Popular journals took up their cause.

The ruling class read the writing on the wall. The situation was getting out of control. In 1878, exactly five years after the Pabna struggle, the Press Act gagging the Vernacular Press and the Arms Act prohibiting the keeping of arms by Indians were passed.

The British Government also tried to rally a section of the people behind them and isolate the militant peasantry. In 1885 the Indian National Congress was formed by an Englishman, Allan Octavian Hume, whose own conception of the role of the Congress is revealed in the following lines:

> "A safety-valve for the escape of great and growing forces, generated by our own action, was urgently needed and no more efficacious safety-valve than our Congress movement could possibly be devised".
>
> —Wedderburn, *Allan Octavian Hume.*

These calculations of British imperialists were no doubt upset in the decades to come, when the Indian kisan fought in the national struggle even under the leadership of the Congress. And today with the Congress leadership going back to collaboration with imperialism (Shades of Hume!) the Indian kisan together with all the toiling millions is again in the forefront of the battle for liberation from the feudal yoke and British stranglehold.

To every fighter of today the Pabna rising of 1872-73, thus stands as a magnificent inspiration, showing up how our forefathers fought the same enemy eighty years ago.

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