Appendix: 1d

Sixth Congress: 1928: 17 July – 1 September

Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semi-Colonies

(Relevant Extracts)

Source: http://www.revolutionarydemocracy.org/archive/ColNatQ6.htm

Changes in the International Situation:

1. The Sixth Congress of the Communist International declares that the “Theses on the National and Colonial Questions” drawn up by Lenin and adopted at the Second Congress are still valid, and should serve as a guiding line for the further work of the communist parties. Since the time of the Second Congress the actual significance of the colonies and semi-colonies, as factors of crisis in the imperialist world system, has vastly increased.

On the one hand, as necessary objects of exploitation for imperialism, the colonies have become a perpetual source of conflicts and wars between the imperialists to an even higher degree than in the past. Wars, and new plans for wars, by individual imperialist states against various peoples which have remained more or less independent, as well as intensified preparations of the imperialist powers for wars against each other for a new division of the colonies, continue without ceasing.

On the other hand, the vast colonial and semi-colonial world has become an unquenchable blazing furnace of the revolutionary mass movement. The basis of this phenomenon, which is of colossal historical importance, is furnished in part by changes which have taken place, during and after the imperialist world war, in the internal situation of the most important colonies and semi-colonies – in their economic and social structure – e.g. the strengthening of the elements of capitalist and of industrial development, the intensification of the agrarian crisis, the growth of the proletariat and the beginning of its organisation, the pauperisation of the mass of the peasantry, etc. In part also the basis is to be found in changes in the international situation; on the one hand, the difficulties encountered by the leading imperialist powers during the world war and in the post-war crisis of world capitalism, and afterwards, as a result of the imperialist “peace”, the intensified rapacious aggressiveness of the colonial policy of Great Britain, Japan, the United States, France, Italy and Holland; on the other hand, the transformation of Russia from an imperialist into an anti-imperialist proletarian power, the victorious struggle of the peoples of the Soviet Union in defence of their independence, the example of the revolutionary solution of the national question in the Soviet Union and of the revolutionising influence of the work of building up socialism there, and, furthermore, the strengthening of the communist movement in the capitalist countries and the activity of this movement in the defence of the colonies.

All these circumstances immeasurably accelerated the process of the political awakening of the vast human masses in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, and led to a whole series of important revolutionary mass risings, in most cases, moreover, on the basis of a close-knit, characteristic association of the anti-imperialist emancipatory struggle with the development of the forces of internal class struggle.

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India:

34. The basic tasks of the Indian communists consist in struggle against British imperialism for the emancipation of the country, for destruction of all relics of feudalism, for the agrarian revolution and for establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasant in the form of a soviet republic. These tasks can be successfully carried out only when there will be created a powerful communist party which will be able to place itself at the head of the wide masses of the working class, peasantry and all the toilers, and to lead them in the struggle against the feudal-imperialist bloc.

The strike movement of Indian proletariat now taking place, its independence from bourgeois nationalism, the all-India character of this movement, its distribution over almost all branches of industry, the frequent and protracted strikes, the stubbornness and great resoluteness with which the workers have carried them on, the coming forward of leaders of the strikes from the midst of the workers themselves – all these things denote a turning point in the history of the struggle of the Indian proletariat, and prove that in India the preconditions have matured which are essential for the creation of a mass communist party. The union of all Communist groups and individual communists scattered throughout the country into a single, independent and centralised party represents the first task of Indian communists. While rejecting the principle of the building of the party on a two-class basis, the communists must utilise the connections of the existing workers’ and peasants’ parties with the toiling masses for strengthening their own party, bearing in mind that the hegemony of the proletariat cannot be realised without the existence of a consolidated, steadfast communist party armed with the theory of Marxism. The agitational work of the Communist Party must be bound up with the struggle for the immediate demands of the workers, at the same time explaining to them the general aims which the Communist Party sets out to achieve and the methods which it applies for their realisation. It is essential to establish nuclei in the various industrial and other enterprises, and these must take an active part in the labour movement, in the organisation and conduct of strikes and political demonstrations. The communist organisations must from the very beginning devote special attention to the training of leading party cadres from the ranks of the workers.

In the trade unions, the Indian communists must mercilessly expose the nationalist-reformist leaders and carry on a decisive struggle for the conversion of the trade unions into genuine class organisations of the proletariat and for the replacement of the present reformist leadership by consistent revolutionary representatives from the mass of the workers. It is especially necessary to expose the method so much favoured by Indian reformists of deciding conflicts by means of petition to the representatives of British imperialism, as well as to “impartial” courts for adjudication between workers and employers. In this struggle, it is necessary to push forward the demands for trade-union democracy, for putting the trade-union apparatus into the hands of the workers, etc. The levers for party work in the trade unions must be the communist fractions as well as groups founded by the communists and sympathising with them. It is necessary to utilise the present strike wave in order to organise the unorganised workers. The miners and engineering workers, the coolies working on the plantations and agricultural labourers in general represent the least organised sections of the Indian proletariat and the communists need to devote the necessary attention to them.
The communists must unmask the national reformism of the Indian National Congress and oppose all the phrases of the Swarajists, Gandhists, etc., about passive resistance, with the irreconcilable slogan of struggle for the emancipation of the country and the expulsion of the imperialists.

In relation to the peasantry and peasant organisations the Indian communists are faced above all with the task of acquainting the widest strata of the peasantry with the general demands of the party in the agrarian question, for which purpose the party must work out an agrarian programme of action. Through workers connected with the village, as well as directly, the communists must stimulate the struggle of the peasantry for partial demands, and in the process of struggle organise peasant unions. It is essential to pay particular attention to make sure that the newly-created peasant organisations do not fall under the influence of exploiting strata in the village. It is necessary to give to the existing peasant organisations a concise programme of concrete demands and to support the activities of the peasants through demonstrations of workers in the towns.

It must be remembered that under no circumstances can the communists relinquish their right to open criticism of the opportunist and reformist tactics of the leadership of those mass organisations in which they work.