

# The Political Situation of the British Empire at the Commencement of the New Year.

By J. T. Murphy (London).

The year 1930 finds the Meerut case occupying the centre of the British Empire state telling all the world of the precariousness of the position of the Imperial Labour Government. For ten months this "preliminary trial" has dragged its weary way. It reveals at a glance how great is the fear of the Indian revolution in the hearts of the bourgeoisie. Papers have been suppressed, workers thrown into prison and military force used with such a frequency that the old Tzar governments must be restless in their graves to think how they are being left behind in these things by a Labour Government.

The year 1929 closed with turmoil in the ranks of the Indian bourgeoisie who thought that a good bargain could be struck with the British Imperialists over the heads of the workers. For twelve months they have chattered about "Dominion status", moralised against violence, and endeavoured to divide the ranks of the toiling millions of the cities. But to no avail. Although the Government had the fullest support of the pseudo lefts at home and the Ghandis and Besants of India the workers of India pushed ahead with mass political and economic strikes and fought back at the imported soldiers and armed police. Six million days of strike action stand to the credit of the Indian workers of the big cities in the last three months.

The National Congress of India in the face of the equivocations of the Imperial Labour Government had to manoeuvre afresh or lose contact and hold upon the masses. The Government proposed a Round Table Conference with the parties of Indian nationalism and the British but would go no further in their statement about Dominion status than the statement of the Viceroy and the I.L.P. Wedgwood Benn—that Dominion Status was "a far off divine event" but not in this age.

The Brockways and Maxtons and Lansburys welcomed the new spirit of co-operation between the Indian leaders and the Labour Government. In fact Lansbury sent his "love" to all comrades and told them that the Viceroy's declaration opened a new era of brotherly co-operation towards a common end. Undoubtedly but not the end which Lansbury was talking about, but that of a more powerful consolidation of British Imperialism in India.

The Indian masses saw through this manoeuvre and the leaders were forced to move to the "left" with phrases and set on foot a pacifist movement of passive resistance. Ghandi is trying to repeat his earlier performances although the most stupid must know that it will be met with violent repression. Nevertheless the Government has failed. The strikes of the workers are continuing. The Indian stocks are falling in value. British imports are falling off. The mass movement against the Imperialists is growing. The Conference of the British and Indian chiefs will aggravate rather than stifle the crisis. The Simon Commission report will then be thrown into the arena. Again the grand manoeuvre. And yet again it will fail because not a single provision that they will bring forward, will relieve the foul conditions of the Indian working masses or stop their intensive exploitation.

The New year begins with the Meerut case being sent to a higher court. Everybody regards the "trial" as a judicial farce. They look upon it as a means of putting public money into the pockets of unscrupulous lawyers knowing full well that the sentences are already agreed upon. Nevertheless the staging of the trial serves its purpose. It is held up to let the Indian masses know what is coming to them and to terrorise them against communism.

But India is not the only storm centre of the Empire. Palestine has been the centre of a white terror in the hands of the Labour Government who accepted the provocation of the Jewish fascists to step in with crushing forces against the Arab and Jewish workers and to behead the workers movement of its leadership. Law and Order prevails to-day with the aid of the British navy, army, air force.

Hardly had the Labour Government finished this surgical performance against the Jewish and Arab workers than the women of Nigeria had to face their guns because they ventured to protest in thousands against the intense robbery to which they were subjected. Scores were killed and wounded. But this is not all. In Kenya the Labour Government have had to crush a revolt of the natives who object to having their land stolen from them. And in Samoa once again the flames of revolt burn high and the battleship of the Labour Government sail away to crush it.

No one giving but a cursory attention to these facts can help recognising in them the evidence of a widespread crisis deeper and more extensive than any in the history of the British Empire. 1930 does not and cannot see the liquidation of the crisis but its intensification.

It is on the basis of these conditions in Britain and throughout the Empire that it is possible to understand the manoeuvrings of the Labour Government in its international relations. It is perfectly clear that under these circumstances Britain cannot hope to yet make a frontal attack upon the USA, or take arms against a frontal attack, however sharp and acute the economic relations between them. Britain must manoeuvre for a breathing space in the hope of consolidating its position. This is the meaning of the attempt to establish an Anglo-American entente.

But it is equally clear that these same conditions make British capitalism increasingly scared of the proletarian revolution and more bitterly than ever the enemy of the Soviet Union. Simultaneously with the decline of British economy the socialist economy of the Soviet Union grows from strength to strength and challenges it more and more in the international arena. At the same time these very victories of the Soviet Union, accompanied as they have been by the liberation of the colonial masses that were in the frontiers of the Tzarist

Empire, inspire the colonial and proletarian masses of the whole world.

This big political fact strikes at the very foundations of the colonial empire of Britain. British Imperialism, headed by the Labour Government, feels that the Soviet Union stands in the forefront of all their problems. This is why the Meerut trial is directed against the Soviet Union and the Communist International. This is why the "Propaganda" issue has figured so largely in the discussions re the restoration of diplomatic relations between Britain and the Soviet Union.

## The Communist Parties under Exceptional Laws.

Leading Article of the „Pravda“ of January 20, 1930.

The severe economic shakings which the capitalist world is now experiencing are accelerating the approach of big revolutionary struggles in all the important capitalist States.

In Germany we are witnessing an extraordinary accentuation of class antagonism and of the class struggle. The growing strike movement, the mass movement of the unemployed, the collisions with the social-fascist police, which now and then assume the form of barricade fights, the increasing discontent of the petty bourgeoisie in town and country, the regrouping of forces in the camp of the bourgeoisie in the direction of growing activity of the most reactionary wing of heavy industry, which is aiming at an open fascist dictatorship — these are the main features of the sharp social crisis in Germany.

Fascist Poland, which is passing through an epoch of severe political and economic crisis, is more and more frequently encountering the growing resistance of the revolutionary workers, who are obtaining mastery of the streets and, under conditions of a monstrous terror, are preparing for decisive revolutionary struggles. The agrarian crisis and the growth of revolutionary ferment among the peasants of West Ukraine and Western White Russia and the main masses of the Polish peasantry are rendering the social crisis in Poland more profound and acute. The fascist dictatorship in Poland will soon be experiencing severe shocks.

In Rumania and Czechoslovakia the unemployed movement is accompanied by mass demonstrations and collisions with the Police and Gendarmerie. In France the strike movement is growing and extending rapidly in the most important branches of industry. In Italy great demonstrations of workers and peasants are taking place, namely, in the North in industrial Lombardy and in the agrarian provinces in the South. The growing revolutionary movement in India, in China and even in the most backward colonies of the oppressed East completes the picture of the daily increasing new revolutionary wave. Finally, the economic crisis developing in the United States is not only a powerful factor tending to shake capitalist stabilisation, worsen the business position, and increase unemployment in the European countries. This crisis is beyond doubt causing an aggravation of the class struggle in the United States themselves. The intensification of the general crisis of capitalism is accompanied by a pronounced deterioration of the material situation of the working class. Finance capital is adopting measures for a fresh attack on the working class along the whole line by exercising the most various forms of economic pressure on the workers, such as new taxes, cutting down of social insurance and of unemployment benefit, discharging thousands and tens of thousands of workers, indirect attacks on wages etc.

The bourgeoisie, however, recognises the difference between the present situation and that obtaining in 1923/24; it sees the rapid revolutionisation of broad masses of the toilers and is therefore making feverish preparations for the approaching struggles. In Poland and Germany, for example, the entire State apparatus, before all the Police, a part of the army, the judicial organs and fascist groups, is being prepared at a forced pace for civil war. Very characteristic in this respect is the growing importance of questions of technique and strategy of street fighting, of barricade fighting, of methods of regular military besieging of entire working class districts etc., the system of military training of civilian armies, of the police and fascist cadres. Here of course it is not merely a question of "theory". The methods with which Zörgiebel