

IN THE COLONIES

The Ways of the Indian Revolution.

By N. Roy.

The process of class differentiation inside the nationalist ranks, which is a condition for the overthrow of imperialist domination by a revolutionary struggle, is slow, devious and painful. The proceedings and the results of the annual meeting of the **National Congress**, in the closing days of the last year, have once again proved this. The struggle for the capture of the leadership of the anti-imperialist movement by the petty bourgeois radical nationalists from the reformist big bourgeoisie broke out last year when the National Congress, for the first time in its history of forty two years, declared **Complete Independence** (separation from the British Empire) as its goal. On the eve of this year's meeting of the Congress the struggle became so acute that a split appeared to be imminent. The petty bourgeois left-wing was in open revolt against the plan of the right-wing leaders to have the Congress endorse the desire of the big bourgeoisie to come to an agreement with imperialism.

The situation was so acute that the right-wing leaders would have been completely defeated, had they insisted upon carrying through their plan fully and without disguise. For example, on the eve of the meeting of the Congress, the right wing had the majority of only one vote in the Working Committee (governing body) of the Executive. The balance of forces in the full Executive was still more unfavourable; while the rank and file were overwhelmingly hostile to any compromise with imperialism. Offensive tactics, in such a situation, would be disastrous. The petty bourgeois nationalist masses would break away from the anti-revolutionary leadership of the reformist big bourgeoisie, and, by the pressure of circumstances would be driven closer to the working class.

The result of the meeting of the National Congress is that the right wing leaders working in collaboration with the big bourgeoisie standing outside the Congress, have prevented such a clear revolutionary development of the situation. In the critical moment, they called upon the hero of the petty bourgeoisie, Gandhi, to save the situation. It was Gandhi who provided the formula of compromise between the two warring factions. According to the resolution proposed by him, and finally passed after two days of stormy debate, the National Congress agrees to accept **Dominion Status inside the British Empire**, if it will be granted within one year. Petty bourgeois illusion is incorrigible. Seven years ago Gandhi led a mighty revolutionary movement in a blind-alley with the cry "Swaraj (self-government) within one year". He reappears on the poli-

tical arena with his antic and exploded programme, and the petty bourgeoisie again falls for it. In moving his resolution he said:

"If you will follow me and follow the programme I have suggested honestly and intelligently, I promise that Swaraj will come within one year."

The programme he suggested as alternative to the programme of a revolutionary mass movement, which the National Congress must adopt should it insist upon the attainment of complete independence, is removal of untouchability, abandonment of alcohol drinking and popularisation of the spinning wheel. It should be remembered that his notorious **Bardoli Resolution**, which liquidated the revolutionary mass movement of 1920—21, also recommended this programme to the nationalist movement. Gandhi has not learnt anything or forgotten anything since then. But the situation has changed. This was indicated by an unprecedented phenomena in the Congress meeting. While the left wing resolution reaffirming that complete independence is the goal of the Congress, moved in opposition to Gandhi's resolution, was defeated by 1350 votes against 973, epithets of "traitors" were hurled at the right wing leaders including the Mahatma. Such a scene could not be dreamt even a year ago.

With the help of their hero the right wing leaders outmanoeuvred the petty bourgeois rank and file; but the revolutionary tide that sweeps these forward cannot be stemmed. The rank and file of the Congress are bound to move still further to the left — towards the formation of a revolutionary democratic anti-imperialist united front of all those sections of the population whose condition will not be improved, indeed made worse, by a compromise with imperialism sought by the big bourgeoisie and their agents at the head of the National Congress.

The National Congress (that is, the main organ of anti-imperialist struggle) still remains formally tied to the interests and convenience of the big bourgeoisie. As far as resolutions go, it has been forced to repudiate its last year's resolution about the object of the movement, and to declare its readiness to waive its demand for complete independence in favour of self-government within the British Empire. Supposing the British Parliament will grant India the status of a self-governing dominion within a year, acting on the resolution of the National Congress, the Indian people will agree to remain inside the British empire. Owing to political immaturity and the weakness of their social basis, the left radical leaders have been outmanoeuvred in this impossible position where they cannot remain for any length of time without admitting a complete defeat. Jawaharlal Nehru and Suvash Bose, who until now were outstanding leaders of the left opposition, abstained from voting of the Gandhi resolution. In contrast to these, there is Srinivash Iyenger, a former president of the Congress and the principal leader of the radical wing. He kept up the resistance to the end, and characterised the Gandhi Resolution as "ambiguous and unworkable which simply postpones the formal rejection of the Dominion status for a year". And this, after all, is the correct reading of the situation. Obviously as a tactical move, Iyenger, after a prolonged fight inside the governing body of the Executive, agreed to accept Gandhi's compromise formula on condition that the time limit was reduced to one year. This was generally recognised a victory of the left wing. The resolution, as finally agreed upon, has the character of ultimatum to imperialism; but it requires unusual amount of political naïveté to believe that imperialism will take the resolution as an ultimatum. Indeed, it has already answered through its authoritative organ, the London "Times", which commenting upon the resolution observed: "The British Parliament will not be unduly disturbed" by this dramatic gesture. But the resolution can be a potential weapon in the hand of the radical wing of the Congress. As there is no hope of British imperialism granting India full Dominion Status within the time limit set in the resolution of the Congress, the issue avoided today will reappear as the crux of the situation next year. And the final victory will belong to that faction which will have gained ground in the intervening time.

The plan of the right wing leaders seems to be to divert the attention of their rebellious followers from the burning political question to side issues of social reform. Previously political radicalism of the petty bourgeoisie was allied with

religious and social conservatism. The growing change in the economic situation — development of the modern means of production — is having its reflex upon the ideology of the nationalist movement. Today, critical attitude towards religion and hostility to pre-capitalist social customs and institutions are in fashion among the intelligentsia. They go hand in hand with political radicalism. Therefore the attempt to distract the radical petty bourgeois nationalists with antic cult of Gandhism will no longer be successful.

Nevertheless, the right wing leaders are going to encourage the new zeal for social and religious reform in order to divert the attention of the petty bourgeoisie from the burning political questions. **Motilal Nehru** devoted a considerable portion of his presidential address to the Congress in denouncing the disabilities placed upon the women and demanding the divorce of politics from religion. The Chairman of the Reception Committee, **Sen Gupta**, who is an agent of the right among the left, was much more vehement in dealing with the same problems. The logical conclusion of these speeches can coincide with imperialist objection to the freedom of India. The imperialists and their apologists point out the backward religion and social conditions of the Indian people to prove their unfitness for self-government. The big bourgeoisie desire to focus the revolutionary zeal of the petty bourgeoisie upon the fight for the removal of these obstacles. But this fight, of historical importance as it is, cannot be isolated from the political struggle. The two should develop as complimentary to each other — making the national democratic revolution. So, the plan of the right wing leaders to head off the petty bourgeois revolt in the direction of non-political religious and social reform is bound to miscarry.

Consequently, the resolution of the National Congress does not essentially change the situation. It represents an attempt to check the revolutionisation of the anti-imperialist struggle, which, however, is bound to be of no avail, thanks to the operation of forces beyond the control of the right wing leaders. The situation created by the result of the Congress is correctly depicted by a sensible imperialist organ in India:

“We anticipate that the effect of the speech (of M. Nehru at the Congress) will be to bring not peace, but a sword among the parties he has sought to unite, and that he will fail to convince the Extremists who are pushing out any moderate element out of the Congress, that the goal he sets before them is right and desirable, and that the method of approach he has prescribed is suited to the present conditions in India.” (The Times of India, Dec. 30/28.)

The struggle for the leadership of the nationalist movement, resulting from the process of the differentiation of class interests, cannot be liquidated by compromise resolutions. Intensification of imperialist exploitation calls for intensified forms and methods of struggle for national freedom. As the big bourgeoisie, owing to its desire to come to a peaceful agreement with imperialism, are opposed to a revolutionary struggle for national liberation, the nationalist movement must have the leadership of a more revolutionary class. Even the petty bourgeoisie, traditionally incapable of taking an independent political attitude, are rapidly outgrowing the leadership of the big bourgeoisie. For example, the left Nationalist organ **Indian National Herald** considers the speech of Nehru as “disappointing” and remarks: “It is hopeless to expect much from men like Motilal Nehru who want to hand over the Congress machinery to the Moderates”. After condemning Gandhi as an “adept to compromise” the same paper declares that “there should be no surrender in the fight for independence”.

The process of class differentiation will be quickened, the nationalist movement will be completely freed from the influence of the anti-revolutionary bourgeoisie, and will develop a clear revolutionary way in proportion as the influence and intervention of the proletariat and its party in the situation will be effective. The struggle for leadership will have to be fought ultimately between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The present petty bourgeois revolt is only a prelude, and as such is of historic significance.