

# Meerut Conspiracy Case (1929-1933)

## Excerpts from the Joint General Statement of Communists Accused

*Besides giving individual statements in their defence, a General Statement by Communists accused in Meerut Conspiracy Case was given during the magistrate and sessions court trials. Through their statement the Communists sought to establish Marxism ideologically and politically. This statement 90 years ago is an evidence of ideology. Below are some excerpts from the statement.*

As British imperialism is exploiting and stifling the economic and general progress of the country the situation in India is objectively revolutionary. The great majority of the population is compelled necessarily to struggle for freedom from Imperialist domination. It is obvious that the Workers and Peasants must inevitably tend to be revolutionary. There is no doubt about this. At the same time even the bourgeoisie class also has the soundest reasons for desiring freedom. The reactionary policy of Imperialism in relation to industry, its control of the currency of the country in its own interest (the latest pegging of the rupee to a falling pound is a glaring example), its taking for itself the cream of the profits to be obtained from the exploitation of the people, and many other major and minor consequences of imperialist control, all go to determine that the policy of the bourgeoisie class must be one of hostility to Imperialism. And the intermediate section of the population, the petty bourgeoisie, the lower ranks of the bourgeois class, the artisans, the poorer professional and intellectual strata etc., have as a whole even more to gain than the bourgeoisie from Independence. Only those sections of the population, chiefly the princes and the landlord class, and those upper sections of the bourgeois and professional classes whose interests are closely bound up with the Imperialist machine, which profit from the Imperialist connection, must support Imperialism and can be considered definitely counter-revolutionary.

The revolution in India will prosper either soon or less soon but inevitably at some time. That revolution must comprehend the following principal elements:

1. The overthrow of British rule and establishment of a completely independent national state and economic independence.
2. All the Feudal and semi feudal institutions in the land system (landlordism) and in the State (the Indian States) will be abolished.
3. Achieving popular democratic rule. In short, the revolution in India will be of the nature of the bourgeois democratic revolution.

The Indian Bourgeoisie in

## **Relation to the Revolution**

What social forces will carry through this revolution? Although the revolution is bourgeois democratic type, it does not necessarily follow that it will be carried through or led by the bourgeois class itself. In India the bourgeoisie will not lead the national revolution.

The Indian bourgeoisie is not objectively capable of pursuing a revolutionary policy. The main reasons for this are:

1. The close association of British and Indian capital in Indian industry. The British policy is to increase the association of the British and Indian capital, under the domination of the former, so that conflict will become increasingly difficult;

2. The dependence of Indian merchant capital on export and import, which is largely concerned with British goods or is controlled by British interests. This section, the so called "comprador" bourgeoisie is as in China normally very "loyal" to the foreign interests.

3. The close connection between the Indian bourgeoisie and the indisputably loyalist landowning interests. The source of the "primitive accumulation" of a good deal of Indian industrial capital is land. A number of leading princes are partaking in industrial activity both in British India and in their States. The lower ranks of Indian bourgeoisie (landlords) also are connected with agrarian exploiting interests, as a great deal of capital is applied to money lending, the acquisition of land, and retail trade. Such interests are necessarily politically reactionary.

4. The general weakness and backwardness and the deeply divided character of Indian capitalism. It has not a single united political party. Its forces are divided among the Congress, the Liberation Federation and various communal and other organizations.

In view of this weakness which is realized by the bourgeoisie, and the growing and already very sharp clash of class interests in both industry and agriculture it is clear that a revolutionary policy and movements, which would necessarily have to involve the masses, could not be kept under control by the bourgeoisie. The bourgeois class in short is too weak, and its interests are bound up too closely with both British Imperialism and Indian feudalism, while the contradiction between its interests and those of the masses, it's only possible revolutionary allies, and is too direct to enable it to embark upon a policy of revolutionary overthrow of British rule.

## **The Bourgeois National Movement**

The Indian National Bourgeoisie (Congress) have been driven to organise open mass movements on two occasions against British imperialism. (The Non-

Cooperation Movement of 1919-22 and the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-31). On both these occasions the bourgeoisie groups who have financed and actually controlled the movements, and the bourgeois and petty bourgeois politicians who have actively led them, have been extremely careful to restrain their followers and prevent them from becoming revolutionary. It is a fundamental mistake to consider either the Non-Cooperation Movement or the Civil Disobedience movement as revolutionary. Neither movement has demanded complete independence from British imperialism. A Section of so called "left" leaders of Congress (principally messrs Jawaharlal Nehru, Srinivas Iyengar and Subhas Chandra Bose) launched the Independence League, but the formation of this organization was simply a demagogic device, having no serious purpose to secure independence behind it.

Complete Independence to the ordinary Congress leader is a "phrase" with which to keep the rank and file contended, and perhaps to threaten the government. Not only that, the two movements did not put forward the required programme for the people and directed attention away from the fundamental revolutionary question of the "seizure of power". The leaders have consistently refused to contemplate the use of violence believing religiously in non violence. They have not hesitated directly to sabotage and oppose the beginnings of the revolutionary movement of the masses. The classic example is the termination of Non Co-operation movement shamming the reaction of masses on police in the Chauri Chaura incident. The Civil Disobedience movement (1930-31) was started confessedly with a double aim: 1) to bring pressure to bear upon government, 2) to check the growing "violence" (that is revolutionary spirit) of the masses. And it is certain that the second one i.e. the defeat of the Indian revolution, has been more successful.

Therefore, the Indian bourgeoisie cannot pursue a revolutionary policy. It may act for a time in more or less vigorous opposition to imperialism but it can never go to the point of revolution against imperialism. In its actual political activity it is normally as much concerned to check the beginnings of the revolutionary movement of the masses as it is to oppose the government; and when seriously threatened by the mass revolution, it will become directly and actively counter revolutionary, and will join with imperialism against the masses. The bourgeoisie represents for a time a force wavering and vacillating between the counter revolutionary bloc and its allies (the princes and landlords and the loyal upper classes) and the revolutionary block (workers and peasants and the town poor, the petty bourgeoisie and the revolutionary youth) assisting to a certain extent, especially in the early stages, in the growth of the revolutionary

movement, but later coming more and more to hamper its growth, to confuse the issue and mislead it, and eventually, as the revolution gathers strength, finding itself forced to line up more and more definitely with the forces of counter revolution.

In regard to the ultimately counter-revolutionary role of the national bourgeoisie there can be no doubt. The clearest case is that of China. There the national bourgeoisie, after deserting the revolution in 1927, joined with imperialism to crush the revolutionary movement of workers and peasants and instituted a unparalleled White Terror and physical extermination of the cadres, none of the most terrible in history (20,000 were executed in 8 months).

### **Can the Bourgeoisie Compromise with Imperialism?**

The question arises: Will the opposition between imperialism and the Indian bourgeoisie continue indefinitely, or that there are objective possibilities of a satisfactory compromise between them?

The general line of policy of Imperialism is: the restriction of the development of industry, the control of finance and banking etc., this policy gives no basis for a compromise at all satisfactory to the desires of advancement of the Indian bourgeoisie. This line of policy is necessitated by the position of the world and the general decline in the economic power of British imperialism. It is not in position to grant substantial concessions but must on the contrary try by all means to increase its exploitation and the strength of its political dictatorship in India.

It uses its entire means to consolidate its position. A vigorous and deliberately provocative manner was used to suppress the Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-22) and the Civil Disobedience movement (1930-31). The result is the surrender of Bourgeois Class. Neither the Simon Commission Report, nor the First or the Second Round Table Conference made any firm suggestions for compromise.

If Imperialism makes any concessions to the bourgeoisie, it will be a serious loss to Imperialism itself. Therefore, there is no objective basis for a lasting compromise really satisfactory to the aspirations of the Indian bourgeoisie. Compromise of a permanent character will come, if at all, only when the mass revolutionary movement drives the bourgeoisie into open counter-revolutionary alliance with Imperialism (the temporary Irwin –Gandhi pact has been set at naught by Imperialism within a very short time after its adoption). There is no objective basis for a final compromise. The compromise which may be reached will be a surface compromise only, based on no real concessions by Imperialism.

## **The Revolutionary Anti-Imperialist Front**

As established that Bourgeoisie cannot lead the Indian revolution and will ultimately oppose the revolution, the petty bourgeoisie also cannot lead the revolution. This class, especially the urban petty bourgeoisie certainly includes large sections which are objectively interested in the success of the revolution and will gain by it. But the petty bourgeoisie as a class is incapable of leading the revolution. Strictly speaking it is not a class at all. It is a heterogeneous group of strata and sections having roughly similar economic standards but no homogeneity of economic functions and no other social bond to unite it. And the political consciousness which distinguishes some part of the petty bourgeoisie reflects the divided and indefinite position of the class. It has none of the consistency of the political consciousness of such comparatively homogeneous classes as the working class or even the peasantry. The line of petty-bourgeoisie is always to vacillate and follow that class which seems for the moment to be victorious. Individuals from petty bourgeoisie class can and do perform useful service for the mass revolution, but not as members of that class.

## **The Workers and Peasants**

Among the masses the industrial working-class must take leading place. In spite of comparatively small numbers, the working class inevitably will take the lead in the revolutionary struggle.

The principle motive power of social progress in the modern period lies in large scale industry. The industrial town is the leader in society today. The village can only follow. The peasantry represents a backward reactionary mode of production which is deemed to disappear. Such a class can hardly take the lead in a movement of social advance.

In consequence of its mode of production and life, the peasantry is culturally more backward than the working-class and being directly confronted with Capitalism working class achieves a more thorough understanding of the nature of the modern society than the peasantry. It acquires further a more complete class consciousness. It can form general ideas and policies and fight for them. The peasantry on the contrary is condemned to a relatively narrow range of interests. General political policies will not readily penetrate its understanding. They will readily join together and fight against their own exploiter, money lender or landlord but only with much greater difficulty will they organise over large areas as a class to fight the landlords as a class. The working class on the other hand very easily acquires a national and even an

international class consciousness. (The 1857 Indian freedom struggle was firmly supported by the Chartists in England). In view of its more developed culture if the two classes are associated, the working class inevitably takes the lead.

Further in the contrast to the peasantry, the working-class is more homogeneous class. There is very little clash of interests between different strata of the working -class, as there is between different strata of the peasantry. The working class is concentrated and disciplined to act as a united force by the conditions of its life and work, in a way that neither the peasantry nor any other class can be. It is given by its experience of exploitation a more complete under-standing of the nature of the economic and political system. It therefore comes to be imbued with a more thorough revolutionary outlook than any other class. All these considerations go to show that the consciousness under-standing and revolutionary determination of the working class must be superior to those of the peasantry.

Finally the working class is placed in such a position in control of strategic points- the big towns, the decisive parts of the productive system, the transportation and lines of commu-nication etc of society that the force of its attack is immensely greater than the relative weight of its numbers.

In India the working class though backward is far in advance of that of peasantry, as are also its political experience and consciousness. We conclude therefore that the working class can and will be leading class in the Indian revolution. While the peasantry will establish for the revolution the indispensable base in the country by seizing the land and overthrowing the feudal-capitalist system of exploitation in operation there.

### **Gandhism**

We oppose Gandhism. We oppose it because it is a complete and well-thought-out system of bourgeois national reformism. This system like any reformist programme has two sides, one the achievement of reforms by peaceful and constitutional means, the other the opposition to revolution, and of the latter is as usual in practice the most important. Mr. Gandhi, with the advantage of his reputation as a saint, which gives him great power over the masses, and the like, has enabled him to become the representative and spokesman of the Indian national bourgeoisie.

By means of Gandhism, the bourgeoisie is able to mobilize mass support to a far larger extent than it would otherwise dare to do. It claims to speak in the name of the peasants, because of the khaddar programme and because it has ventured from time to time to launch limited and strictly safeguarded no-tax campaigns. It even claims to speak for the workers on the strength of the tame

unions, especially of textile workers at Ahmedabad. The influence of Gandhism on the working-class is not inconsiderable. It is most intense in Ahmedabad, but is found to a certain extent over the country. And it is a most reactionary influence.

In relation to the peasants, the policy of Gandhism shows its reactionary character and seeks support mainly in the ranks of the rich peasants. It is confined to the ryotwari areas which constitute less than half the area of British India. In the zamindari areas, the propaganda of Gandhism is mainly concerned with open advocacy of class-collaboration and the unity of interests between the peasants and the zamindars.

Generally the anti-revolutionary character of Gandhist policy and tactics is confirmed by all its prominent features: the absence of an aggressive or militant attitude ("love your enemy") - the adoption of "passive" resistance, "Civil" Disobedience etc, the tactics of offering oneself for arrest, "filling the jails" and so on, which have the effect of assisting Imperialism to remove from the arena of struggle with the minimum of difficulty all the most active and conscious men etc. etc.,

*(Key Excerpts from the Joint Statement of 18 Communists accused in Meerut Conspiracy Case delivered under Com Muzaffar Ahmad editorship)*

*(Reference Book: 'Communists Challenge Imperialism from the Dock' (pp. 81-90, 93, 98-102, 268-269.)*