

Revolutionary Development in India.

Gandhi's Arrest.

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In spite of the rigorous censorship that has been established by the British Government of India upon all news sent out to foreign countries, the information already available from different centres in India is sufficient to show that the movement of revolt is rapidly spreading and deepening.

It is now admitted that the "riots" in **Peshawar** were not confined to the conflicts between the revolutionaries among the civil population and the Government troops. The regiments sent to fight the "rebels", although mainly British, included a battalion of Indian troops, the 2nd/18th Royal Garhwal Rifles whose conduct is described in the official Government communique as "unsatisfactory", for which reason the battalion has been sent to **Abbotabad** where there will be "an enquiry". The Garhwalis, like the Gurkhas, are hillmen who are splendid soldiers and have been hitherto regarded as among the best and most reliable fighters of the Imperialist Army. Their "unsatisfactory conduct" signifies that they were in sympathy with the revolutionaries and refused to fire upon the workers and peasants; and the "enquiry" that is being held regarding their conduct is a court martial that will probably result in heavy sentences. But the fact that Indian soldiers refuse to fire upon those classes of the population that are actively engaged in the anti-imperialist revolt is an indirect proof of the feeling that prevails among the peasantry, particularly in the **Punjab**. It is therefore probable that the events in **Peshawar**

will be repeated in other military centres of the North where the troops are even more intimately related to the disaffected peasant population.

That the attacks by the revolutionaries should be directed primarily against the police and the munition depots is obvious. The Indian police, doubly corrupt and brutal under the order of their British chiefs, is the most visible and provoking aspect of imperialist oppression, while munition depots are a source both of the material used by the police and the military to shoot down the workers, as well as of the material needed in the fight by the workers against the oppressors. After the storming of the arsenal at **Chittagong**, there have been many attacks on depots, particularly in **Bengal**, where there are secret organisations that have specialised in this branch of activity. The most recent was the surprise attack made at 2.30 in the morning of April 29th on the British sentries guarding the gates of the **Cossipore Artillery Magazine** at **Barrackpore**, ten miles from **Calcutta**.

Police raids, followed by dozens of arrests, are taking place every day. But the real situation in **Calcutta** is indicated by the extraordinary solidarity manifested by all categories of workers with the carters. These had peacefully set up their carts as barricades on April 1st as a protest against the new Government order prohibiting them from driving their

carts along the streets between the hours of 12 noon and 3 p.m. These are the most important business hours in Calcutta, and the 40,000 carters were faced with unemployment and starvation, the new order being a move to stimulate increased motor traffic (and therefore motor lorry import) and consumption of the petrol of the Burma Oil Company. The carters engaged in a Satyagraha were fired upon by the police, six being killed and over 100 wounded. They nevertheless reappeared the next day with their carts during the forbidden hours, and a number were arrested. The police raided the offices of the Carters' Union, the Bengal Jute Workers' Union, the Workers' & Peasants' Party. The Secretaries of the first two organisations were arrested. There have been mass protest meetings in Calcutta jointly organised by the three organisations just mentioned and by the Textile Workers' Union, the National Dockers' Union, the Burrabazar Labour Union, the Young Comrades' League and a number of other Labour Unions. The case against the carters has just ended in three of the Union officials and a carter being sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment each.

In South India, the stronghold of Hindu orthodoxy and of social reformism, the extension of the movement has been less rapid than in the North. But even here the situation is developing. In Madras a demonstration of thousands of workers and students last week was fired upon by the police and a large number were killed. This has led to further street fighting between the masses and the police. In the suppression of the revolutionary movement among the railway and port workers of Madras, the Government is receiving valuable assistance from the reformist theosophical trade union leader, Shiva Rao, one of the most active agents of the Imperialist Labour Party and of Amsterdam in India. But the textile workers have not allowed themselves to be influenced by his intrigues, and a strike has just broken out.

In addition to using its machine-guns and its bombing planes, the MacDonald Government has revived the Press Law of 1910 (which was repealed in 1922). Under that "Law" every newspaper had to deposit a certain security which was confiscated if the paper was guilty of publishing "seditious" matter. The new Ordinance goes further and makes both the amount deposited as well as the printing presses liable to confiscation, and empowers every magistrate to decide whether any particular article is seditious and justifies the confiscation of the newspaper's property. In Delhi, the seat of the Viceroy's government, certain papers were called upon to furnish securities the same evening or to suspend publication. These papers were the "Hindustan Times", the "Tej" and the "Arjun" (each to deposit £ 375), the "Riyasat" (£ 300) and the "Millat" (£ 150). The first three are nationalist papers standing for national independence but regarded as organs of the Arya Samaj and therefore as anti-Mohammedan. The fourth is an illustrated weekly directed against the tyranny in the States governed by Indian Princes, while the last is the organ of the anti-Hindu Mohammedan group that is for independence but against Hindu domination. The different amounts demanded of the papers correspond to the interests of imperialism. No attacks are to be permitted on Indian Princes who are its main support, while the Indian Mohammedans are to be "protected" as a "minority" against Hindu nationalist attacks. All the above papers have suspended publication. The Ordinance declares that it will not tolerate any propaganda creating class hatred, and it may therefore be expected that all revolutionary workers' organs will be compelled shortly to suspend legal publication. Also four important nationalist dailies in Bengal—Liberty, Advance, Bangbasi and Ananda Bazar Patrika—have been called upon to deposit £ 375 each and "Advance" is likely to suspend publication.

The Indians will not reap the fruits of the new society scattered among them by the British bourgeoisie till in Great Britain itself the present ruling classes shall have been supplanted by the industrial proletariat, or till the Indians themselves shall have grown strong enough to throw off the English yoke altogether.

Karl Marx, "Future Effects of British Rule in India".

The leading nationalist papers are receiving heavy subsidies from the Burma Oil Company in the form of daily advertisements. Corruption and repression are working hand in hand.

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Gandhi's repeatedly expressed desire to be arrested has at last been fulfilled. If the Government allowed him to go on breaking laws for four whole weeks while his followers were being sentenced to various terms of imprisonment it had good reasons for wishing to gain time. Gandhi and the Congress leaders launched the movement on the express condition that it shall remain non-violent. But all those who were acquainted with the actual condition of the workers, the peasants and the youth were well aware that the masses were not likely to be influenced by the theory of non-violence. As soon as the Salt Campaign began, violent outbreaks took place throughout India, and it was proved that the workers and the youth in the towns were not acting under Gandhi's leadership. The policy of the Imperialist Government was to give time to the movement to demonstrate fully its violent character, before taking any steps against Gandhi. If Gandhi had been arrested at the very beginning, the Government would not so easily have received the moral support even of some sections of the propertied classes or of the bourgeois Nationalist leaders. It was necessary for the Government to convince the propertied classes that the country-wide outbreaks that have led to armed conflicts with the police and the military, were a consequence of Gandhi's non-violent civil disobedience movement, even against his will. This "lawlessness" of the masses, has been used by the Government to obtain declarations of sympathy and support from the propertied classes, and the Government therefore finds itself in a more favourable position to undertake the arrest without destroying the chances of negotiations with the landowners, the industrialists and their representatives in the political organisations, such as the National Congress, the Liberal Party and the Muslim League.

As far as the textile industrialists are concerned, their opposition has not only been overcome but their actual co-operation has been assured by the recent Tariff Legislation. The millowners of Bombay are satisfied with the raising of the Import Duty on cotton goods from eleven to twenty percent against all foreign countries except Great Britain, thus "protecting" the Indian industry against Japan and America, although the duty against Great Britain is raised only to fifteen percent, thus giving preference to Lancashire textile capital. The millowners are now demanding a revision of the Trade Union Act so as further to crush the revolutionary textile workers. The President of the Bombay Millowners' Association welcomed the legislation because, he said, that the "proposals are calculated to arrest the decline in our fortune and give us breathing time to carry on complete reorganisation." This reorganisation is to be effected by ruthless rationalisation and by a merger of textile factories under a common directorate with a single Managing Director. At least fifty mills are expected to be merged into a single company and the Government of India is expected to advance the millowners a loan of Nine Million Pounds in order to enable them to carry out their scheme of reorganisation. Sir George Schuster, Finance member of the Government of India, had a long interview with the Bombay millowners about three weeks ago to discuss the details of the proposed merger of the Bombay cotton mills and the conditions on which the Imperial Bank of India would grant the loan. The Finance Minister is reported to have declared that the Government would be prepared to stand security to the Bank, but according to the Bombay correspondent of the Lahore "Tribune", the Minister made it clear that the guaranteeing of the loan by the Government would be conditional on the millowners opposing the campaign of civil disobedience and helping the Government to fight the menace of the boycott of British goods, in other words, on their fighting even the Gandhi movement. It is therefore clear that the Government has already obtained the full support of the industrialists.

That the landowners naturally support the Imperialist Government goes without saying. But even among them, especially in Gujarat and the United Provinces there was a tendency to support Gandhi and his non-violent campaign because they had received from the Congress leaders the

assurance that the movement was not directed against them. But the facts of the recent **peasant movement** in Oudh and Rai Bareili, in Bihar and Orissa, in Jabbalpore and Broach demanding radical changes in the system of land tenure, advocating the non-payment of taxes, which in some cases was carried into effect, and the growing threat of the expropriation of the landlords have brought the latter face to face with the possibility of an agrarian revolution. That the landowners are alarmed by the fact that Gandhi is no longer able to hold back the masses as he once treacherously did in 1922, is proved by the declaration of loyalty and the offer of help that has just been given to the Government in a strictly confidential Memorandum sent on behalf of the landowners of Bengal by the **Maharajah Tagore**, a document that has been published by the "Liberty" of Calcutta.

The political representatives of the industrialists and the landowners are all manoeuvering for a compromise, but they repeatedly declared that they would not be able to negotiate with the Government if Gandhi were arrested. But the position has become changed even in their case by the fact that Gandhi has become more and more aggressive in his language under the pressure of the mass movement and has declared that "the struggle this time will continue even though violence may break out". The Liberals and other moderate leaders who are in favour of a Round Table Conference were making larger demands than the Government was willing to concede even to them, and Gandhi's arrest will have the effect now of

making them still further moderate their terms in order to make a compromise possible.

But while Gandhi's arrest is likely to receive the approval of the above-mentioned classes and political groups, it is also likely to stimulate further acts of revolt, particularly among the youth and the intelligentsia. As far as the masses are concerned, there is a danger that Gandhi's lost influence will be partially resuscitated by his martyrdom at the hands of imperialism and the illusion created that he was fighting a revolutionary battle.

This danger is however not likely to affect the revolutionary movement among the workers or among the peasants, whose economic condition is driving them to organised revolutionary action. The strike movement among the workers in **Bombay**, **Calcutta**, **Madras**, and other cities is developing rapidly, and the unemployment that has already arisen by the closing down of a number of mills, and which will be further enhanced by the carrying out of the above-mentioned scheme of rationalisation, the desperate condition of the transport workers, the miners, and indeed of all categories of workers, is bound to lead within the next few months to a serious sharpening of the struggle. The condition of the peasantry has grown extremely menacing owing to the very serious fall in the prices of all their agricultural products. It may therefore be confidently expected that the movement of the workers and the peasants will grow in intensity and be carried on under revolutionary slogans.