

The Meerut Case.

By M. Ali.

British imperialism is faced with an acute crisis in India. As long as the chief factor of antagonism was the Indian bourgeoisie, the usual imperialist manoeuvres could ease the situation. But the rapid revolutionisation of the working class has brought it to grips with an antagonism which is fundamental and does not permit a solution within the framework of imperialist domination in India. In the course of one year (1928—29) the working class has taken long strides on the road of its development as an independent revolutionary force. In this period there have been unparalleled numbers of strikes characterised by their long duration and fights between the strikers and government armed forces. The economic struggle of the workers is developing into a political struggle. There have been numerous political mass demonstrations of the workers in some of which they adopted the slogans of "Long live the Soviet Republics of India", "Long live the Indian revolution", "All power to the masses", etc. In addition to that the workers have gone on purely political strikes as they have done on the arrest of the leaders in the Meerut case.

British imperialism, alarmed at the growth of the labour movement, has resolved to crush it. In addition to shooting the workers during strikes, provoking armed conflicts between the strikers and the strike breakers and then converting the conflict into religious riots, it has passed public safety bills (made into law by an ordinance of the Viceroy) and Trades Disputes Bill with the object respectively of isolating the Indian workers and making general sympathetic and political strikes illegal. The last step in this direction is the arrest of all the prominent leaders of the workers who have been taken to Meerut to be tried for the offence of "waging war against the King Emperor."

Although in all capitalist countries the justice meted out to the working class is the justice of the capitalist class in India it is still worse. The trial there is only a farce and the law is so flexible as nobody can escape its clutches whom the government wants to shut up in the four walls of the frightful Indian

jails. The section 121 A of the Indian penal code under which the arrests have been made, brings under its jurisdiction not only the persons who have really "waged war against the King Emperor to deprive him of the Sovereignty of India", but any persons who can be alleged to have intentions to do that. The police is always sure of such intentions on the part of those whose liberty is thought undesirable by them and are past masters in indicating these intentions by false documents, by arresting their own agents masquerading as revolutionaries and putting forth their concessions as proofs of such intentions, by using methods of torture against the accused and by bringing in false witnesses trained for this purpose.

In 1924 some letters were produced which were alleged to have been written by Roy and some of the accused to each other. The whole case was based on these letters and some articles from the press supposed to have been written by some of the accused, including Roy. One of the chief objects in producing these letters, the majority of which were fabricated by the police was to point out that the accused were connected with the revolutionary organisations outside India and as such were working on behalf of a foreign organisation as its agents. It is with this purpose that the Communists in India and elsewhere are called by the capitalist press and the police as "Bolshevik agents". The object of giving such a name is to attract the sympathies of the bourgeois politicians and the police succeed to a great extent in this object. A prominent Swarajist politician of Madras, when told at the time of the Cawnpore arrests that the Anglo-Indian government was repressing the working class movement as was shown by the arrests of the communists, remarked: "These people are being arrested not because they are communists, but because they are Bolshevik agents." The judge at Cawnpore also stated that the accusation against the arrested people was not that they were communists, but that they were conspiring to deprive His Majesty of the sovereignty of India. Of course all this is meant to mislead the arrested persons who for the sake of defence might be obliged to say "Yes, we are communists, but as such we have not done anything and do not intend to do anything with the object of depriving the king of his sovereignty of India." The bourgeois lawyers who take up the defence of the accused, also help the government on this point. The lawyer at Cawnpore said that there was no proof that such an organisation as the Communist International existed in the world, and further that the accused did not believe in violence as a political method, etc.

The farce of trial which was prepared and played at Cawnpore is going to be rehearsed on a greater scale at Meerut. Tons of what is called by the ignorant police as "communist literature" including some books written by Miss Mayo Ghandi, MacDonald, etc., have been seized. Documents will be prepared for the occasion in addition to the already existing forged "Roy letter". The arrested persons include some who have nothing to do with communism at all. The throwing of bombs in the Legislative Assembly at such an opportune time cannot but lead one to the conclusion that some kind of provocation must have been at the back of the whole affair.

It is not a mere chance that the trial is going to synchronise with the General Election in England. The British Tories want to utilise the "conspiracy" as an item of their election campaign. They want to create an impression that in the face of great danger existing to the Empire Britain needs a strong imperialistic government.

The present conditions in India are very different from those in 1924. The majority of the persons are vitally and actively connected with the rapidly growing labour movement. The workers have taken up the challenge of the government first by striking for a few days as a protest, and now in Bombay they have gone on a general strike which by the way, may have other causes as well. It is not a few labour leaders who are on trial at Meerut, it is the whole working class movement which stands by them. The Bombay comrades, for example, have got 100,000 workers at the back of their cause. The police, judges and the bourgeois lawyers will not therefore be able to confuse the conscious comrades and isolate them from the workers' cause in their statements and defence as was partially successfully done at Cawnpore.
