

THE INDIAN COMMUNIST PARTY

ITS POLICY AND WORK IN
THE WAR OF LIBERATION

By **P. C. JOSHI**
General Secretary of the Communist Party of India

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
HARRY POLLITT

6d.

PROUD RECORD

HOW THE COMMUNIST PARTY
OF THE SOVIET UNION CREATED
MODERN RUSSIA

By **R. W. ROBSON**

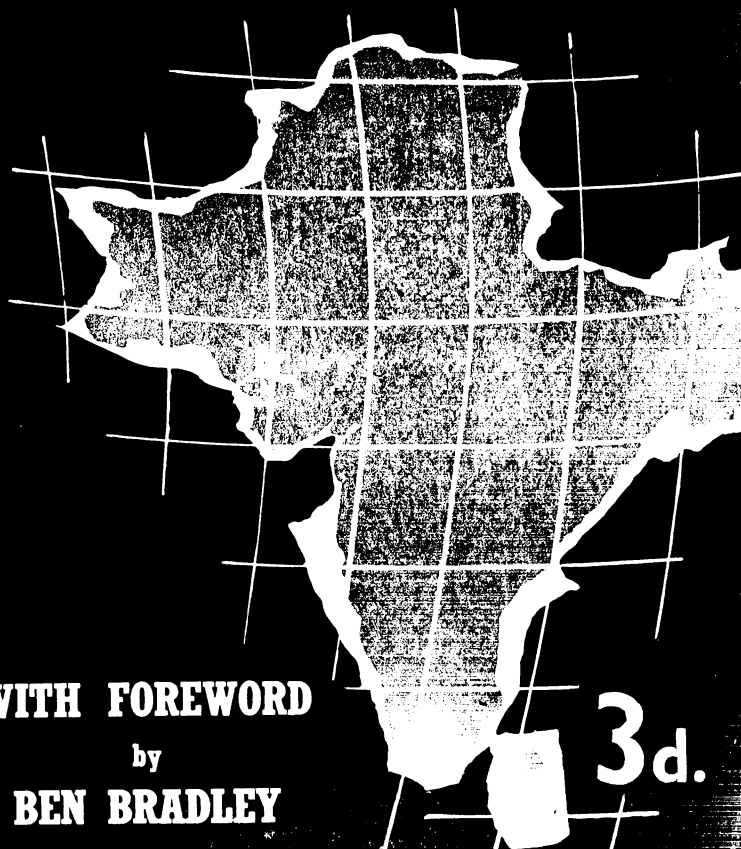
2d.

*Obtainable from progressive bookshops,
or direct from*

CENTRAL BOOKS, LTD.
2-4 PARTON STREET,
LONDON, W.C. 1.

FROM THE INDIAN COMMUNIST
PARTY'S PAPER, 'PEOPLE'S WAR.'

INDIA'S PROBLEMS



WITH FOREWORD
by
BEN BRADLEY

3d.

FOREWORD

THE PEOPLE'S WAR is the title of the weekly paper issued by the Communist Party of India. It is published in four editions, in English, Hindu, Urdu and Marathi. The first copy to be received in this country was published on August 16th shortly after the arrests of the Congress leaders. The contents of PEOPLE'S WAR were considered of such vital importance to the people of this country that it was decided to reproduce them in pamphlet form.

This issue contained the first graphic eye-witness account of the reactions in India to the arrests of the Congress leaders. The Government action in arresting them was a serious blow to the Indian people as a whole, precipitating a very critical and ugly situation.

Strongly protesting against the action of the Government, and calling for the immediate release of Congress leaders, the Communist Party of India countered the disruptive agents provocateurs and called on the workers not to be misled.

For four or five days the people were provoked in every way; the police and military used tear gas, and on many occasions opened fire. The most remarkable feature arising from this intensely interesting report of how the C.P. leadership handled such a serious situation is the influence that our Party had among the workers, and the confidence that the workers of Bombay placed in their Union—The Girni Kamgar (Red Flag) Union—and the Communist Party.

The leading article which we reproduce has a striking message, not only for the people of India but also to the people of Great Britain. It brands Mr. Amery and the die-hards as responsible for the situation:

Our comrades in India point out: who must suffer for this policy? "The Indian peoples, of course; but the peoples of Britain and the peoples of the United Nations no less."

This issue of PEOPLE'S WAR contained an inspiring call by the Communist Party to save four young peasants, members of the Indian Communist Party, from the gallows. Here we learn that while the Government lifted the ban on the Communist Party, it still carried on its repressive policy, and many members of the Communist Party are still kept in prison.

ISSUED BY
THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN
16 KING STREET, LONDON, W.C.2
December 1942

PRINTED BY
LANGLEY AND SONS, LTD
THE EUSTON PRESS, N.W.1.
CP/60/10/11/42

The grim facts in connection with the four peasant leaders who face death is told here. The story of their work as leaders of the peasant movement in their district; their arrest and torture; their trial and death sentences; and now the fight to save their lives. Our comrades say: "*We are going forward not only to save our comrades from the gallows, but to get them out for driving the Japs out of our fair land.*"

The voice of the people of this country must be raised to save these working-class fighters, not only from the gallows, but from long terms of imprisonment.

STRUGGLE OR SUICIDE? is the title of a brilliant article by P. C. Joshi, General Secretary of the Communist Party of India, who, I am proud to say, was a co-accused with me for assisting in the organisation of the Trade Union Movement (the Meerut Case). Comrade P. C. Joshi reports on, and analyses, the tragedy of the last session of the All-India Congress Committee held in Bombay.

As Joshi says, it is impossible to get an intelligent picture of what happened in India without correctly understanding what happened at the All India Congress Committee meeting.

The speeches of Maulana Azad, Gandhi, Patel and Nehru are summarised. The only serious criticism of Congress leadership and alternative policy came from the Communists:

"Two lines were placed before the All-India Congress Committee: *by the Working Committee*—freedom from British Imperialism first, then we shall unite and fight fascism. *By the Communists*—unite for freedom, organise to fight the Fascists, we shall be free."

The Communists secured only a small minority vote; as is explained, many of the Communist members of the All-India Congress Committee were prevented from attending. The clear, sober lead given by our Party in India is gaining widespread support in India to-day.

But, as our comrades there emphasise, it is not just a question concerning Indians—it concerns the people of Britain in particular.

We must force the Government to change its policy—*this is vital and urgent*. Demand that the Government make a clear statement recognizing India's independence, re-open negotiations and proceed to the establishment of a Provisional National Government.

BEN BRADLEY.

IN BOMBAY AFTER ARRESTS

SUNDAY, 9TH AUGUST, Bombay woke up to hear of the lightning blow which the maddened bureaucracy had struck at the National Congress.

7 a.m.—Before the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee office stood a black board on which was chalked out: "All members of the Working Committee arrested." The Congress house itself was occupied by policemen.

AT GOWALIA TANK

Flag salutation and the People's Volunteer Brigade rally was to take place that morning on the Gowalia Tank Maidan opposite the All-India Congress Committee pandal. When the Volunteers arrived they found the maidan already occupied by a big police force, with arms and lathis. Order was served on Volunteers to disperse and not to hold the rally P.V.B. Volunteers were asked to go away but the Congress Volunteers attempted to hold their flag salutation. Tear gas squibs were used by the police to disperse the crowd. Twice or thrice the rally reformed. After about one hour the whole crowd dispersed.

The Congress-minded public was dazed. Nobody had any clear idea as to what to do next. By 10 a.m. attempts for bringing about a Hartal had begun. Attempts were being made to stop trams and buses and close shops. By midday there were reports of forcible cessation of traffic, smashing of glass panes, and lamp posts. Police forces were stationed at all street junctions. In the afternoon reports of more clashes with the police began to arrive. At Bhuleshwar, tear smoke was used on a procession of women. Storming of tramcars and buses had begun. The police opened fire in several places in south Bombay.

IN THE MUSLIM AREAS

Madanpura, Nagpada, Bhandi Bazar, Mohamad Ali Road were entirely unaffected. But groups were discussing the situation on the streets and in restaurants. On Mohammad Ali roadside in several

places the following slogan was chalked out on the streets, "Without Pakistan we can't help you." In a Muslim restaurant on the Nagpada side, four Pathans were discussing the situation. They were very sore at the Congress failure to arrive at a settlement with the League, "How can you get freedom without taking 10 crores of Muslims with you. . . . We will get National Government within 24 hours if we have Congress-League unity," they were saying.

LEAD FOR ANARCHY

"We don't know what exactly to do. They say Congressmen everywhere are being arrested. I myself don't know what to do." So said Mr. Deshpande, Secy. of the Maharashtra Provincial Congress Committee. Some comrades met him in Sardar Grina on Sunday morning. Responsible Congressmen who were left did not know what to do. . . . In a crowd passing along C.P. Tank Road provocateurs were shouting "Burn down Government buildings." At some corners they were stopping all people wearing hats and taking their hats to light a bonfire on the streets, shops were being smashed. The police were using all these acts of irresponsible elements to open fire upon the people. By evening some 150 were arrested and several wounded.

TEAR GAS BATTLE

On Sunday evening Gandhiji was to address a meeting at **Shivaji Park, Dadar**. After the arrests, news was circulated that Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi would take Mahatma's place. From 4 o'clock thousands were concentrating on the maidan. About 2 lakhs (200,000) were present there. Bajaj's son and two ladies attempted to address the meeting in spite of the ban. They were at once put under arrest. There were only 50 policemen and 10 sergeants. What was happening was that a crowd of people was forming itself in the centre of the maidan and shouting slogans. The police were throwing tear gas squibs and making lathi charges and dispersing them. The crowd reformed again and again. This went on for 2 hours. Several persons were injured. The crowd put out tear gas squibs by water and sand. The bulk of the crowd, however, stood there as spectators. By 8.30 p.m. the maidan was cleared.

WORKERS PROTEST AGAINST LEADERS' ARREST

In the working-class area the workers were on the streets as it was Sunday. There were no disturbances. Workers were discussing in groups. There was agitation in the air. News of what was happening in the other parts of the city was trickling in. "What was the lead

of their Union and their Party?" the workers asked. By two o'clock in the afternoon a campaign of street corner meetings began. "No precipitate action. The Government has struck at the National leadership. We must protest unitedly. Come to the meeting on Kamgar Maidan." That was the message of these street corner gatherings.

At the meeting Com. B. T. Ranadive explained the meaning of this Government attack against the Congress. "Why did the Government strike? Only because it does not want to part with power, only because it wants the Indian people to trust the incompetent bureaucracy for defence against the Japanese. We cannot tolerate this. We demand immediate release of Congress leaders, lifting of the ban on the Congress, immediate opening of negotiations with the Congress to settle the question of National Government." Workers cheered. Com. Ranadive went on to point out that we cannot win National Government and fight the Japs without National unity, without Hindu-Muslim unity. He said that what was going on at present was not struggle but mere chaotic outbursts, which gives the bureaucracy an excuse to strike at us and to weaken our power. That is why we do not give the call of protest strike. There is an attempt at provocation and to let loose repression on the head of the workers. We must not fall prey to this game. Comrades Ashraf and Sardesai who spoke also stressed the same points.

MONDAY, 10TH AUGUST.—Death roll of persons killed by police firing was 5 on Sunday. On Monday it was 15. Both provocation and repression were rising. The main feature on Monday was the **COMPLETE HARTAL** (Strike) of students and an attempt to provoke the workers into bringing about industrial deadlock and rioting.

STUDENT HARTAL

Students gathered at the colleges and schools at 9 a.m. There was no question of attending the classes. Meetings were held in the College premises. Feelings ran high. Communist students spoke in several places—condemning repression and putting forward our line and programme. The speeches were appreciated. But after the meeting a set of students wanted to go out in batches and "bring about a deadlock" in the life of the city. A chit was being circulated among the students purporting to be the last message of Gandhiji. The students were determined to get out on the streets. They could not be checked. Communist students were with the student masses—patiently arguing with them that acts of violence, such as smashing of shop windows, stopping traffic, etc., was not struggle for freedom. In the morning Com. Nergis Batliwalla was arrested. The police twice dispersed the

crowd listening to the patriotic squad of student singers led by her. There was a lathi charge. In the noon she was free again and at her post with the student demonstrators trying her best to prevent them from doing foolish acts of violence. In the North, the boys of the Ruia College and of the schools, came out on the streets, brought out the Khalsa College and V.J.T. Institute. A batch of students marched to the working-class area. They attempted to bring the Kohinoor mill workers out.

PROVOCATION IN THE MILL AREA

On Monday provocateurs concentrated on the mill area since the morning. Their aim was to bring about a complete stoppage of the textile industry and to provoke the mass of workers to mass acts of violence. This was sought to be brought about by pressure from the side of some owners and jobbers and by provocation in the streets. In the Mafatlal Gagalbhai group it is stated that the workers were promised 8 days' pay for keeping away. In other mills the head jobbers and officers and mill staff took the lead to close the mills. They just walked out of the mills. Third factor was provocation by the usual goonda and strike-breaker element. These indulged in intimidating and beating up stray groups of workers and forcing them to stay away from work. In this way about 28 cotton mills and 9 silk mills were closed down. During the day the gangs of provocateurs were active stoning tramcars, smashing lamp posts, cutting telegraph wires, uprooting trees. Various roads were littered and blocked by stones, bricks, etc. In one place a bus was smashed up. The result was that the police took all advantage of this to open fire on the workers several times during the day. However, the great mass of workers did not participate in this action. But, all the same, they were very much perturbed by this state of things. They certainly wanted to protest in an organised manner against repression and for the release of National leaders, but they instinctively kept away from acts of provocateurs. Because of firing near about, the evening meeting called by the Union on the Kamgar Maidan was cancelled.

NIGHT MEETING

In the evening, however, 3 street corner meetings were held in the Naigam area in spite of Curfew Order. They were attended by 400 in each. A leaflet issued by the Textile Workers' Union and the Communist Party was distributed. It was very well appreciated. Workers applauded the attack made in the leaflet against the bureaucracy for the repression against the Nation. They also approved of the appeal

to desist from violence and the call to smash provocation. The meetings and the leaflet served to dispel the panicky mood of the workers in Naigam. The night in the working-class area which was under curfew passed off peacefully. Night shift was closed. Workers kept indoors.

TUESDAY, 11TH AUGUST.— Situation worsens. The storm centre shifts to the North, i.e., towards Dadar, Matunga and to the working-class area. Police open fire 13 times and fatal casualties were 11, including those who were injured on Monday and succumbed on Tuesday.

MORE PROVOCATION IN MILL AREA

On Tuesday morning the textile workers presented themselves as usual for work at the mill gates. But there was a conspiracy on behalf of some of the owners and the head jobbers and officers to close down the mills. In all 44 mills were closed and the remaining were not working with full complement. On Tuesday morning the picture in the mill areas was something like this: Most of the mills closed. A large part of the workers went home but a considerable part remained hanging about the footpaths, attracted by the police show of force. Armed police and military with machine guns in certain places were posted at all main "nakas." The game of the provocateurs was to instigate large-scale clashes between workers and the police. At Lalbaug, for instance, hooligans began deliberately throwing stones at a tram car. The police opened fire. Among the wounded was a Communist—**Comrade Mukund Rane**. He was with the crowd of spectators doing his duty of explaining our main slogans to the workers. He was dissuading the workers from participating in the criminal game of the provocateurs. He was asking the workers to go home.

WORKING CLASS MASSES COOL

During the day the police cordoned off the various sections of the mill area by posting armed squads and military on strategic bridges. Provocateurs were doing their best in every section to goad the mass of workers into frenzy. Police firing took place in several places; several scores were wounded, but nowhere did the mass of workers lose their heads. The proof of this was to be seen in public meeting which Girni Kamgar Union held on the Fergusson Road maidan. All the mills in this section were closed mostly by the owners themselves. The lanes and by-lanes of this area were scenes of horrible and senseless smashing up. Smashed lamp posts, post-boxes, trees uprooted, etc., littered the streets, which showed that gangs of provocateurs were extremely active here. All the same the workers' meeting which was attended by some

5,000 to 7,000 workers was a great success. The speakers emphasised what provocative role police repression was playing and called upon the workers to maintain their unity and not to give way to this instigation. The attack on the Government repression, the demand for National Government, and the urgency of Hindu-Muslim unity were warmly cheered.

POSTSCRIPT

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 12TH, NOON: Almost all mills are closed to-day. In the morning as usual workers went to their respective mills to attend work; but found that mill-gates were closed. The management themselves are closing the mills. In one mill, workers trying to enter the mill were forcibly driven out and beaten. So they returned home. They are not participating in any act of rowdiness. On the contrary, there is a feeling of resentment with regard to such acts, among them.

In general situation is quieter to-day.

FIGHT ANARCHY! RALLY THE PEOPLE!

THE blitz of brutal repression let loose by the imperialist bureaucracy has set the country aflame. It is an attempt to goad the accumulated anger and discontent of the people into unorganised and spontaneous outbursts and then meet them with lathis, bullets and tear gas. It is a criminal culmination of the imperialist policy of keeping our nation paralysed and powerless even on the eve of the Fascist aggressors' onslaught. They denied us National Government and now they are out to crush the only organised force, the Congress, which could unite the nation and snatch National Government from their unwilling hands. Who must gain by this policy? The Jap aggressors alone! Who must suffer from it? The Indian people, of course; but the people of Britain and the peoples of the United Nations no less. A blow at the Congress is a blow at the Indian people, their unity, their potential anti-fascist resistance. This blow against Indian freedom is a blow for the fascist invaders. To crush the Indian national movement is to ensure that there will be no national resistance to the fascist aggressors. On the ashes of Indian nationalism India's national resistance can't be organised. To crush the Congress, therefore, is to aid the Fascists.

Who are responsible for this monstrous crime against India and freedom-loving humanity?

Mr. Amery is foisting a lie on the peoples of Britain, America and the United Nations when he says that he has "saved India and the Allied Cause from grave disaster" by "cutting the fuse leading from arch-saboteurs to the inflammable and explosive material which they hoped to alight all over India."

The plain truth is that Amery and his Indian agents are the arch-incendiaries. The incendiary and inflammable material of which they talk so glibly is nothing else than the accumulated anger and discontent of our nation against their rule. Now they have set fire to it, with their own hands. What for? Imperialist arrogance is driving them mad, they cannot give up the greed for our Motherland as their possession. They are, therefore, out to destroy our national strength. They are strangulating and not saving India, sabotaging and not strengthening the Allied Cause.

The plain question before every Indian patriot is: Are we going to play into the hands of Amery and Co., or we are out to smash that game. The situation before the country is this: The Congress leadership, blinded by a sense of frustration, did decide to launch non-violent struggle. But it is equally true that they had declared in unmistakable terms their eagerness for a negotiated settlement of Indian freedom, and for National Government to organise Indian armed resistance to the fascist invaders, through unity with the United Nations. The imperialist diehards who never wanted to free India, who want an enslaved India for themselves and not a settlement between the British and Indian peoples struck before the Congress leadership could even make its last attempt at negotiations. By removing the Congress leadership within 10 hours of the All-India Congress Committee session they have not "cut the fuse" but themselves set a match to the house and removed the fire brigade.

The result is that there is neither a programme before the people nor a leadership to negotiate with the Government. The bureaucratic blow has dazed and incensed the nation. Spontaneous demonstrations take place, the provocateurs get busy committing senseless acts of violence, the police get on with its job, using the lathi or the bullet. This intensifies mass fury, which leads to more and more repression. This is just what the alien bureaucrats want, to paralyse our nation, our people's strength, our Congress.

If we let this happen how are we going to organise people's resistance to fascist aggressors, establish National Government and win freedom? If we allow this to continue we only help the bureaucrats to lay the foundation of a tragedy more terrible than Malaya or Burma in our own country. If we acquiesce in or gloat over what is going on we let the achievements of 22 years of national movement go up in flames.

No sane person will maintain that smashing of lamp-posts, burning of buses, or even of a few police chowkies can lead us to freedom. Now as always such sporadic acts of violence only strengthen the police rule. To-day, with the fascist invaders at our gates, these senseless acts only aid and encourage them. The gleeful exhortation of the Berlin and Tokio Radios these last 3 days should make every Indian sit up.

There is no earthly comparison with the movements of 1920, 1930 or 1932. There is no organised lead, no organisation, no plan. What is going on to-day is not "struggle" in any sense of the word, but a series of sporadic acts by enraged youngsters who themselves do not know what to do and get elbowed out by known provocateurs who are capturing the streets, for themselves, for arson, looting, etc. The bureaucracy is taking the fullest advantage of the situation and letting loose an orgy of bloodshed and anarchy.

Therefore, the task of every patriot to-day is not to lose his head in face of the frightful provocation and imagine that what is going on is national struggle, but to UNITE ALL SANE AND PATRIOTIC FORCES IN THE COUNTRY, IN EVERY LOCALITY, TOWN AND VILLAGE, TO STOP THIS ANARCHY AND LAWLESSNESS AND GIVE ORGANISED FORM TO THE ANGER OF THE PEOPLE AND THE DEMAND OF THE NATION. If Indian patriots fail to seize the initiative to give a united and organised lead in this direction we shall be proving ourselves to be enemies of our country, of our people, and of our great Congress. We would be parties to the sin of seeing our national organisation, the Congress, crushed, handing over our people to the provocateurs, and weakening the defence of our motherland.

We appeal to all fellow Congressmen to realise the following and find their way to patriotic duty:

(1) The Congress has not given the actual call for non-violent mass struggle. The appointed sole leader was arrested before he could prepare the country or give a lead.

(2) The A.I.C.C. has passed no programme of civil disobedience to be followed in case of the leaders being arrested.

(3) Neither the Congress nor Mahatmaji has given the call for anarchy and senseless violence. These acts are anti-Congress and anti-national.

A difficult and desperate situation faces the patriots outside the bars. The first duty of all Congressmen and all patriotic organisations who want to win the national demand is to unite immediately to stop all acts of violence, lawlessness, and destruction of property. They help the bureaucrats to intensify repression, and not the nation to win the national demand and organise national resistance.

We Communists are convinced that no movement for winning the national demand and organising national resistance can be built unless all honest and sane patriots unite to rally the people AGAINST ANARCHY and unitedly demand of the Government: LIFT THE BAN ON THE CONGRESS, WITHDRAW THE BAN ON MEETINGS, STOP REPRESSION, RELEASE THE LEADERS, NEGOTIATE WITH THE CONGRESS FOR NATIONAL GOVERNMENT. Our common patriotism demands this of us all; this is the only way to avert the blow aimed at our nation by a crazy bureaucracy; this is the way to save India from the fascist vultures—this and no other is the path for Indian freedom.

BROTHER WORKERS! Recall your strike experiences; to-day nation-wide provocation is on. Beware of provocateurs. Resist panic. Discount all rumours. Stick to your jobs. No political general strikes. Every hour that you work is for the nation's defence and the people's needs. Take no steps unless called upon by your Union or your Party, the Communist Party. Strengthen your union for Mahagai (increased cost of living allowance). Organise meetings and demonstrations against repression, for the release of the national leaders, for opening negotiations with the Congress, for forging Congress-League agreement.

STUDENT PATRIOTS! Think hard before you act. Help to build national unity to liquidate British domination. Get ready to shed your blood to save the motherland from the fascist invaders. Remain peaceful: you will soon be wanted to show your heroism with arms in hand. Do not participate in acts of violence—they help the British rulers. No permanent hartals and idling at home. India needs you as soldiers and officers at the front. Win the chance to be an honoured

martyr or a victorious warrior by holding protest meetings for the release of leaders, for negotiations with the Congress for National Government to lead you in the war of India's defence and freedom. Rally support for Congress-League unity to make the national demand irresistible.

FELLOW CONGRESSMEN! It is above all your responsibility to guard the honour of the Congress and rally rank and file Congressmen against acts of violence and disorder. They do not lead to the Congress goal but to the British prison and tempt the fascists to march in as our "liberators." Co-operate with workers, students, and all people's organisations to prevent anarchy in your town or village.

In this critical hour the slogans of the Communist Party are:

HOOLIGANISM IS NOT PATRIOTISM, ANARCHY IS NOT STRUGGLE. MOBILISE THE PEOPLE AGAINST ANARCHY! UNITE THE PATRIOTS FOR NATIONAL GOVERNMENT!

TO THE RESCUE OF THE FOUR KAYYUR PATRIOTS

THE Government of India's Press Communique lifting the ban on our Party is at once a triumph of the people and an index of imperialist wooden-headedness. The Government is prepared to give facilities to the Party to carry out its policy of helping the people's war, but it is not prepared to release its soldiers from jail and from underground.

For clapping our comrades in jail the Government thought it sufficient to satisfy itself that they were our comrades, but for releasing them, it wants to "go into the merits of individual cases." And remember that this is about the fourth time that they are "going into these cases" and that it is about eight months since Maxwell promised to release all anti-fascists.

People's pressure could force the Government to legalise our Party, but it is yet insufficient to get our leaders released.

REPRESSION RAMPANT

The lower you go down the bureaucratic hierarchy the more reactionary this institution—that is, at least, our experience. As our

Malayalam proverb says, "You can easily please the Central God in the temple but you can never please his satellites."

The Government of India lifts the ban on "National Front" and "New Age" but our Collector (District Magistrate) has been squatting on our declaration for our Malayalam organ. He has been "looking into the matter" and "arranging to decide on it soon" for well over two months.

The Government of India cancels the warrants against some of our All-India leaders but its agents have arrested Com. Bharateeyan after the ban on our Party has been lifted. Our leaders are still in prison and underground, the exceptions being Comrades Krishna Pillai and E. M. S. Namboodiripad.

Thirty detenus, about one hundred convicted prisoners, a dozen underground comrades, about fifty with various restrictions imposed on them—such is the picture of the Government "giving facilities to the Party" to carry out its policy in Malabar.

You know this is the monsoon when we get a heavy downpour and when it is an uphill task to organise meetings and demonstrations. Of course, the slogan has gone forth, "the Red Army fought the Nazis in winter, let us fight defeatism and inaction in the monsoon." And I must say that June 22nd, July 7th, July 12th and July 26th have proved that the slogan is being acted up to. But it would have been much easier and more effective if we had such facilities as the halls of school buildings for public meetings. And the Collector in his capacity as District Board Special Officer was approached for the purpose, but back came the reply, "regretting inability."

Anti-Jap student organisers are being expelled from schools; anti-Jap teachers are punished and their teaching certificates cancelled.

The Police? They have, of course, stopped house searches, but their officers and men still harass our workers with threats of various sorts. A year and a half ago they had promised their admirers that "the Red Flag will no more be flown in Malabar," "Communism is dead," etc. Now, that they have to eat their own words they are busy hatching plans to foist false cases on our comrades.

BATTLE-FRONT OR GALLOWS?

A grim reminder to our comrades that the lifting of the ban on our Party does not change our essential character as revolutionaries; an effective reply to our misguided fellow patriots who say that the Communists have fallen in line with the Government and hence the

lifting of the ban; a serious menace to the progress of our anti-Jap people's movement; a great challenge to every true patriotic individual and organisation to exert his or her utmost to organise the people on the broadest possible basis—that is how our leadership viewed the confirmation of death sentence on our Kayyur comrades.

Will they be saved as Com. K.P.R. was saved by the people, or will the death sentence on them be carried out? **Will they fight and die on the battle-front as patriotic soldiers or will the executioner's sword snatch them away from us? Will the anti-Fascist, anti-Imperialist people triumph over imperialist wooden-headedness or will the latter overcome the former?**

WE IN MALABAR KNOW THAT THE ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS DEPEND ON US, OUR ORGANISED EFFORTS, OUR ABILITY TO UNITE THE PEOPLE ON THIS ISSUE. IT IS A CHALLENGE TO THE COMMUNISTS IN KERALA TO ORGANISE THE ENTIRE PEOPLE.

UNITED FRONT TO SAVE KAYYUR COMRADES

Fortunately for us our leaders, Coms. Pillai and E.M.S. Namboodripad, are in our midst again. The **first publication** that Com. Pillai issued on emerging from underground was the one fixing August 2 as **all-Kerala Kayyur Day**. The **first public meeting** Com. E.M.S. attended was the united front all-Kerala **Kayyur Day demonstration** in Calicut. And the **first circular** we issued to our units after the Party became legal was how to organise **that day** and carry on subsequent agitation.

Comrade Pillai's appeal was endorsed the next day by the Congress leaders and the **Kayyur Day** bids fair, from the example in Calicut, to become a fine example of united front agitation.

M.L.A's and M.L.C's (Members of the Legislative Assembly and Council) from Malabar and South Kanara districts have written to the Governor asking him to show mercy towards them. The Calicut Municipal Council has passed a resolution endorsing this universal demand. People's leaders from outside Malabar have replied to Com. Pillai promising to do whatever they can to save these comrades from the gallows.

The old K.P.R. defence committee consisting of Messrs. T. V. Sundara Iyer, K. Madhava Menon and K. Kelappan has been strengthened by the addition of Com. Pillai and Sir K. A. Damodar Menon (the Editor of "Mathrubhoomi"). The Committee is making arrangements for a mercy petition and Privy Council appeal.

We know that the entire Communist movement in India will take up their cause; we know that our national leadership will not be one step behind in trying to save these comrades for the nation. We know that the peoples of the United Nations will not rest so long as a single anti-Fascist soldier remains behind the bars, but we realise that all that will not help us **unless** we ourselves put forth our maximum effort. With firm determination not to disgrace our province by the verdict of history that, even in this period of the people's war when the bastions of reaction are one after another being shattered by the triumphant people, the Communists in Kerala were found wanting, **WE ARE GOING FORWARD NOT ONLY TO SAVE OUR COMRADES FROM THE GALLOWS, BUT TO GET THEM OUT FOR DRIVING THE JAPS OUT OF OUR FAIR LAND.**

SONS OF OUR KISANS AND COMMUNIST FIGHTERS

Who are the Kayyur comrades? Every Communist, every patriot in Kerala is justly proud of the four comrades who are now awaiting the gallows.

RISEN FROM THE RANKS OF ACTUAL KISANS (Peasants), working day and night for their class, fighting the class enemies with a firmness which none but Communists are capable of, these young comrades of 20-25 years of age have already become the dear comrades and affectionate leaders of kisans (peasants) in Kasargode Taluka.

Deprived of every facility for education by the most reactionary educational system, they have nevertheless been educated by their class, its struggles, its organisation, its Communist leadership. They are uneducated—nay—even semi-illiterate in the accepted sense of the word "education"; but they are superior to the "graduated flunkies" of our decadent universities not only in the peasant's native shrewdness and commonsense but also in regard to an understanding of the world, its essential problems, India's place in it and the role of their own class. **COMMUNISM NOT ONLY ORGANISED THEM, BUT EDUCATED THEM.**

MADATHIL APPU, the first accused in the Kayyur case, **belongs to a family of working peasants in kayyur village**. The family income from the small-scale cultivation and toddy tapping is just sufficient to meet their expenses on scales which are common in Malabar among working peasants. Com. Appu can read Malayalam and also write to a certain extent. **HE PARTICIPATED IN ALL POLITICAL ACTIVITIES WHICH DEVELOPED IN THE TALUK SINCE 1937 AND WAS AN ACTIVE FIGURE IN THE KARSHAK SANGHA**

AND THE VOLUNTEER MOVEMENT. He was so popular among the kisans that Government officials and Jenmies did not dare engage themselves in their usual mischief in Kayyur village. HE WAS ARRESTED ON APRIL 3rd, 1941, AND WAS SEVERELY TORTURED. He is married and has no children.

PODAVARATH KUNHAMBUR NAIR belongs to a family of very poor peasants, can read and write to a certain extent, is married and has a child, HAS BEEN VERY ACTIVE SINCE THE KARSHAK SANGHA WAS STARTED IN 1938; ARRESTED ON APRIL 7th, 1942, AND WAS SEVERELY TORTURED. All members of the family were also tortured after Kayyur incident (March 28, 1941) and the family house was looted by police agents. The whole family is politically conscious.

KOYITHATTIL CHIRUKANDAN belongs to a very poor family even according to the miserable standards of life in Malabar; can read and write to a certain extent, WAS VERY ACTIVE IN POLITICS SINCE 1938 AND WAS A LEADING FIGURE IN TWO KISAN STRUGGLES IN PALAI AND THIMIRI (FEB., 1941), WAS ARRESTED IN APRIL, 1941. Is **unmarried**.

PALLIKAN ABUBAKER, belongs to a family of poor Muslim peasants; is semi-illiterate but TOOK A LEADING PART IN THE KISAN MOVEMENT SINCE 1938, WAS A MEMBER OF THE KARSHAK JATHA (Peasant Deputation) WHICH WENT FROM THE TALUK TO MANGALORE TO MEET THE COLLECTOR AND REPRESENT THE DEMANDS AND GRIEVANCES OF KISANS; LED SOME OF THE FAMOUS KISAN STRUGGLES. These activities led to persecution by his relations who are rich and also to social ostracism by his co-religionists; is unmarried but has a poor widowed mother.

CHURIKANDAN KRISHNAN NAIR is too young to be sent to the gallows and only for that reason has been exempted from death sentence; has studied up to the sixth standard and therefore is better educated than the other four comrades. In spite of his being a boy, he was A MEMBER OF THE KARSHAK JATHA WHICH MARCHED TO MANGALORE IN 1938; the whole family was persecuted after the Kayyur incident.

KASARGODE KISAN MOVEMENT

The biographical facts sketched above may be rather dull and uninteresting; but behind these facts is a more inspiring fact; these uneventful lives of the most common members of ordinary peasant

families led to one of the most notable events in the history of Kerala; these semi-literate peasant leaders created a movement which was terrible to the local organs of the British bureaucracy and will now prove the strongest barrier to the Japs.

The Malayalam-speaking areas of Kasargode Taluk have the distinction of being the Taluk which, along with Chirakkal and Kottayam, built up the now famous peasant movement of North Malabar. Although it is, administratively speaking, part of South Kanara District, it is, socially and economically speaking, part of Malabar. A Janmi system, as oppressive as that of Malabar, holds sway there, but it is not checked by a tenancy act as it is in Malabar since 1930. Nay more, the tenants are not even allowed compensation for any improvements they make as their brethren in Malabar have been getting since 1899. Thus the peasants of Hosdurg (Malayalam-speaking area, Kasargod Taluka) are groaning under the worst features of both the Janmi and the Ryotwari systems.

The previous tenancy movement of Malabar did not effect Kasargod but the Kisan movement which began to grow along with the rise of the Congress Socialist Party touched it. The organisers of the movement for joining the Malayam-speaking area of Kasargod with Malabar gave a stimulus to the movement for applying the Malabar tenancy act to this area. The Malabar Krashak Sangham which came into being in 1938 not only demanded amendments to the 1930 Malabar Act but (irrespective of the merits of revision of the boundaries of the administrative districts) its application to the Janmi ridden areas of Kasargod Taluka.

It was in the wake of this demand that Karshaka Sanghams (Peasant Organisation) sprang up all over Hosdurg. 1937-38 saw the rise of Congress Committees and Karshaka Sanghams everywhere, and it was these which gave rise to a band of Kisan leaders in whose FOREFRONT STOOD

THE NOW-FAMOUS KAYYUR COMRADES

Many were the struggles which they waged against furious Janmis, embittered village officials and wily money-lenders. The absence of any tenancy act, while it gave birth to the Karshaka Sangham, demanded of the peasants that they should undergo the utmost suffering for their organisation; for the Janmis try to browbeat the peasants out of the Sangham by evicting them from their lands. But once awakened from age-long slumber, the Kisans rose to a man to resist this. **One after another, battles were waged against arbitrary evictions; legal**

eviction was not allowed to become actual eviction; the Janmis saw a fortress of determined peasants who had to be battered down if they wanted to carry out the eviction threat and take possession of the land. And 1938-41 were the three glorious years when the Karshaka Sangham was supreme in the Taluka. **It was these struggles of which any political party may be proud and of which FOUR OF THE FOREMOST MEMBERS AWAIT DEATH and others are rotting in Jail.**

The Kayyur incident itself is well known. During March, 1941, the police and its agents were very busy trying to suppress the Karshaka Sangham. They searched houses and beat up several kisans and volunteers on March 26th. To protest against these there was a demonstration at Kayyur on March 28th. A police constable was on the spot. The kisans are alleged to have got so enraged that they stoned him to death. It is for this that these comrades have been sentenced to death.

It is particularly noteworthy that the Sessions Judge in his judgment admitted that in an incident like this in which so many participated it is difficult to identify the actual person who committed the murder and that probably that person had NOT been brought before the court. Still, since this was a ghastly murder, he convicted THEM.

BOMBAY A.I.C.C. SESSION.

STRUGGLE OR SUICIDE ?

By P. C. JOSHI.

AFTER the All-India Congress Committee (A.I.C.C.), events have moved with such speed that its proceedings appear already remote, a page in our history rather than a part of to-day's reality. It is impossible to get an intelligent picture of what is happening to-day without correctly understanding what happened at the A.I.C.C. The roots of to-day's tragedy lie buried therein. The risks were known and admitted by the National leadership. The warning had been given sharp and clear by the Communist members.

It was a gay pandal for a grim session, buntings galore, numerous lights and fans. The dais was covered with costly rugs, big modern fans

to keep the leaders cool in a situation when the whole nation felt stifled, and hot issues were on the agenda.

GOVERNMENT GAME

The Government planned to blow-up the Session politically; it published the minutes of the Allahabad Session of the Working Committee. They did confuse and horrify the world press but not the Indian public, for they correctly reflected the prevalent confusion in the Indian political scene. The Government game was known—to pit the peoples of the world against the Indian national demand by seeking to “expose” that the Congress leadership was not united nor wholly anti-Fascist, and National defence could not be entrusted to Indian hands, and hence no real National Government was possible during war-time. The answer of the Working Committee was to scrap its old draft resolution, which was neither clear nor consistent, and replace it by a new resolution which was patently Nehru's draft and a vast improvement on the original.

BETWEEN WARDHA AND BOMBAY

Wherein lay the difference between the Wardha and Bombay drafts: (1) A categorical mention was made of organising armed resistance to the Fascist aggressors. Thus the imperialist critics who argue that Gandhian pacifism stood in the way of trusting the Congress were sought to be silenced. (2) The line that no unity is possible till freedom is achieved was modified by stating that the Constitution of a free India would be Federal and residuary powers would rest with the provinces. True this was not a call for communal unity but a shift towards creating a basis for negotiations. (3) A full-throated declaration that Indian freedom had to be won by participating in and winning this war. “The Congress would change the present ill-will against Britain into goodwill and make India a willing partner in a joint enterprise of securing freedom for the nations and peoples of the world and in the trials and tribulations which accompany it. This is only possible if India feels the glow of freedom.”

PRESIDENT'S ROUSING SPEECH

MAULANA AZAD'S opening speech was a report on the resolution, in colourful words, clothed with the warmth of patriotism. Describing the Indian political spectacle he said, “Instead of our hearts being filled with a burning flame, our morale was sinking. Our youth, instead of going out to war to stop the aggressor with their valour, were looking on as helpless spectators. Instead of rising in revolt in one unconquerable wave they were becoming indifferent, cold and lethargic. The

entire responsibility for this position rested on the shoulders of the British administration. That was because human nature would not respond to mere words—only action could call forth action.

“ The condition of India and of the world has reached a stage when it was absolutely necessary that everything should be done at once. Let us come together to-day and simultaneously decide both the issues—the freedom of India and India’s complete participation in the war-efforts. Let there be simultaneous declaration of India’s Independence and the signing of a treaty between India and the United Nations.

“ The national demand was twice-tested gold. . . . The demand they were putting forward before Britain and the United Nations was to be judged by the one and only one test: whether for the sake of the defence of India, for very survival, freedom was necessary.

The Fascist flood-tide was coming on and the Congress could not stand still on the shore and look on. They had to take the plunge and battle with the waves.” He admitted that civil disobedience involved “ perils and risks.” **Five times during his speech the Maulana said the Congress was eager for settlement and did not want a struggle.**

GANDHIJI SPEAKS

After the Maulana Gandhiji spoke in the language of an anointed Messiah. “ I must bring out the jewel (non-violence) given to me by God or I fail in my duty. The path is fraught with danger. . . . Decide for yourself—will it benefit India or injure her interests. . . . Once you pass the resolution, all the orders I give, you will have to carry out. . . . Will you be able to digest the independence to which I will lead you? ” He propounded the anarchist conception of the State, “ there is no democracy in Russia.” He had learnt this from the books supplied to him by Masani, he naively announced.

“ The movement will be without restrictions except one—ahimsa. . . . Make India independent or we will fight for it.” He wouldn’t stand in the way of armed resistance and the operation of the armies of the United Nations, but he could not kill his conscience, he would advise Free India to try non-violence. If the British yield his would be a lone voice after the settlement, he was frank enough to declare openly.

He had been rattled a lot by the hostile comments of the foreign press and muttered his usual mantrams, which I doubt if a single foreign correspondent understood at all.

His speech fell flat.

NEHRU proposed the resolution. He stated that his head was with the United Nations, his heart bled for enslaved India. He had been torn with conflict. . . .

“ The foreigners do not understand us, our people, our movement. . . . They are insulting or patronising towards our ancient nation which is the mother nation of the world. Their statesmen only annoy us.

“ I can’t go with the British Government; they are incompetent, stupid, brainless,” and he described what they had done in Malaya and Burma.

“ How can I go with them? They have treated the National Congress as their enemy No. 1. They retreat before the Japanese and resist India’s national demand.

“ I cannot tap their door nor remain helpless. Let us take the dip; we will either emerge free or die buried in the bottomless sea. There is no turning back. We burn our boats.”

It was an angry man speaking, worried beyond words over the fate of his beloved country, wanting to fight the fascist aggressors to death but finding himself at bay before the British Government. “ Hairan hun ” (I am at sea) was the keynote of his Hindusthani speech. As he spoke he drifted this way and that, clearly disclosing that his groping for a way out had ended in nothing and he had decided to take the blind plunge. In his English speech, however, a torrent of angry words carried him along—frustrated under the British imperialist rulers he was fretting and fuming over the fate that will be India’s lot under Fascist invasion. Burma was on his brain. He had thought the British Government would see sense and found it was incorrigible. A sensitive soul was in torment, holding himself together by loud words. He would fight the British, regretfully it was apparent, to be able to face the Japs manfully? Such a struggle would help the Japs? He knew the risk and conceded—it may! But he would be back at the British—they had left no other way. He would, therefore, blindfold the nation and himself lead the plunge. He had worked himself up to believe that this was leading the nation. Thunderous cheers from the crowd helped him to waive aside the doubts his civilised intelligence raised: **how is it fighting Imperialism when the “ struggle ” involves the risk of aiding Fascism?**

SARDAR’S OVER-SIMPLIFICATION

SARDAR PATEL rose to second the resolution; he was cheered every two minutes. “ Our country is in danger. Will the British

defend us? They don't trust themselves; how can we trust them. Even the National War Front-ers; their own men, are defeatists. We want to fight. We say release us; we will fight. They say, we will release you after the war! After the war will we be in your hands or those of Japs? You can't defend us; we do not wait to go the Burma way; we say get out, but they don't.

" We agree to bring the armies of the United Nations to defend India but first make it possible for us to co-operate. They say no."

He referred to the hostile comments in the world press to the Working Committee lead. " Even to keep unarmed India, suppressed, you need American aid; then how will you fight the Japs? I do not care for the world. I want India's answer for our freedom."

" In the coming struggle family, career, property, all will go. Others are dying to defend their freedom; we have to fight for our freedom.

Sardarji's speech was one of sustained sarcasm. The iron had gone deep down his soul. He had loyally observed non-embarrassment; the British did not melt; he had been cheated into making the Poona offer and got Amery's August offer in return. From inside prison-walls he had seen the British being beaten up in country after country and yet they were adamant before India. He knows the Japs were coming and the British were not going; he would make them quit and save his country. He had reduced reality to such ridiculous over-simplification.

DESPERATE DILEMMA

The desperate nature of the present situation oozed out from every speech of the national leaders. Azad pleaded, Nehru spat fire, Sardar poured out his bile. THE DAMNED BRITISH DON'T YIELD AND THE BLOODY JAPS ARE COMING, WHAT TO DO? STRUGGLE AS THEY HAD DONE BEFORE, TO FORCE THE BRITISH NOW AND FIGHT THE JAPS LATER. SUCH WAS THE CONCLUSION THEY HAD COME TO. It was apparent to anyone who had known and heard them before that they spoke with a diffident voice this time, they were not quite confident of themselves, they were hesitant and were getting round all tight corners by one argument, the British Government is forcing us to fight. IT WAS ALSO APPARENT THAT THEY WILL ACCEPT A SETTLEMENT IF IT COULD BE HAD WITH HONOUR. It is significant that not one national leader referred to the issue of COMMUNAL UNITY, THE FREEDOM OF FORMING NATIONAL UNITY FOR WINNING THE NATIONAL DEMAND. The Communists dragged out

the carcass of national disunity and in ringing tones gave the obvious solution: BURY DISUNITY, FORGE UNITY AND IN THIS LIES THE SOLUTION OF YOUR DILEMMA OF HOW TO MEET THE JAPS WHEN THE BRITISH SIT ON TOP OF US. The day you build Congress-League unity the British domination will end and National Government come and we can self-confidently face the Fascist invaders.

THE COMMUNISTS

The only serious criticism of the Working Committee lead, the only alternative policy was put forward by the Communists. The whole pandal was eager to listen to them. They had suffered the worst repression. They were known as the foremost of freedom's fighters. It was being whispered now that they had gone over to the British Government. Could it be ever true at all? What had they to say?

ASHRAF moved the deletion of the Working Committee's plan of action and proposed instead Congress-League agreement and a joint front. These having united to bring all parties together behind the national demand and to launch a country-wide campaign of people's mass mobilisation demanding immediate transfer of power and the installation of provisional national Government, to inspire and instruct the masses in the spirit of national resistance, to organise people's defence, co-ordinating it where possible with similar efforts of the Government wherever they serve the interests of the people and resisting them where they are coercive.

" The whole issue before the All-India Congress Committee was one of national defence against the Fascist aggressors. It was common ground between the Congress leadership and the Communist Party that the British Imperialist bureaucrats were incompetent and utterly incapable of defending our motherland. A National Government was the *sine qua non* of patriotic defence. The question is how to achieve National Government. We say: **unite!** Unity is the weapon which will at once enable us to defend the motherland and win National Government."

He went straight at the Working Committee. **You have reduced the nation to utter helplessness. You hitherto relied upon the British Government and even now you appeal to the Government of the United Nations. Why not look to your own people and forge their unity? Go to your own people, make the national demand unanimous, that will wake up the peoples of the United Nations. They will make their own Governments do their duty by India.**

You talk of national defence as if it was a defence of imperial interests and not of our own land. You refuse to see how successful defence is itself the path to freedom.

“ You are in the grip of panic. THE LEAD YOU HAVE GIVEN IS NOT NATIONAL STRUGGLE BUT NATIONAL SUICIDE. It takes you to jails and leaves the people under the imperial bureaucrats and will end with the Jap invaders walking in. Unite now, our country is in danger. Don't play with revolution. If we unite, successfully organise national resistance, we shall be free. Such is the course of the Indian revolution ; there is no real national struggle for freedom outside this.”

FREEDOM'S WAR

COM. ZAHEER moved another amendment. He emphasised that **IN THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THIS WAR AND ITS RELATION TO INDIAN FREEDOM THE CONGRESS AND THE COMMUNISTS STOOD CLOSER TOGETHER THAN EVER BEFORE. THE CONGRESS PRESIDENT HIMSELF HAD STATED THAT THIS WAR MUST BE WAR FOR THE FREEDOM OF EVERY NATION. IT COULD ONLY BE WON AS A PEOPLE'S WAR, I.E., AS A WAR AFTER THE MODEL OF RUSSIA AND CHINA.** The great lesson which we could draw from these countries was one of unity against the aggressors, or relentless struggle against the Fascist invaders.

“ The operative part of the resolution however contradicted this position. Instead of uniting the nation to wrest National Government from the Imperialist rulers the proposed “ struggle ” would disrupt and weaken the nation and strengthen the imperialist bureaucrats, on the one hand, and, on the other, pave the way for the Japanese invasion. The only real struggle to-day was the struggle for the unity of the country to meet the Fascist danger. **The imperialists made Burma and Malaya possible by their wooden-headed arrogant policy. This has been well stressed by the leaders. But the other lesson—that of China and Russia, that of national unity which made the latter's successful resistance possible, had not been learnt.** We Communists say, unite the people, achieve Congress-League unity and force the imperialists to capitulate. The path suggested by the Working Committee is suicidal. It leaves us now helpless in the hands of the bureaucrats and at the same time opens the way to the Fascists to enslave us.”

SELF-DETERMINATION

COM. SARDESAI proposed that self-determination be declared as the basis of national unity. In the Free India of the future “ every federating unit, comprising more or less homogeneous sections of the Indian people having a contiguous territory as their homeland, to which it is attached by historical tradition, having common language, culture and psychological make-up and common economic life, would have the right as an equal and free member, to an autonomous statehood, accompanied by the right of secession from the Federation.”

He pointed out that in the course of our national struggle vast masses of people had awakened to distinctive national consciousness and the full recognition of their right of separation alone could bring about genuine national unity. Without such an approach Hindu-Muslim unity was impossible. Here was the remedy that killed suspicion at one stroke and united the nation. In answer to those who feared that conceding the right to secession would disrupt India he answered, “ on the contrary it will permanently unite the Hindus and Muslims. To suggest that a United struggle for the defence of the country and its freedom could end in the division and disruption of the country was ridiculous. **The country itself was in peril, all, without exception, were in danger. Here was a new basis for unity ; it was an issue of life and death. Unity will save us all, disunity means death for all. “ Don't slur over the issue, courageously face it,”** he said.

WITHOUT NATIONAL UNITY NO NATIONAL GOVERNMENT; WITHOUT NATIONAL GOVERNMENT NO SUCCESSFUL NATIONAL DEFENCE; WITHOUT NATIONAL DEFENCE NO NATIONAL FREEDOM. Such were the grave issues to-day. It was absolutely essential for every Indian to think straight and look ahead and fight for unity by conceding to all nationalities that inhabit our great land the same right of self-determination which we claim for the country as a whole from British Imperialism, and which right is the embodiment of real freedom.

“ Build the wall of unity to save the nation, unity of Hindus and Muslims, unity of every man, woman, and child : our own unity will enable us to sweep aside the British Imperialists, face the Jap Fascists and lead to a free India in a Free world.”

Communist speeches were heard with rapt attention and mildly cheered, Sardesai was cheered thrice. They made the delegates think though not change their views. **“ THERE IS A LOT IN WHAT YOU SAY ”** was the current opinion. But unity is difficult to achieve

and there is no time to wait—this would be the next sentence. They did not see that they were arguing that uniting ourselves in the common cause was more difficult than fighting alone for the cause of all, that the job of all could be done by some, that it was despair under slavery and not confidence in our own brothers that moved them.

GANDHI SOCIALISTS

THE CONGRESS SOCIALIST LEADERS tried to play to the gallery by wagging their tongues against the Communists, having already lost their Party to them. They propounded the Gandhian thesis in Socialist jargon. They paraded as “genuine” Congressmen and heroic revolutionaries. Their speeches could have been made at any session of the A.I.C.C. during the last 10 years. The war was no concern of theirs. Fascism did not exist for them, Imperialists ruled the world and the people did not come into their picture. What they mouthed against the Communists were vile slanders or white lies, such as were below the dignity of the National leaders to indulge in.

WHY STRUGGLE?

NEHRU wound up the debate. He was fanatically convinced that there was no way out except “struggle.” Unity was not possible because Jinnah was impossible. “Struggle” was necessary because the British were unbearable. He cursed all round and bucked himself up by recreating the image of the mediæval Rajput warrior going into battle from which there was no returning home. He felt sorry for the Communists that they were committing suicide. He was delightfully oblivious that it was he who was calling upon the Nation to commit harakiri because the British did not get off our backs and the Japs are coming. Cursing the bureaucrats by itself leads nowhere. A march into jails is not always struggling for freedom. **One felt sad that the leaders of the Nation felt that their being in British prisons was greater pressure to win the national demand than the unity of our people.**

VOTING

It came to voting on the amendments because the Communist members refused to withdraw them, 12 or 13 in a house of about 250 voted for them and the same number opposed the official resolution. The Congress Socialists tried to work up the cry “Shame!” but it soon subsided. There should have been 50 of us Communists in this session had not the Working Committee liquidated our Malabar and Bengal members of the A.I.C.C. when “non-embarrassment” was a virtue;

and also if the imperialist bureaucracy had not kept back our Punjab comrades as hostages in jail, and our A.I.C.C. leader R. D. Bharadwaj in the U. P. (United Provinces).

GANDHIJI AGAIN

GANDHIJI began his speech by congratulating the Communists for the courage of their convictions. They were practising what he had been preaching these 50 years—honesty. His long speech was a mixture of anecdotes and abstractions. He was a genuine friend of the British, Lord Linlithgow and his family included. Hindu-Muslim unity was in his bones; he had done the most for it; where he had failed no one else can do anything; he will always try for it.

He was willing to negotiate; in fact he would write to the Viceroy and seek settlement before launching on struggle. If settlement could not be had it was: do or die.

AZAD CONCLUDES

Nehru’s violent outbursts and the Mahatma’s long speech had created a hazy impression; and the main purpose of the session as a demonstration of “Willing to negotiate but ready to fight” was receding into the background. In his concluding speech MAULANA AZAD put the session back on to the rails by another rousing speech.

He admitted that the **war had divided the world into two camps Fascist and Free, and declared India’s place to be with freedom-loving humanity. He declared that by fighting this war we will get freedom. Up to the last minute we will negotiate with the British Government.** As for Congress-Moslem-League unity, he was willing to send Congress representatives whenever the League agreed. If the British Government agrees to the national demand, unity will come.

WHAT NEXT?

The session then dispersed, delegates and spectators walked home, none knowing what was in store next—will it be struggle or settlement? **THE CONGRESS HAD TAKEN A DECISION OF WHICH THE ANSWER LAY WITH THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT AND NOT THE INDIAN PEOPLE. A HELPLESS LEADERSHIP HAD CREATED A HOPELESS SITUATION THOUGH SUPERFICIALLY IT LOOKED AS IF A LEAD FOR ACTION BY THE PEOPLE HAD BEEN GIVEN.**

In the speeches of all responsible national leaders it was conceded that this struggle may turn out to be a gamble but they

argued there was no other alternative. Congress-League unity they thought was no immediate way out, because Jinnah would not listen. Embittered against the Imperialist bureaucrats they were prepared to gamble on the fate of the nation to pull the former down. Embittered by Jinnah's jibes they despaired of national unity. Here was a leadership that felt itself checkmated all round and was in a desperate mood; it was undeniably patriotic, but how blind. It was living misery to see their real plight, hidden under heroic words, and the fate of the nation in their keeping.

THE DANGER OF FASCIST AGGRESSION AND ITS RELATION TO OUR NATIONAL STRUGGLE WAS UNREAL TO MOST, EXCEPT TO THE MAULANA AND NEHRU. All failed to realise that Fascism was the last form of Imperialism itself. If Fascism won the world, including India, would be under Fascist-Imperialism. If the Fascists were defeated world Imperialism as we know it would disappear and world freedom, as the Indian people together with the peoples of the world would make it, would emerge. Indian patriots argued as if Imperialism and Fascism were two separate categories and thus came to the suicidal conclusion, the British Imperialists first and then the Jap-fascists. Where did this lead? They would fight the fascists if the British bureaucrats would let them fight the war as freedom's battle. What is the result? They had thus left the initiative in the hands of the hated bureaucrats themselves to do what they like with the nation's demand, our nation's defence, our people's fate.

TWO LINES

Two lines had been placed before the A.I.C.C. **BY THE WORKING COMMITTEE**—freedom from British Imperialism first, then we shall unite and fight the fascists. **BY THE COMMUNISTS**—unite for freedom, organise to fight the Fascists, we shall be free. The national leadership had asked the British to quit, entirely oblivious that it was opening the gates of India to the Fascist invaders, while we “struggled for freedom.” This is what its lead boiled down to. The Communists relied on the people's strength—their unity, and explained how national unity leads to National Government and that fighting the Fascists is fighting for freedom, our own and humanity's.

The British bureaucrats had created a desperate situation. Indian patriots were out to tread the traditional path of mass civil disobedience with which they were familiar, to be able to oust the imperialist rulers, defend the country and win its freedom. Actually such would be no national struggle but national anarchy and national disruption which

would help the Fascist aggressors and not India's defence and freedom. This they don't see; the hatred against the British had blinded them to this extent.

POSITION AFTER

The position immediately after the A.I.C.C. stood thus:—

The national leadership was eager for a settlement rather than struggle. Would the British Government respond?

The National leadership was ready for struggle if the Imperialists did not bend? Would the British Government force a struggle on the national movement and thus weaken the defence of India, break the people's morale, and fan pro-Jap sentiments.

It was a lead in which the nation had nothing to do but wait. It was left to a mad regime to **act**.

THE WORKING COMMITTEE HAD TIED THE ROPE ROUND THE NECK OF THE NATION AND HANDED OVER ITS ENDS TO THE IMPERIALIST BUREAUCRACY. THIS WAS THE LEAD THAT WAS BEING GLORIFIED AS “NATIONAL STRUGGLE.”

It was with a heavy heart we came back. Would the peoples of the United Nations intervene in time and save the Indian front before an alien regime began enacting another Burma in our land? Before there was time to gather one's thoughts the imperialist autocrats struck, the Congress was banned, leaders arrested, lathis, bullets, tear-gas against the Indian people became defending India from the Fascists! Little urchins went about smashing lamp-posts, with goondas (hooligans) capturing the scene, a house in front of our Headquarters was on fire. I remembered Ashraf's warning to the A.I.C.C., “Don't play at Revolution.” Would our nation go up in smoke? News came from Parel that workers were listening to us all right. Student comrades were doing their best to see that the enraged student community does not lose its head. **For our great nation a living hell, but who says there is no hope? The imperialist diehards are doing their damndest to send us the Burma way and provoking our patriots to go that way. But India is not Burma; we have a proud national movement which through its own experience will soon see that this anarchy is not struggle, and realise that forging national unity is the struggle for India's freedom to-day. Further, can the peoples of the United Nations afford to see the Japs occupy India? No. They will see to it that the British Imperialists retreat and the Indian people come into their own, to be able to hold the Indian front against the Fascist invaders.**