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COMRADES,

Sixteen long months separate us from the last Conference of our Party at Faizpur,—long because in that period of time we have moved fast and far, both in this country and in the world at large. In India, the scene has shifted considerably as the result of the important decision of the Indian National Congress to make itself responsible, for the first time, for the administration of several provinces. Abroad, the Fascist intervention in Spain, the Japanese invasion of China and the Nazi conquest of Austria are altering the international atlas.

In those months, we were fortunate to have restored to us after a long spell of exile and imprisonment Subhas Chandra Bose, one of the bravest fighters in the cause of Indian freedom. *President Bose has in his address to the Congress Session at Haripura declared his belief in Socialism.* We are happy that a Socialist and a friend of our Party is at the helm of the country's affairs. Many brave political workers are, however, still behind bars. Indeed, we are meeting in the very citadel of repression, where comrades like Gurumukh Singh are still in prison. To them, we send greetings and we renew our determination to see them free. On the eve of this Conference, our Punjab comrades and indeed all of us have

gress of the Congress Left-wards seems to be, at least for the time, arrested.

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In this deepening gloom, the absence of the light is apt to be mistaken for its non-existence. The torch burns low. How shall we make it glow ?

### OUR FUNDAMENTALS

I think at such a juncture we cannot do better than re-examine the fundamentals of our Socialist creed, the basis of our revolutionary faith. In this address, I propose therefore to discuss the *approach* to various problems rather than their solution. The review of events in the past year and the forging of policies for that which lies before us I shall leave to our beloved General Secretary, Jayaparkash Narayan, to deal with in his Report.

Essentially, what do we Revolutionary Socialists, whether in India or abroad, stand for? From all the various policies and tenets that go under the name of Socialism, I would pick out the abolition of private property and the evolution of a classless society as of the essence of Socialism. I would say that the basic conceptions underlying our creed are those of Equality and Liberty. Nothing is Socialism that does not insist on the abolition of private ownership of the instruments of production, distribution and exchange and the building up of a classless society. Nothing can be Socialism which is a negation of equality or liberty. It is necessary to emphasise this because, in the last analysis, it is these tests which differentiate genuine Socialism from bastard Socialism of the National Socialist (Nazi) and other spurious brands.

suffered a great loss by the death in very tragic circumstances of Hansraj Agarwal, who was by all accounts one of the finest and most indefatigable workers in our Party.

It would be futile to deny that developments abroad and in our country are provoking ever greater questioning of our Socialist faith. These are dark days. We are to-day in a counter-revolutionary era and reaction sweeps greater and greater areas of the globe. In country after country even *bourgeois* "democracy" is crumbling and Fascism raises its ugly head. The armaments race grows ever more intense, wars rage in the West and the East, Spain and China fight with their backs to the wall and none can evade the grim conclusion that World War is round the corner. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the first Socialist State and the Workers' Fatherland, stands increasingly isolated in a capitalist world and is rudely shaken by internal conflicts in its Bolshevik leadership.

In India, the Congress, hitherto the permanent opposition to the British Raj, has installed in the administrative saddle in many provinces its own Ministries which, to the detached observer, seem to have settled down to giving proof of administrative capacity and to getting the best out of the Constitution which they were put there to wreck. The peoples of the Indian States,—who form a fourth of the nation,—are told to-day to fight their battles on their own and to expect no direct aid from the people of British India. 'Federation' is no doubt to be combated but increasing emphasis is being laid on the possibility of doing this successfully by constitutional means and without recourse to mass action. The pro-

Soviet Ambassador in Paris, announced proudly: "We Bolsheviks are a congregation. We obey". To my mind, the Socialist movement loses its soul, ceases to be that dynamic force which is to overthrow kingdoms and systems of society in the interest of the masses of the people on the day on which it becomes an organised religion, with its Popes, its Cardinals and its Jesuits, its Censor and its Index. Rather, we want something of the iconoclastic mentality of Pandit Motilal Nehru who,—when somebody remarked in the debates on the Sarda Bill that the *Sastras* enjoined child marriage,—declared wrathfully: "In that case, so much the worse for the *Sastras*!"

### INHERITORS OF THE FUTURE

I am aware I have painted so far a pretty black picture and I have done so quite consciously, because if we are realists, scientific Socialists, we must face the fact that the outlook to-day for Socialists, at home and abroad, is black. And yet, if we believe in the essential validity of our principles, if we believe in what may vaguely be called human progress, the strength of reaction and counter-revolution cannot daunt us. We shall remind ourselves that we are the inheritors of the future.

Karl Marx told us half a century back that this phase of Capitalism on the offensive, with all the restraints removed, was the phase through which we would have to pass before we reached the Promised Land of Socialism. The old order of Capitalism fights to-day with its back to the wall and, like every system and vested interest whose day is done and which therefore fights for its very existence, it is "naked in tooth

The Marxist classics undoubtedly furnish us with valuable training in the application of our principles. Nothing is more natural than that we should hark back to the teachings of Marx and Lenin in hammering out our policies, as Lenin called the workers back to Marx during the dark years of the last War when the Socialist leaders forgot their mission and asked the workers to fight "to make the world safe for democracy"! At the same time, nothing can be more disastrous than to decide issues not by what our reason dictates in the given circumstances but by what so-and-so said in this-or-that year.

Some of us distinguish our 'Scientific' Socialism from what we call with misplaced contempt 'Sentimental' Socialism. The real choice to-day seems to me to be between Scientific Socialism and Dogmatic or Authoritarian Socialism. To put it another way, we have to prevent Socialism from being made into a dogma, almost a religion. Lenin rightly declared that religion was the opium of the people. He was not thinking of Christianity alone. And his words would certainly apply to Socialism or Communism, if we allowed Socialism or Communism to degenerate into a religion.

There are grave dangers of this happening. Before our eyes we have seen the growth of a spirit of dogmatism and intolerance which is characteristic of adherents of organised religions. In the Marxist fold to-day, we have the orthodox and the heretics. At a certain stage in the history of the Roman Catholic church there were two rival Popes, one at Rome and the other at Avignon. We see a similar situation in the Marxist world to-day. Rakovsky, when he was

Fascism and War with the slogan of "peace and democracy". It is hoped by an emphasis on such a rallying cry to rope in classes and individuals who would be scared by the spectre of Socialism. This, to my mind, has been a mistaken approach. The middle classes have certainly got to be approached with tact and won over to our side, but I feel that they can be rallied under the slogan of the Social Revolution to much better purpose than under that of decadent *bourgeois* democracy.

We Socialists do stand for peace and for democracy, but neither peace nor democracy is, as every Marxist knows, possible so long as capitalism exists. Capitalism must inevitably be accompanied by political inequalities and the perpetuation of the Capitalist State which is in its essence undemocratic. It must also inevitably bring in its wake War. Because of its very nature, because it lives and feeds on competition, there cannot be a world capitalist order. Such a thing is a contradiction in terms. Thus, democracy and peace are only possible if, in the important countries of the world, Socialist States have first come into existence and that means that the first requisite is the Social Revolution. This has been the teaching of Marx and Lenin.

"Under capitalism, particularly in its imperialist stage, wars are inevitable," wrote Lenin. "The idea that a so-called democratic peace is possible without a series of revolutions is profoundly mistaken."

If to-day we are faced with the failure of the "Democracies" to hold their own against Fascist Powers, that is a price the Socialist movement must pay for having forgotten the elements of its

and claw." This is the phase that we know as Fascism. The present is therefore not only an era of darkness and danger; it is also a time of great opportunity. The chronic crisis of capitalism, the constant threat and reality of war, the taking up of arms by the capitalist class,—all indicate the increasing decay of the capitalist system. Capitalism has failed to survive the test of being a workable social institution. It was never before so bankrupt. If it is not yet collapsing, it is certainly cracking in places. In dying, it threatens also the death of millions. These failures, the protracted crises, afford to Socialists the supreme opportunity to overthrow it. From Karl Marx onwards, our leaders have prophesied that it is precisely in such a manner that the old order will change, yielding place to new. To-day we have reached that stage. One good push and a push all together by the workers of the world,—that is what is required to bring down the tottering edifice. The tragedy is that this challenge is not to-day forthcoming. Socialists and Communists in the West have in a state of panic refused to take the offensive and seek to defend the *status quo* of capitalist "democracy" against the Fascist menace. The situation calls for a Revolutionary Socialist movement which, instead of defending this so-called "democracy", will go forward to make that Social Revolution without which democracy is impossible. The objective conditions are ripe; what is needed is leadership. We are at the end of one era and the beginning of another, provided we have the courage, the vitality, to bring that new era to birth.

The Socialist and Communist movements of the West have sought to meet the menace of

"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,  
But to be young was very heaven."

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Now, twenty years have passed and during that period much has been achieved, wonders have been worked by the peoples of the Soviets, but with achievement there have also come mistakes and failures.

What should be the attitude of Socialists in other countries towards the Soviet Union and its problems? To say that we should look upon it as one of the important bulwarks of the Socialist forces throughout the world, to say that we follow the Soviet experiment with the utmost sympathy, to say that we should rally to the defence of the peoples of the U.S.S.R. in the event of war,—these are the merest commonplaces to which every Socialist will subscribe. Must we also consider it our duty to endorse each and every act of the Soviet Government or the Communist Party of Russia? Is it our duty to smother all criticism and give undivided support? This is a question which is exercising the best brains and giving rise to a lot of searching of heart among Socialists throughout the world to-day. My own view is that it is not only our right to study and comment on, if need be to criticise, the actions and policies of the Soviet Government, it is also our Socialist duty. We should be poor friends of the Soviet Union if we do not perform that first duty of a good friend,—to point out mistakes and to give sound and honest advice according to our lights.

There is a lot we can applaud with all our heart, yet there are happenings that cause us

own science, for ignoring the fact that "Fascism is an evil of Capitalism which can be overcome by a Social Revolution ending Capitalism itself." What is called for is a revision of our methods and the assertion of the one clear issue: Socialism versus Capitalism.

### A RAY OF HOPE

There is indeed, in a world dominated by Imperialist powers and their rivalries, one little ray of hope. That lies in the existence of the solitary Workers' State, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. It is a Socialist oasis in the capitalist desert and we, who labour under imperialist conditions, cast our eyes thither and draw inspiration from that example. When Lenin and his comrades made the October Revolution not only the workers of the West, who recognised the victory of their class, but also the subject peoples of the East looked upon it as an event which heralded their own liberation. They realised that at last a Power was coming into the world whose policies would be based not on considerations of national gain or of the balance of power, but on the right of nations to self-determination and on the solidarity of human beings, irrespective of nationality, race or colour. The very advanced and friendly policy pursued by the Soviet Government towards the subject peoples of the Czarist Empire, the abolition of the extra-territorial concessions in China and Persia, all helped to create this confidence in the minds of the peoples of the East.

I still remember the thrill the news of the Russian Revolution gave me, then a mere boy:

exploitation at the hands of the British capitalist class, but also directly ruled by the British Government. I say directly because, although attempts are made to create illusions in the minds of our people by taking into junior partnership groups of Indians and making them do the dirty work of Imperialism, the veneer is pretty thin and it is not difficult to see the reality which is so thinly veiled by provincial or fiscal 'autonomy'. The task of the Indian people is clearly the wresting of political power from foreign hands into its own. Ours is the task of achieving national independence and of setting up a democratic Indian State. It is this that makes Indian Socialists also ardent nationalists.

"I am both an anti-Imperialist and a Socialist," wrote Ram Manohar Lohia recently. "It is necessary for me to proclaim my two faiths separately for now-a-days there are Socialists who are suppressing the struggle against Imperialism".

There cannot be for the Indian people, and therefore for the Indian Socialists, any effective part to play in the international scene until first the people of India have terminated the system of foreign rule,—until India has become a subject and not an object of international relations. Nor can there be any question of building up Socialism in India until first the national revolution has been accomplished. At the same time, there is great need for a Socialist approach and for the application of Socialist technique.

"Socialism comes in here and now", said Jawaharlal Nehru at Faizpur, "to help us to understand our problems and point out the path to

pain and disappointment. There is much that happens in the Soviet Union that is not essentially Socialist,—that is accidental, that is traditional, that is Russian. We would be doing a poor service to Socialism if we were to allow Socialism to be identified with every thing that happens in the Soviet Union.

Truth is a weapon we cannot spare. Our Gandhian friends in the Congress sometimes claim to monopolise Non-Violence and Truth. We resent this. We claim that, inasmuch as a Socialist or classless society is the only form of communal existence which is not based on violence by one class over others and which ensures international peace, we too stand for the elimination of violence in human relations. We may also claim that since our ideals and our struggles are based on a set of political, social and economic truths, truth too is dear to us. We may only make that claim, however, if we do not allow ourselves the privileges of being silent or shutting our eyes. For, as Charles Peguy eloquently says: "He who does not cry out the truth when he knows the truth becomes the accomplice of the liars and the falsifiers."

### *INDIA'S PART*

While the world as a whole is in the throes of a struggle between Capitalism (increasingly taking on the shape of Fascism) and Socialism, what is the part which we Socialists in India have to play? Where do we come into the picture? India, before it can determine the social and economic system to which it shall adhere, has first to win the pre-requisite of political power. India, to-day is a country not only still subject, to economic

suffered a great reverse and appeared to be retreating in disorder under the fierce blows of intense repression by the British Government. The first task of the Party was to stem that tide. How was this to be achieved? On the one side the existing leadership of the Congress, defeated in the Civil Disobedience Movement, was thinking more and more in terms of constitutional agitation and opposition,—a tendency which was taking shape in the Swaraj Party. Most of its leaders had very little time to interest themselves in the economic struggles of the peasantry or the workers and completely failed to realise the importance of organising these classes and mobilising them for active participation in the national struggle. On the other hand the Communist leaders of the small Trade Union Movement showed an equal lack of political realism. They were so absorbed in their desire to set up Soviets in this country that they almost forgot that the British Government had still to be overthrown! So they directed the greater part of their attack on the Congress which they characterised as the Party of the *bourgeoisie*, quite failing to realise that for a subject people, nationalism is not a reactionary, but a democratic and revolutionary force.

### FIGHT ON TWO FRONTS

Our Party's fight has therefore from the start been on two fronts,—calling for a new orientation both in the national and the labour movements. It was only natural that the initiative in this task fell to those who were convinced Socialists and who at the same time had taken part in the national struggle. It is this

its solution, and to tell us the real content of the  
12 Swaraj to come."

When we look back at the course of our national development and scan its history for the past fifty years, we find that since the birth of the Indian National Congress in 1885 the struggle of the Indian people has assumed different shapes and forms. From generation to generation the movement has changed its leadership and its policy and has developed from being the expression of that 'infinitesimal minority' of educated people so contemptuously referred to by the British bureaucracy to being the organ of the toiling masses of the people which has repeatedly dared to raise its head in direct action struggles against the firmly entrenched British *raj*. We see also, alongside this development, another tendency taking shape, particularly since the last World War, in the form of a nascent working class movement which expresses itself in strikes by the workers against exploitation, whether by British or Indian capitalists; and in our own times we see the phenomenal rise of a peasant movement which has been the most striking development of the past few years.

When we formed our Party in 1934, we felt, as we feel now, that these two revolutionary forces of pure nationalism and of economic revolt against exploitation had to be brought together and harnessed in a common endeavour. Our Party, which was appropriately enough born in prison, arose out of the experiences of the Civil Disobedience Movements of 1930 and 1932 and it is important to remember the background against which it came into existence in October 1934. It emerged at a time when the national forces htd

alism as its creed. The Congress is and must remain predominantly nationalist in sentiment and character so long as we are under the foreign yoke and have to fight for our freedom. The Congress is the weapon which the Indian people have forged through fifty years of struggle. It is the *People's Front in India* and we have all to play our part in sharpening that weapon and using it so that it achieves its historic purpose.

Naturally, we Socialists cannot feel quite satisfied with the present policies or mentality of the Congress leadership. Though we have Subhas Chandra Bose, a Socialist, as President of the Congress, the leadership of the Congress is predominantly of a different complexion. We have, whenever we felt the necessity, given stern opposition to the Right Wing leadership of the Congress on such important issues as the wrecking of the new Constitution, refusal to accept Ministerial Offices, the resistance to war, support to the States' Peoples, the organisation of peasants and workers and on the methods of preventing the Federation from coming into existence. It may be that we have been defeated on many of these issues, but who can deny that the policies of the Congress have for the past two or three years shown the impress of Socialist hands? For in spite of strong opposition from the present leadership we have been able to rally round us larger and larger numbers of Congressmen. This is largely due to the correctness of our policies as also to the fact that we are looked upon as Congress workers with a record of service and sacrifice in the national struggle.

Since we met last at Faizpur an important

close relationship with the national movement that is represented by the name which our Party bears. Contrary to the cavilling criticism of certain people who felt that there was something strange in this juxtaposition of "Congress" and "Socialist", that combination has been, in fact, a real source of the success of the Party and of its strength.

A Socialist Party in India to-day has two fundamental tasks,—first, to help in the building up of a powerful national front against British Imperialism; and secondly, to spread the ideas of Socialism in India and prepare the ground for its introduction once political power has been secured. To what extent has the Congress Socialist Party been able to perform those tasks?

It has been said, not without good cause, that it was the formation of our Party that put Socialism, till then a subject for academic discussion, on the political map of India. When we look back and review the background of defeat and demoralization against which the Party took shape in 1934, we are able to realise how much has been achieved in the direction of radicalising the Congress and evolving a newer nationalism. Within a year of its birth, the Party was able to turn the tide and to take the offensive in bringing about greater militancy in the Congress and in turning its thoughts in the direction of mass organisation and mass action. The return of Jawaharlal Nehru to the field and his election as Congress President for two successive terms was, of course, a factor whose importance cannot be over-estimated. Neither Jawaharlal nor the Congress Socialists have, however, attempted to persuade the Congress to adopt Soci-

monstrated our instinctive loyalty to the Congress and our keenness on the nation speaking with one voice in a time of crisis. 17

Within the Congress, our Party has functioned as a rallying point for all radical elements. We have been the champions of the peasants' and the workers' organisations and of the peoples of the Indian States. If to-day the latter feel that the Congress at Haripura has sent them into the wilderness and has left them to fight their battles alone, we hold out our hands to them to renew that solidarity which binds the people of India, whether in so-called British India or Indian India.

We shall labour for the rights and demands of our peasantry and working-class. As a Socialist Party we are a Party of the working-class and it is but natural that we should wield influence in the Trade Union Congress which has been the central organisation of the more militant section of the Indian working-class. In that sphere our influence has always been exercised in the direction of unity. We contributed to the dissolution of the Red T.U.C. and its merger in the All India Trade Union Congress and from here we shall repair to Nagpur to see the final union between the Trade Union Congress and the Trade Union Federation and the building up of a single Trade Union centre in India. It is a matter of pride for us to recall that it was at a previous Conference of our Party in Meerut that the Peasant Movement in India took organised shape and if to-day the All-India Kisan Sabha raises its head among the mass organisations in this country, we may take legitimate pride and joy in seeing one of our dreams come true.

The Congress Socialist Party has ever exer-

change has come over the political scene with the formation of Congress Cabinets in seven out of the eleven Indian Provinces. This was a development which the Congress resolved upon in spite of our efforts. It has created for Congress Socialists a most difficult position. On the one hand there has been the strongest desire on our part to make this experiment, now that it has been launched upon, a success. On the other hand there has been an equally strong urge to criticise acts and utterances at variance with Congress policy. This is a situation which calls for the greatest discipline and control on our side. Some of our Congress Ministers and leaders have felt that we have not always been as restrained as we should have been in our comments on the work of the Congress Ministries. I do not know how far this feeling is justified. But I think I can say on behalf of all members of the Party that, if they have said things which have been found unpalatable by the ministerial wing of the Congress, they have said them out of a sense of duty to the organisation and to the movement as a whole.

Some recent self-criticism on our part in this connection has been misunderstood and misconstrued in certain sections of the Press as repentance and recantation! Let me make it clear that I for one feel our policy in this and other respects has been a sound one and that there is nothing for us to repent for or to recant.

We have acted always in the best interests of the Congress as we have seen it. We Congress Socialists had our birth in the Congress and were baptised in its struggles. At Haripura, we de-

also to act as their vehicles. So long as this is so, our primary duty is to increase the strength of our own organisation because it is in its programme and policies that we believe.

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The Congress Socialist Party is a Revolutionary Socialist Party. As such, it is a Party which must act as a homogeneous team, its members thinking the same way, speaking with one voice. Such a Party must develop its discipline to the highest levels. In a revolutionary Party there is no room for internal conflicts that inevitably lead to paralysis and stagnation. The Congress Socialist Party is not a platform for united front. The anti-imperialist united front is in the Congress. The Congress Socialist Party is not a mass Party. The mass organization is the Indian National Congress. The Congress Socialist Party is and must be a determined group of conscious Socialists who will act as a compact Party and guide the bigger movement and the mass organisations. It must have its face turned to the masses in the Congress, to the Kisan Sabhas, to the Trade Unions. It cannot do so if it spends most of its time looking within, trying to resolve its internal conflicts and contradictions. That way lies the dismemberment and disruption of the Party. Our Party has supplied an independent initiative in Indian politics. Among other things, it has acted as a corrective to mistaken policies and tendencies. If unfortunately that initiative were to disappear, the old disastrous drifts and sectarianism would again become manifest.

### **'LIFE IS MARCHING'**

In the year that lies before us we shall pro-

cised a unifying influence. Our Party not only contributed to bringing about unity in the Trade Union Movement, but it has also in a bigger way brought about greater harmony between that movement and the bigger national movement. Our weight in the peasant unions has always been cast in the direction of maintaining harmonious working between them and the Indian National Congress. Even in the direction of Socialist unity we have been pioneers.

### **SOCIALIST UNITY.**

When our Party was formed, there were one or two other groups of Socialists or Communists in the country which had been in the field for some years already. One would have thought that the rapid success which met the policies and efforts of the Congress Socialist Party would have led to the dissolution of these groups and their fusion in our Party. Unfortunately, this has not been the case. From these groups we have had to face much suspicion, opposition and calumny, but we have refused to respond in like manner. We have held out our hands out of a desire for solidarity and for joint work wherever possible and we have met with partial success. Complete Socialist unity is a dream which many of us share. Many things, however, have to happen before it can come true. Meanwhile, what is of vital importance is that the influence of our Party must be brought constantly to bear on the situation and must act as a potent instrument to bring together in action Socialists of different groups and shades of opinion. So long as different tendencies remain, it is inevitable and proper that different organisations should remain

bably have to face one or other of the two major perils of War and Federation. The Indian National Congress has taken a militant stand against both. There can be no question but that they must be met with nation-wide mass action. They are a menace to our entire people, and those who suffer in common will fight in common.

The desire to put an end to this insane social system that breeds poverty and unemployment; to abolish a world order that leads inevitably to war and the destruction of millions; to usher in the to-morrow when we can create where to-day we must destroy,—these are the latent desires of the toilers in our country and throughout the world. We have to make our people fully conscious of these desires and build on them a mighty mass movement.

Years ago, Edward Carpenter, the Socialist poet, sang :

“England, arise! The long, long night is o’er,  
Faint in the East behold the dawn appear.”

That dawn has still not burst. “History has plenty of time.” But if we do our duty we may yet help India to destroy the biggest single obstacle to the dawn of a new era,—the British Empire. That is the proud privilege reserved for us.

“Life teaches. Life is marching”, declared Lenin. Let us learn the lessons it has taught us. Let us quicken its march and usher in To-morrow.

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