

**Indian Feudal States
and
National Liberation
Struggle**

by

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To

The brave men and women fighters of Mansa, Mysore, Travancore, Dhenkanel and other States, these countless sons and daughters of the people, who, aflame with will to liberty, are swiftly marching to storm the strongholds of the Feudal Lords,

To

Those millions of toilers, farmers, serfs, artisans, workers, from whose squeezed flesh and crushed bones the blood-stained palaces of the Feudal Rich arise, who are astir to-day and struggling to smash their chains of agelong slavery,

To

This sea of crushed humanity who no longer consent to remain slaves but, as slaves in revolt, hurl defiance at their masters and proclaim in chorus, "We Shall No Longer Be Slaves",

These words are dedicated.

INDEX

- 1 The In n States As Perpetuated Feudal Remnants.
 - 2 The States As Strongholds Of Black Reaction. ... 10
 - 3 The New Constitution And The States 35
 - 4 The States As War Reserves Of Britain 41
 - 5 The Rising Tide Of The States' People's Struggle
Against The Feudal Regime 46
 - 6 The States And The National Liberation Struggle ... 58
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FOREWORD

The Indian States are a *peculiar* feature of the present day Indian Society and form a *peculiar* problem of our National Independence Struggle. No other people ruled by Imperialism and struggling for national freedom and unification (the Egyptians, the Negroes, the Irish, the Indo-Chinese, the Chinese etc.) have to face such a problem.

For the victory of our National Struggle, it is essential to understand the role of the States in the political scheme of British Imperialism in India. It is also necessary to grasp *the basic Anti-Imperialist character* of the growing States' People's struggle against the autocratic States which are the main social support of the British Rule in India.

The pamphlet is an attempt to help this understanding, It is also a plea for the unification of the two wings of our National Struggle (viz. the struggle of the States' People against State Autocracy and the struggle of the people of British India against the foreign yoke) under a single political and organizational leadership. *As such*, the pamphlet includes a refutation of Gandhi and other Right Wing Leaders of the Indian National Congress who preach the policy of " non-interference " in the States, thus isolating and making ineffective each of these Struggles.

Only the union of the two struggles under a common direction can guarantee victory over the Feudal-Imperialist bloc.

THE INDIAN STATES AS PERPETUATED FEUDAL REMNANTS

The Native States of India are the feeble remnants of the pre-British Feudal States perpetuated by the British Government with a view to create out of them its political allies and reliable social support to its domination of India.

These States are deliberately maintained by the British Government, which, with its colossal might, could have destroyed them at one stroke, but which kept them alive to serve its basic political ends.

Glancing back at those periods of the Indian History when the Britishers entered India and slowly started extending the orbit of their economic interests (commercial exploitation) and subsequent political conquest of the Indian territory, we find how they utilized the Feudal States as useful levers for their commercial and territorial expansion.

By annexing some of the numerous feudal states into which India, from the moment of the dissolution of the Moghul Empire, had disintegrated, by making treaties with some, thereby securing their support against the others, by frequently adopting the policy of fomenting internecine conflict amongst a number of them, in short by taking full advantage of the chaos that

prevailed all over India, due to the lack of any effective central authority, Britain was able to successfully seize province after province till it became the political master of the whole of India.

So, British Capitalism did not achieve this mastery single-handed, exclusively by its own economic and armed strength, nor did it feel confident of retaining it without the aid of some allies. With a view to defend, stabilize and perpetuate its conquest of India, it preserved a number of Feudal States. In addition, British Capitalism even thought it politically necessary to create an absolutely new class, that of Zemindars as a further support to its domination (Bengal etc.).

The political importance of the Princes was most vividly and clearly seen when due to the stern annexation policy of Lord Dalhousie, the deposed Princes utilising the general discontent rampant among the Indian masses against the foreign conqueror, revolted against the British Authority to regain their lost kingdoms, but whose revolt (1857) could be easily suppressed by the British Government with the help of those Princes whom it had perpetuated on their thrones.

The Declaration of Queen Victoria is very significant for understanding the attitude of the British Government towards these Feudal States. The British Government dropped the annexation policy, recognized the sovereignty of the Princes in the internal affairs of the states, guaranteed their existence and promised them safety against any menace, the former undertaking the responsibility of defending the States against external attack and internal rebellion. The British Government thus gave

an eternal lease of life to these States, which, if political expediency would not have compelled it, could have, as some British Statesmen themselves admitted, wiped out. In return for this, the British Government secured the strongest support to its political domination of India. British Capitalism found its most faithful ally in the Princes.

The British Government is the secure foundation for these barbaric States which are scattered over two-fifths of the Indian Continent and inhabited by a population of eightyone millions.

The British Government is the arch-defender of these hundreds of feudal states inhabited by one-fifth of the Indian people, ruled by despots who, though they oppress their subjects, are mere pawns of Britain to maintain its rule in India.

British Capitalism perpetuates and stabilizes these feeble, parasitic, exploiting Princes who are the most faithful defenders of British Domination of India.

The truth is admitted by the Britishers themselves.

To quote:—

“ We have emancipated these pale and ineffectual pageants of royalty from the ordinary fate that waits on an oriental despotism.....This advantage (securing able and vigorous Princes through rebellion) we have taken away from the inhabitants of the States of India. Our hand of iron maintains them on the throne, despite their imbecility, their vice and their crimes. The result is, in most of the States, there is chronic anarchy under which the revenues of the States are dissipated between the mercenaries of the camp and the minions of the Court.”

THE STATES AS STRONGHOLDS OF BLACK REACTION

General

The Indian States, these survivals of Indian Feudalism perpetuated (as we saw) by British Imperialism for political strategic reasons, as a prime social support to its continued domination of India, are the strongholds of social, economic, political, and cultural backwardness and reaction.

We shall see how.

There are about 563 States in India under the hereditary rule of the Princes. These States extend over an area of 712,508 square miles, thereby comprising one-third of the total Indian territory. The total population inhabiting these states amount to 81,310,845 *souls*.*

Out of these 563 States, there are about 119 Major States, while the remaining 444 are Minor States. The total revenues of the States amount to 4748 crores of rupees. While the income of the Major States is about

* The combined feudal, capitalist and imperialist exploitation has ruined the population of the States physically so much that we can, with justification, say that these eighty-one millions of humans who form the population of the States, have more soul than body.

Rs. 45.45 crores, that of the Minor States is only Rs. 2.02 crores.

All ruling Princes do not enjoy uniform powers, Some of them (Nizam, Mysore, Baroda, Travancore and some more) possess almost absolute internal sovereignty, having full rights to make their own laws and complete power of life and death over their subjects. Thus practically free from any interference or restrictions from the paramount British Government in matters of internal administration of their States, these Princes are so many despots. Only when the maladministration of a State and the oppression of its subjects, reach a dangerous limit threatening the collapse of the State machinery or a rebellion on the part of the oppressed people, does the paramount British Government intervene in the internal affairs of these sovereign States (e.g., prompt British intervention in the affairs of the Kashmir and Alwar States in recent years when serious peasant revolts broke out such as the rebellion of the Meus in the latter's territory).

Such is the position and status of the sovereign Princes.

Next, there is a group of Princes who, while subjected to a few formal restrictions from the British Government, otherwise enjoy the same unlimited authority over their subjects. They are practically as independent in the internal affairs of their States as the first group.

Then there follow other groups of Princes whose powers over their States and subjects are restricted in varying degrees. These groups are far too numerous, to discuss severally.

Finally, there is a horde of petty Princes, "rulers" of the tiny States, who practically possess no political power and the administration of whose States is carried on by the Political Agents appointed by the British Government.

The Ruling Princes.

The following searching analysis of the life of the rulers of the States given by Kanaiyalal Gauba in his valuable work "H. H. Or The Pathology of Princes," vividly shows what type of Princes are administering the Indian States inhabited by an enormous human population of eightyone millions :—

"There is the ruler of Mysore, who has never been outside India and yet maintains an efficient and progressive administration,* there is a Maharaja who spends four months in the year in India out of which a month consists of Christmas at Calcutta and maintains a medieval administration; there is the Maharaja who spends four times as much annually on new cars as on the education of his people; there is a prince who will not consider an application without a photograph; there are princes who penalise child marriages, there are some who force their daughters of seven; there is a prince who killed his wife

* The Mysore State has already started to move in a retrograde direction. It has been brutally attacking the movement of its people for representative institutions and fundamental democratic rights of speech, assembly and organization. Recently it even went to the extent of firing on an unarmed and peaceful crowd involving a heavy toll of lives. Its ban on progressive political propaganda is becoming notorious and chronic. But more about this in a subsequent section.

because she refused to yield herself to her brother in his presence; there are a few princes who are monogamous, there are scores who are polygamous; one prince maintains his father's wives in comfort, there is another who sold his three hundred step-mothers at thirty rupees a piece; one prince's pleasures have resulted in two pretty film stars; several princes' pleasures result in nothing better than a miscarriage; some tax marriages and deaths, there are others who enforce *jus primi nocti*."

This description is a graphical portrayal of the Princes, their character, psychology and practices. Most of these Princes are in advanced stages of psychological decadence and suffer from all sorts of neurosis. Their sadistic and other cruel practices are unlimited and usually unchecked. Imagine the conditions of life of eightyone millions who are governed by these Princes, some of whom have even lost all humane feelings, even the last fragment of any human quality. Imagine also the nature of the laws emanating from these Princes for the welfare of their people!

No social, cultural or economic progress, is possible in these States. No democratic and general human liberties can exist there.

The British Government has established some colleges in India where the Princes are trained and educated. What type of education do they imbibe there? What training do they get to equip themselves for becoming sound statesmen and efficient administrators of their States?

This is how K. Gauba, a keen and thorough student of these Royal Highnesses, describes their education in those centres.

"These tutors (appointed by the Political Department) see that the young Prince is taught that the British Empire is the greatest and the most wonderful that the world has ever seen, that the sun never sets on the King Emperor's dominions, that Cricket is the King of Games, that Waterloo was won on the playfields of Eton, that Russia and Japan would divide India between themselves if the British Army was removed, that India had become prosperous under a wise economic policy, that the Allies waged a righteous war, that India for a hundred years will not be fit for Dominion Status and other equally intelligent propositions. It is absolutely essential that the Prince does not come into contact with any doctrine of a different nature. He must not, for instance, know that his pedigree from the Sun or the Moon is myth, nor need he know that many parts of the world are homes of stark want. It is equally undesirable to teach him that the best people do not waste their time at Cowes or at Ascot."

What is the social environs in which these Princes move and the home training they receive?

"And yet the first dawn of youth finds a Prince smothered by beautiful girls very considerably thrown on his path by people who desire to advance themselves in his estimation." (Princely India 1st April 1927).

"In addition to these lawfully married and much wronged wives, many Princes have mistresses and concubines, chosen from the ranks of low-class dancing and singing-girls. Often, indeed, European travels result in further additions to the nuptial board. Reference has already been made to the Maharajah of Indore

and Nancy Miller. The Maharajah of Kapurthala found a spouse in Spain, while the Maharajah of Pudukotta married an Australian. Also there is Mr. "A", who earned an unenviable notoriety in England". (P. L. Chudgar.)

And what is the effect of this "specially" provided education and such social and court environments on the Princes? It is reflected in their subsequent life. To get an objectively true and vivid picture of the life led by the Princes, to get a full measure of the predatory and degrading activities which comprise their subsequent life, it is necessary to mobilize reliable and indisputable evidence from proper sources. For that purpose we shall quote extracts from the statements of responsible persons and authoritative books.

We shall first quote no less an authority than the Rt. Hon. S. Sastri. He remarks, "They are to be seen anywhere where enjoyment can be bought with their people's money. You go to all the fashionable cities, and you meet some Indian Rajah or other dazzling the people of Europe and corrupting those who go near him."

This is what Mr. Gauba remarks.

"We have all different ways of beginning the day. The English man begins on bacon and egg, the German on sausages, the American on grape nuts. His Highness prefers a virgin". (The Pathology of Princes).

These are the individuals who are the supreme masters of the fate of one-fifth of India's vast population: the feudal heads of States who daily mould the destinies of millions. These are the very Princes whom M Gandhi described as "our own kith and kin", who, by Gods

grace, are born kings and who are permeated with a deep desire to serve their subjects. This is what he said about the Princes at the Second Round Table Conference.

"I feel, and I know, that they have the interests of their subjects at heart.....There is no difference between them and us, except that we are common people and they are, God has made them, noblemen, princes. I wish them well; I wish them all prosperity".

Let us see how these Princes, "our own kith and kin", administer their States, given to them as divine gifts by God and defended, from external invasion or internal revolt, by formidable British Imperialism.

The State Regime

First, we shall inquire as to how these Princes, with unlimited power over the use of state revenues, dispose of these revenues, the heavy burden of which explains the intolerable poverty of the population of these States.

What proportion of the state-revenues do these Princes spend on themselves to meet the extravagant demands of their parasitic existence and what proportion for the economic and cultural advance of their people (on items such as education, sanitation, productive aid to farmers, etc.)?

Here is a comparative study of the proportions which the amounts used for their own persons by the heads of different states in the world, bear to the respective revenues of these states :—

"The King of England receives roughly one in 1600 of the national revenue, the King of Belgium one in 1000, the King of Italy one in 500, the King of Denmark one

in 300; the Emperor of Japan one in 400, the Queen of Netherlands one in 600, the King of Norway one in 700 and the King of Spain one in 500. No king receives one in 17 like the Maharani of Travancore (which is the most progressive state in India), one in 13 as the Nizam of Hyderabad or the Maharaja of Baroda, not one in 5 as the Maharajas of Kashmir and Bikaner. The world would be scandalized to know that not a few princes appropriate one in 3 and one in 2 of the revenues of States."

"One in 2 of the revenues" is spent on the personal needs of the Princes! Half the revenue of the State mainly wrung out from the peasant masses, who toil like beasts of burden, day and night, on a wretched piece of land with poor technical equipment and who normally live on the verge of starvation, is spent by the feudal king for feeding his parasitic existence. Millions must toil so that a feudal parasite may be helped to maintain his existence!

To get a clear idea of the expenditure of state revenues, we give below the budget for 1929-30 of the Bikaner State which is paraded as having a progressive administration:—

		Ra.
Civil List	1,255,000
Wedding of the Prince	82,500
Building and Roads	618,384
Extension of Royal Palaces	...	426,614
Royal Family	224,864
Education	222,979
Medical Service	188,138

			Rs.
Public Utility	30,761
Sanitation	5,729

What does this budget indicate ?

It shows that while a small fraction of the total revenue is spent on Public Utility, education and other progressive sections of State activity, a monstrous proportion of the revenue is assigned to the programme of meeting the personal whims of the Maharaja, such as the construction of an ever expanding number of royal palaces and buildings, royal wedding, etc.*

* Here is a vivid description of a typical Princely wedding by Mr. Chudgar :—

“One of the exceedingly interesting events in a State is the Prince's marriage. Nothing brings the reckless extravagance of the Princes so much to the forefront as this function. It is an illustration of the ease with which State revenues are normally diverted from their legitimate channels for the private use of the Prince. To begin with, parties of the Prince's friends and dependents go forth in all directions in search of a beautiful and suitable bride. The girl who, in addition to the possession of personal beauty, can also boast of a father with large amounts of jewellery and wherewithal to pay a handsome sum in turn for the high honour paid to his daughter, is the bride selected.

“Preparations on a huge scale are made several months in advance. Agriculturists, labourers, artisans, and tradesmen of every kind are summoned, and are employed in various ways in connection with the forthcoming ceremony. They have no alternative but to obey. It is simply forced labour—a form of conscription.

“They go about pitching tents, arranging camps, building roads, erecting arches, carrying water, preparing sweets and all the accompanying paraphernalia of a festive board. It may be needful

Surely, the Bikaner State is "a progressive" state and its Maharaja "an enlightened king"!

In 1926, the Maharaja of Jamnagar appropriated 50 per cent of the State revenue to satisfy his personal wants including his craze for palace construction.* In

to add that the wives of these men are also "conscripted." The daily avocations of the working class are thus dreadfully upset. They must get on as best they can. Their possessions likely to be useful in such a contingency, carts and bullocks, milch cows, even their tools and utensils, do not escape this "impressment," and if such goods are not produced on demand, the State sees no injustice in taking them by force.

"But the "most unkindest cut of all" is that our "forced labourers" have to work without any thought of remuneration except the food that keeps them alive while they serve their masters. Even their unpaid labour is not considered sufficient. A special marriage tax is levied on the land-holders, cultivators, and labourers, so that the marriage expenses can all be covered by the State.

"It is the responsibility of all State servants, from the Prime Minister downwards, to see that the Chief has all the money he wants. That is the important thing. When that has been accomplished, nothing else matters.

"The whole State Administration is suspended during the preparations. The heads of all departments and the members of their staff, high and low, are engaged in preparations for the wedding.

"Courts of Justice are closed and school buildings and business offices are cleared for the housing of the wedding guests. Batches of officials are sent round the States with wedding invitations for the Chiefs and prominent men. Special trains are run, and often lavish gifts of money, jewellery, and clothes accompany the invitation to the wedding ceremony. Then comes the actual event and with it the real Bacchanalia—feasts and entertainments, casks of wine by the hundreds, swarms of dancing and singing girls, and rejoicing and revelry for days and nights on end."

* "Literary Digest" December 3rd 1927.

the same year, the Maharaja of Alwar spent £ 66,000 on motor-cars and garages but only £ 7500 on the education of a population of over 700,000.*

We do not refer to the hundreds of thousands of rupees spent by the Princes—even the most “enlightened” Princes like those of Mysore, Travancore, etc.—on golden chariots, on numerous and extensive royal parks (while population suffers from utmost poverty and misery) and above all on their frequent trips to Europe where they spend people’s money with hectic and neurotic extravagance.

The statistics and other facts given above refer to some of the Major States whose rulers are considered progressive and paraded as enlightened.

Still we have not referred to those hundreds of Minor States, those innumerable feudatories. Human language cannot adequately describe the hellish life conditions of millions of human beings living in these small States.

How the States’ People Live

The most striking economic feature of these states is that they are all based on backward agrarian economy. They are primarily or exclusively agricultural. Only a few States like Baroda, Mysore, Gwalior, Travancore, Cochin and Hyderabad can claim to possess some factories and a few other industrial enterprises. Hence land labourers, peasants, landlords, moneylenders, artisans and petty-traders, form the bulk of the population of the States.

* “Indian Princes Under British Protection” by P. L. Chudgar.

A composite picture of the social and economic conditions of the various strata of the population of the States is given by Mr. Chudgar as follows:—

“As we proceed to consider the lot of the people of the States, as compared with that of their Princes, truly we find that no country in the world to-day could show a greater contrast between reckless affluence and abject poverty.

“Most of these States are inhabited by the same class of persons as is found in British India, that is to say, by agriculturists, merchants, artisans, craftsmen, and labouring classes. The guaranteed land-holders who are known by various names or titles in different States form a class whose position it is important to understand clearly. In Southern Maratha States they are known as “Jaghirdars”, in Rajputana States as “Thakurs” and in Kathiawar States as “Mulgirassias” and “Bhayats.” These are the privileged classes, and their lands and holdings are guaranteed by the British Government.

“The rest of the population is made up, as I say, of agriculturists who number about 70 per cent.; merchants, artisans and craftsmen about 15 per cent.; and labouring classes about 10 per cent. The last mentioned are employed for the most part in some form of agricultural labour, and, of course, in other odd jobs.

“The remaining 5 per cent. are State servants and their families, dependents of the Princes, Rulers and Chiefs.

“Few States possess any industries worth the name except Mysore, Travancore, Cochin, Baroda, and Gwalior. Some have spinning and weaving mills, others cotton

ginning, and pressing factories. Many of these mills and factories are owned by the Chiefs, for whose private profit they are carried on as monopolies.

"There are also a good number of "cottage industries," but as they do not provide a living wage they are scarcely worth mentioning. As regards the labouring classes generally, employment is notoriously unsteady. Ordinarily the labouring classes in the States find employment for six months in the year. During the other half of the year they can find little to do, and they are forced to migrate to British India and elsewhere in order to get work.

"The condition of the artisan and craftsman class is much the same as that of the ordinary labourer. The majority of our artisans and craftsmen are migrating to British India on account of the forced labour and harassment to which they are constantly subjected by the members of the Chief's family and the State officials.

"The merchant class is occupied in the distribution and sale of local produce, such as cotton, corn, and other products, and in the supply of the necessaries, such as cloth, sugar, and other commodities. This 15 per cent, includes bankers, money-lenders, and people of kindred occupations. But persons with private means and members of the literary and learned professions are gradually leaving the States and settling down in British India.

"The reason is not far to seek. The old archaic form of administration offers them no scope for the display of their intellectual powers, or for the safe investment of their money. In other words, under our

Princes, neither personal liberty nor private property is considered safe !

“ For, at any moment, a subject can be deprived of his liberty, and his private property can be confiscated with little more than the semblance of a trial, and in some cases in its entire absence.

“ The vast majority of the working class population is engaged in some form of agricultural work. In fact, agriculture is at present the chief, if not the sole, occupation of the people of India, and more particularly of the people of the Indian States. ”

It would sound incredible that agriculture in the States is on a still lower level than even the agriculture in British India.

We know fully well the appallingly miserable conditions of millions of peasants in British India in spite of the irrigation works and programmes of agricultural aids by the British Government.

How low must be the level of agriculture and unbearable the conditions of the agriculturists in the States whose agricultural output is less than that of his fellow-brethren in British India, who are more intensely exploited as a result of forcibly collected, oppressive, land revenues and other exactions imposed on them according to the sweet will of the Princes ?

The following lines vividly depict the peasant living in British India :—

“ Bowed by the weight of centuries, he leans
 Upon his hoe and gazes on the ground,
 The emptiness of Ages in his face,
 And on his back the burden of the world. ”

How much more miserable must be the conditions of the masses in the States who live under the barbaric yoke of the Princes ?

Imagination fails to conceive the mysterious manner whereby these millions maintain their very existence, whereby these millions postpone their inevitable death through starvation from moment to moment.

Subjected to the heavy land and numerous other taxes, smothered by the autocratic rule of the despots, helpless before the tyranny of State against which there is no help, with all freedoms crushed, a victim of the State officials whose inhuman oppression knows no bound and opposition to whom means ruin or death, with meagre resources to maintain himself and his family, steeped in ignorance, the average citizen of a Native State is living in a state of perpetual terror, slavery and starvation.

Tyranny which perennially crushes him is visible in his submissive nervous gestures. Hunger, constant and poignant, peeps from his pale hollow eyes. Ignorance, profound and abysmal, is visible in his stupefied facial expression.

The grinding and arbitrary nature of State taxation of their subjects by the Princes is thus described by Mr. Chudgar :—

“ The taxes as they obtain in the State of Nawanagar give a fairly accurate idea of taxes common to all States, as also the special taxes varying in particular States. The first list comprises taxes on professions and persons, such as labourers and artisans, on cattle, on brothels, marriages, births, deaths, and funerals. It is to be noticed that there are also taxes on such small concerns as the hand-grinding

mills of widows which provide the sole means of subsistence of these poor women. As regards the larger taxes, some, it will be noticed, are supposed to be Municipal cesses and tolls, and some are in the nature of import and export duties. But one fact of universal application may be noted, and that is that there is absolutely no logical principle governing their imposition, and that they depend entirely upon the will of the Prince to demand and the capacity of the people to pay. The people's "capacity to pay" may be exploited almost to the starvation point, for the Prince's power to enforce his demands is absolutely unlimited."

But the agony of the population of the Native States does not stop here. Remnants even of slavery and a vast system of "forced labour" prevail in those States. Let Mr. Chudgar describe it.

"It is not true to say that slavery in the ordinary sense does not exist in the States to-day. There are Slave Communities in many of the Rajputana States, and in various States of the Western India States Agency including the States of Kathiawar. According to the Census Report of 1921, in Rajputana and Central India alone, there were in all 160,735 slaves of the Chakar and Daroga classes. These Slave Communities are known by various names, such as Darogas, Chakars, Huzuris, Ravan Rajputs, Chelas, and Golas.

"The slaves, Hindu and Moslem alike, with their wives and children, are owned, body and soul, by the Princes. They are allowed to possess only the merest necessities of existence. They have no property, and no private rights of any description, and in return for their

life services they are supplied with food only. This food consists, as a general rule, of the scraps and crumbs left over from the dishes of their masters."

"The masters can give away, as part of the marriage dowries of their own daughters, the wives and daughters of their slaves. Marriages and divorces of slaves depend solely upon the sweet will of their masters. If a slave runs away to seek a sanctuary in some other State he can be seized and forcibly returned to his master."

And further :—

"The system of what is known as Veth and Begar (meaning Forced Labour) prevails in almost all the Indian States, and all classes of labourers, workmen, and artisans are compelled to work for the Princes and their officials, in many cases the only remuneration being the barest necessity of food. These subjects are compelled to work at any time and for any period that the State may require. Often they may be required to go miles from their homes, and may be forced to follow the hunting parties of the Prince or of his guests from village to village, over hills, and through dense forests and burning sands. This is quite a common sight. One can see these people in cold, hot, or rainy seasons, insufficiently shod and clad, toiling after the pleasure parties of their masters. Even the women, young or old, married or widows, are not exempt. If any of these people, men or women, are infirm and cannot work properly, they are flogged or otherwise tortured.

"To the knowledge of the writer, poor old women of sixty have been severely flogged by constables. This was done with bamboo sticks in public streets, and the

crime for which they were punished was merely that of pleading exemption from forced labour on the ground of their infirmity."

A few States have legislative councils. Some Princes "go through the farce of summoning a few submissive individuals to annual Durbars". But there are no assemblies in most of the States. People are voiceless regarding legislation. The will of the Prince is the law, his caprice the amendment of a law. Any man can be committed to prison for an indefinite period or banished without reason, charge, or trial, if the Prince so chooses.

The confiscation of property of individuals depends on the sweet will of the Prince. He can break a contract or infringe the rights of individuals. There is no appeal against the Prince. There is no court where the Prince can be sued.

And how does the British Government watch the interests of the people of these States?

"If he (a Prince) spends all his time with his wine bottles and his sinewy concubines, if he exploits his subjects to the uttermost farthing, if his State is a den of debauchery, corruption and vice, if he squanders the revenues on fantastic hobbies, if he pawns the jewels of the State, if as a ruler he is a despot, as a man a vagabond, the Paramountcy will generally not be enforced. Once or twice during his term, the Viceroy will pay a visit to his State. There will be buntings and body-guards, durbars and shikars. In the bubble of champagne and the scent of the hunt are forgotten the archives of the Government of India—reeking with the crimes of the

worst despotism the world has ever seen." (The Pathology of Princes).

Public meetings, publication of newspapers, or formation of associations are banned in most of the States. Wherever they are not banned, none of these things can be done without the previous permission of the Prince. If this rule is contravened the omnipotent Police can step in, and against Police there is no remedy.

Even in "Progressive" States like Mysore, Travancore etc., very little liberty of speech, press and association exists. As soon as the subjects try to utilize this liberty to organize struggle for democratic institutions, the State authorities launch repression against the people. They call into action armed police, troops, etc. We will deal with the campaign of terror directed at present against the struggle for democratic liberties of the people in the States in a subsequent section.

What horrible state of affairs must be rampant in those innumerable States, which are considered even by these progressive (?) States as backward and barbaric!

How intolerable must be the conditions of the people in those innumerable States, where not even a semblance of liberty exists, where naked autocracy is rampant, States which are ruled by the Princes who are utterly barbaric, drowned in wine, rolling in riches squeezed from the bones of the masses?

Incredible as it may sound, still it is true, a grim gruesome blood-soaked truth.

India is a mysterious land as our patriots proclaim, The most mysterious thing in this mysterious land is the way in which these millions of people-exploited, oppressed

voiceless, enveloped in ignorance and misery - are able to continue their existence under the rule of the Princes, who are "worst despots known to history" and who are deliberately maintained by the British Government as it itself admits:—

"We have emancipated these pale and ineffectual pageants of royalty from the ordinary fate that waits on an oriental despotism. Our hand of iron maintains them on the throne, despite their imbecility, their vice and their crimes." (The Times, London.)

While admitting frankly that there is chronic anarchy, and heavy and arbitrary taxes levied on the miserable masses in the States, the Times nevertheless boasts that the British Government has emancipated these pageants from their inevitable fate by its hand of iron. This statement clearly shows that the British Government is the conscious perpetuator of these countless States - these vast engines which are grinding down millions of human beings.

Ranga Iyer in "India, Peace or War" very nicely shows how these States are consciously maintained by the British Government.

"Were a referendum taken to-day among the subjects, they would cheerfully vote for the annexation of the States to British India. The States exists to-day because of the mercy of the British."

A. Powell in his "Last Home of Misery" says,

"There can be no denying however, that the great majority of Princes are in a fashion which would bring the rulers of far larger states to the verge of bankruptcy or revolution."

The mass peasant revolts which took place in recent years, in Kashmir, Alwar and other places, clearly prove the correctness of the above statement of A. Powell. Exploitation, oppression and starvation reached such limits in these States that thousands of peasants grew desperate, took up arms and attacked the feudal governments, recognizing them as the source and defender of exploitation. A. Powell, with his keen insight in history and knowledge of the intolerable conditions of life of the people in the States, correctly predicts the outcome of such affairs as 'Bankruptcy or Revolution.'

Had it not been for the British troops which immediately helped the Princes to control the situation and suppress the revolts, had it not been for British intervention and armed assistance, the Kings of Alwar, and Kashmir would have been in a sorry plight. Had it not been for the British armed intervention in favour of the Kings, the Crowns would have crumbled to dust, the feudal oppressive State Powers would have collapsed.

These two incidents were merely the indicators of the intolerable and desperate conditions of the masses living in the States.

These two revolts clearly justified the proud proclamation of the Butler Committee that:—

"On paramountcy and paramountcy alone can the States rely for their preservation through the generations that are to come. Through paramountcy is pushed aside the danger of destruction or annexation."

Thus we have vividly seen how British Imperialism has deliberately perpetuated these relics of the past, these Feudal States. British Imperialism itself frankly admits

that truth, through its representatives and in official documents.

It openly declares that it is the maintainer of these predatory States. Does it maintain them without any interest? Does it continue, preserve these reactionary States, out of sheer fraternal feelings towards these fellow-exploiters, out of over-flowing affection for these parasitic Princes, without any selfish design?

The States as Political and Economic Buttress of British Imperialism.

British Imperialism knows full well the economic and political advantages derived from the maintenance of these States.

Economically,

The States are a valuable and dependable market for British Imperialism. It is the British Capitalist firms from which the States mainly purchase all goods necessary for the administrative purpose. Orders for luxury articles amounting to millions of rupees are also placed with the British firms by the Princes, though it may be advantageous to purchase these articles from non-British firms. Since the States exist under the auspices of the paramount British Power, the British Capitalists get concessions and special facilities for the import and sale of their goods within these States. Arms, ammunition, uniforms for the Army and Police, and other goods are supplied to these States by the Britishers at an immense profit. The States are a vast, monopolized market for British Capitalism. Thus, the States are vast reservoirs for British Capitalism to make good some losses incurred in other places.

The propagators of Charkha and Swadeshi, the missionaries of rural reconstruction, etc., avoid the fact that British Capitalism commands 567 States as the guaranteed market for the British products, giving it the economic strength to checkmate its competitors. They avoid the fact that the problem of Indian Emancipation, in its political, economic or any aspect, can be solved only if the factor of the States as the bases of economic, political and military strength of British Imperialism, is taken into account. The exclusive effort of the people of British India (all Swadeshi movement, Village Reorganization Schemes, even National Independence struggle which the Congress Leaders strive to restrict to British India) cannot solve the problem of the emancipation of the Indian people from the present bondage (economic and political). The 81 million Indian People, groaning under feudal tyranny in the States, have to be taken into account while determining the strategy of the Indian Liberation Struggle. Not a single problem of the Indian people can be solved except on the basis of the united struggle of the people of British and Feudal India.

All talk of any programme of reconstructing the economy of India as well as of winning Independence, from the British yoke without taking into consideration the factor of the States, would be futile, nay even dangerous, since it would create the illusion that the Indian Freedom can be achieved by the exclusive effort of the people of British India.

Any programme of freeing India from the economic exploitation of British Capitalism is foredoomed if it

ignores the fact that the States with a population of 81 millions are a substantial and almost guaranteed market, economic reservoir and base of British Capitalism, to beat down any competitor or organized economic attempt to undermine its position.

Politically,

British Imperialism finds in the Princes, its greatest allies. If we glance at the political map of India, we will at once realize how cunningly the States are distributed. The Indian State, with a loyal Prince (as he always is) at its head and with its army, would be a very valuable defender of British Imperialism, whenever the Indian People organize the struggle for freedom. The armies of the States are the armed means of British Imperialism to suppress the struggle of the Indian People to liberate themselves from the foreign yoke.

The States are the best agents of British Imperialism to protect its political domination over India.

It is not due to any consideration of pity or whim that the British Government has maintained these hundreds of States. There is a definite political design behind this maintenance of States. A deep political motive guides the astute British Imperialists to stabilize these Princes on their thrones. Powerful British Imperialism which could conquer huge continents could have easily annexed these States ruled by effete Princes. But it did not. Its territorial abstinence was dictated by political-strategic considerations. The States had to be perpetuated. The Princes had to be stabilized, with a view to create out

of them a reliable social support for the British domination of India.

Many frank statesmen of Britain (as we previously saw) have openly admitted this.

Those who talk of just now leaving the Princes as they are, and concentrate our attack on British Imperialism only, those who (like Gandhi) proclaim that the Princes are "our own kith and kin" and "have the interests of their subjects at heart", those who stand for unity with these Princes, those who preach among the masses of British India that the position of these 81 millions suffering under the States, should be continued just now as it is, those who propagate that the fight for Independence has no connection with the fight against the Princes, are creating illusions among the masses consciously or unconsciously. Those, who consciously sow these misconceptions, very skilfully try, at one stroke, to prevent those millions from joining the struggle for Independence.

So we have discussed the history of the States, the economic, political and social life of the people in the States, the character, education and life of the Rulers of these States, the relations of the States with the British Government, the political and economic use of these States to British Imperialism as its strongest internal ally.

Now in the next section we will discuss the role of the States in the New Constitution.

III

THE NEW CONSTITUTION AND THE STATES

British Imperialism is imposing a New Constitution on India. In the new situation created (1) by the post-War crisis of British Capitalism further accentuated by the world-economic crisis which broke out in 1929 and still persists (2) by the imminence of a second World-War become inevitable due to the sharpening of all antagonisms of World Imperialism as a result of the crisis but above all (3) by the internal situation in India itself fraught with the possibility, nay certainty of a new wave of mass struggle due to the growing misery of the Indian masses, Britain finds it necessary to change the methods and machinery of its domination in India

The New Constitution is devised to meet the two-fold necessities of British Imperialism in the present new situation.

It is constructed so as to help Britain successfully to cope with and overcome the new wave of mass upheaval which is sure to take place in India (the growing ferment indicates it) and secondly to conduct war when it breaks out.

The essential features of the New Constitution are as follows :—

(1) The head of the Central Government (Viceroy) and the heads of the Provinces (the Governors) are

given uncontrolled and unlimited powers over all vital matters of State.

(2) A closer collaboration of British Imperialism and its reactionary feudal allies (Princes), in fact direct participation of these allies for the first time in the governance of British India, is provided under the New Constitution.

We do not need to make a detailed analysis of the mechanism of the New Constitution for our purpose. We will refer only to its salient features.

We know from experience that, in periods of crisis such as war or internal disturbances, a State always needs to arm itself with abnormally great powers.

Under the pressure of the two grim facts of the present situation viz. the danger of internal disturbances (agrarian situation is potential with big peasant struggles) and the certainty of the outbreak of the second World War, the British Government in India, under the New Constitution, will be invested with unlimited powers.

The New Constitution provides for unlimited and uncontrolled authority for the representative of British Imperialism in India, the Viceroy of India, over essential matters such as Army, Navy, Air Force, in short Defence, Foreign Relations, Currency, Commercial Safe Guards, Police, C. I. D. These matters are to be kept outside the orbit of the Legislatures. When analysed, it is found that the 80 per cent of the budget is beyond the scrutiny and decision of the Legislature, is unvotable. Even in the remaining 20 per cent, the Viceroy can, by virtue of his vetoing power override the decision of the Legislature.

The ultimate economic and military dictatorship rests, under the New Constitution, with the Viceroy.

Under the New Constitution, the Central Legislature is devised very carefully and cleverly so as to guarantee a majority support for the Government in all its legislative proposals. For the first time in the history of its domination of India, British Imperialism mobilizes the Princes as direct participants in the governance of British India. As we said, in a period like the present when Britain is menaced with big mass struggles in the country and imminent world war, it needs to make its Indian Constitution more reactionary than ever. It needs to summon its allies, the reactionary Princes, the sure support of Britain in ruling India, for a closer collaboration and direct aid to it in putting down popular movements and successfully conducting war. The Princes, barbarous relics of effete feudalism, are bitterest opponents of all progress. By adding their weight to the Constitutional State Machinery of India, Britain secures a reliable reactionary support in combating all progressive groups in the Legislature.

That Britain has been prompted by this motive in incorporating the Princes in the New Constitution is eloquently expressed in the following statement of the Marquess of Reading in the Parliament:—

“The reason why Federation is of such importance is that the Princes, in their own interests, are involved in the matters that concern us most. If the Princes come into a Federation of All India and you have therefore one Government of All India...at least you can say that in the future.....there will always be a steady influence

.....I ask myself the question, what will be the result if the Princes are with us. It must follow that in both the Lower Chamber of the Federal Legislature and in the Upper Chamber of the Federal Legislature you will have a large proportion of representatives of the Princes. That will be a steadying, stabilising influence more valuable to us than appears perhaps at first sight. What is it we have most to fear? There are those who agitate for independence for India, for right to secede from the Empire altogether. I believe myself, that it is really an insignificant minority that is in favour, but it is an articulate minority and it has behind it the organization of Congress. It becomes important, therefore, that we should get what steadying influence we can against this view.

....In my view the maintenance of internal order and resistance of anything approaching Anarchy or Communism is as much in the interest of the Princes as it is in our interest.....There again you will have a tremendously great stabilising influence.....There will be approximately 33 per cent of the Princes who will be members of the Legislature with 40 per cent in the Upper Chamber. There are of course large bodies of Indians who do not take the view of Congress. So that with that influence in the federated Legislature I am not afraid in the slightest degree of anything that may happen, even if Congress managed to get the largest proportion of votes. Then, too, the Princes are as interested as we are in the security of India against internal aggression. If invaders gain the upper hand, the Princes go just as we should have to disappear. Therefore they are with us on three main questions.....There you will see the value of the Federation to the stability of the Connection between India and ourselves."

The representation provided to the Princes both in the Lower Chamber and the Upper House (125 seats out of a total of 375 in the former and 104 seats out of a total of 260 in the latter) under the New Constitution plus the support which Imperialism can count upon, of the reactionary minority groups in the Legislature, safeguard a sure majority support for the Government in all its proposals, either for repression or increased economic exploitation of the Indian people, become necessary in the present critical situation of British Imperialism.

The reactionary bloc created under the New Constitution and composed of feudal and other reactionary forces in the country is a special feature of the New Constitution.

The voice and assertion of the Indian upper and upper middle-classes who have been provided representation in the Central Legislature to be elected on the basis of franchise extended to 5% of the total population of the country, can be counteracted by the combined forces of Indian Reaction which British Imperialism has mobilized in the Central Legislature under the New Constitution.

The States were always the reserves of British Imperialism. Reserves are drawn upon only in the period of crisis. In normal times when British Imperialism had a monopoly world position in matters of market and general economic interests, when the world crisis of Capitalism had not broken out seriously undermining British Capitalism internally and internationally, when the poverty of the Indian People and together with it the political and economic ferment, had not grown as to drive them to serious mass struggles against Imperialism,-

in such normal times, it was not necessary for Britain to call its feudal reserves.

The new situation demands a New Constitution under which a closer co-operation is established between Imperialists and forces of Native Reaction against all progressive forces in the country.

IV

THE STATES AS WAR RESERVES OF BRITAIN

The role of the Indian States as rich recruiting ground to raise armies as well as a valuable source of financial aid for Britain during wartime, cannot be overestimated. Ruled by obsequious Princes whose very existence is bound up with that of British Imperialism and whose one indestructible trait is a servile wish to win favour of the Imperialist Overlord whenever an occasion arises, the States are formidable bases for Britain to draw money, man-power, raw materials of military importance, etc., whenever she is engaged in war.

It is almost certain that Britain with her huge colonial empire and far-flung market and other economic interests, will be drawn in the orbit of the second world war which is preparing and threatens to break out at any moment. The second world war, there and then complicated by civil wars, colonial revolts, etc., due to all the accumulated antagonisms of the capitalist world, will be a world-wide titanic conflict in which all Imperialisms will be fighting for their very existence. It will be a sanguinary, complex, ruthless, life and death struggle between the belligerents. This specific character of the next war (the last world war of 1914 did not have it) will make it absolutely necessary for each Imperialism to commandeer all human and material resources, it safely can, both of home and colonial countries. The preparations for the impending war, in all Imperialist countries—Britain, France, Germany

Italy, Japan, etc.—are more drastic, comprehensive and thorough than for the world war of 1914. Every Imperialist Government possesses to-day a detailed plan for mobilizing its entire economic resources and manpower for the coming cataclysm.

Knowing full well that a defeat in the next war may not only cripple but even menace it with extinction, British Imperialism is to-day organizing with ruthless scientific precision. On the background of this world situation and with such a perspective, the Indian States—the servile colonial adjuncts of Britain—assume a special significance.

The world war of 1914 demonstrated clearly the unlimited enthusiasm of the Princes to help Britain. Not only did they put at the disposal of Britain large contingents of troops, supply of war material and huge sums but some of them like Bikaner (who became responsible for the armed defence of the Suez) actually took part in the war. In fact, Britain was fully satisfied with the unstinted aid which it received from the Princes during the war. The Princes proved in practice that they were staunch “allies” of Britain.

There is no doubt, therefore, that Britain can count on the enthusiastic co-operation and support of the Princes in the impending war. A number of these Princes have already declared that they will help Britain with all resources of their States when the war breaks out. This is what H. H. the Maharaja of Bikaner stated in his recent telegraph to the Viceroy:—

“It has been the proud privilege of my house and my State never to have wavered in rendering the utmost

possible loyal service to the British Crown at all times in war and in peace and I and my subjects are ever prepared to shed the last drop of blood for His Imperial Majesty and my army, though small in numbers, is ready to proceed wherever required at a moment's notice and eagerly solicits the honour of once again fighting for his Imperial Majesty, should war unhappily break out.

"Although not as young as in 1914 or in as good health, I would earnestly beg that I too may not be left inactive in India and that I may once again be afforded an opportunity to fight for my beloved Emperor. *I can conceive of no greater mistake being made by anyone in India, Europe or elsewhere than to imagine that the Princes of India will not again rally round their Gracious Emperor on this occasion.*" (As reported in "The Bombay Chronicle.")

His Highness the Maharaja of Bikaner is telling absolute truth when he remarks that it would be a signal error to doubt the enthusiastic readiness of the Indian Princes to support Britain in war. In fact, the State measure adopted by the Nizam against all anti-recruiting propaganda immediately after the passing of the Army Bill in the Central Assembly, clearly bears out this truth. Further, the present conversations of the Viceroy with the individual representative of each separate State, at Simla, have for their aim the finding out of the precise estimate and form of the help which the States will render when the war breaks out.

The Princes are the unfailing friends of Britain both in war and in peace time. They were ready to offer their assistance to Britain during the period of Mass Civil Disobedience Struggle. They will unhesitatingly help Britain in any war crisis too.

The Indian States are a rich reliable source for Britain to muster manpower and money during war.

Bikaner is right.

The recruiting campaign to raise armies from the States can specially succeed due to numerous reasons. First, as we saw, due to lack of industrial development (the States are preponderantly agrarian) as well as grinding State exactions in the form of oppressive state revenues, feudal levies and frequently even arbitrary seizure of the scanty resources of the people, the overwhelming majority of the population in the States, live on the verge of starvation. The appalling poverty of these millions is the ally of the recruiting sargeant whose bait of employment as soldiers can effectively decoy the hungry, starving mass into joining the army and becoming the "willing" cannon-fodder of the Imperialist war. Secondly, there is nothing to prevent the autocratic feudal State from using coercive methods against those who, due to political consciousness or horrors of war, are unwilling to enlist. By their very essence, the States are autocratic and, as such, they would employ coercive methods compelling the unwilling to join the army. The autocratic nature of the Indian States is a great advantage to Britain to easily raise recruits from the States in war time.

A third reason why the States are valuable to Britain from the war point of view is that they are inhabited by martial tribes, with warlike instincts, military traditions and experience. The numerous States of Rajputana, Kathiawad, the Punjab, etc. are populated with such martial tribes as the Rajputs (the professional

warrior-caste among the Hindus), the Jats, the Sikhs, the Maratthas etc.

For all these reasons, the States are the best reservoirs of Britain to raise troops during war time. The unlimited zeal of the feudal feudatories to help the Imperialist Overlord, the stark poverty of the people of the States constraining them to seek military service as a solution of their hunger, the co-ercive nature of the State regime which would compel the unwilling to enlist and, above all, the fact that the States are peopled by martial races and tribes distinguished for centuries for valour on battle-field,.....all these factors make the States excellent levers of Britain to raise armies during war time.

Also considering that the fate of the States is inextricably bound up with that of British Imperialism, that with the extinction of the latter the former too suffer a similar fate and that the Princes are nominal "allies" but really servile supporters of British Domination it is not at all surprizing that they should assist Britain enthusiastically in war time.

THE RISING TIDE OF THE STATES PEOPLES' STRUGGLE AGAINST THE FEUDAL REGIME

While British Imperialism is manœuvring to galvanize and incorporate into its constitutional machinery the reactionary States with a view to strengthen its dictatorship and combat all progressive forces in the country, a powerful wave of mass struggle of the people of the States against feudal autocracy is growing. In a number of States, most "progressive" as well as reactionary, the human mass, subjected for centuries to agonies of feudal oppression, has begun to move against the feudal lords. In Mysore, Travancore, Kashmir, Mansa, Sikar and other big and small feudal centres, the people-oppressed peasants, traders, artisans, workers, students etc.—have flung a challenge to the autocratic ruler and have launched a struggle for democratic rights, against inhuman oppression and unbearable economic exactions. The challenge is growing more defiant, the struggles more determined and militant.

(a) A Brief Survey

The prolonged and heroic struggle of the peasants of the **Mansa State** to secure their economic demands from the autocratic State, is a brilliant episode in the steadily growing anti-feudal movement of the people of the States. This struggle is particularly significant for the mass heroism and mass will to fight, of the toiling peasant women who not merely helped their men but actually joined them in the fight. The peasant women elected their

own committee of action from among their midst. This organ of struggle composed exclusively of peasant women led the peasant women mass in the struggle against the police terrorism let loose by the State in the form of brutal lathi charges etc. When even the women of backward peasantry in a backward State rally for the struggle in their hundreds, elect their own organ of struggle and refuse to capitulate even though attacked by armed forces, it is the decisive sign of the accumulated ferment in the Indian masses and their readiness to engage in a battle against their foreign and Indian masters. Such manifestations as at Mansa are signals of imminent large scale peasant actions all over the country, both in Feudal and British India.

In Mysore, Travancore, Hyderabad and other States too, the struggle of the people, long submerged in political passivity, for representative institutions and democratic liberties, are fast developing. In proportion that these struggles aiming to cripple their autocratic powers grow, even those States which posed as enlightened and progressive show their real despotic character and begin to drown these movements in blood. The 'progressive' State of Mysore eulogized as a model State by Gandhi and others, attacks the right of the people to unfurl the National Flag and hold meetings demanding not the abolition of feudal State itself but merely franchise and representative institutions, even enacts a second Jalian-walla Bag by shooting tens of unarmed citizens. The feudal State, by its very autocratic nature, feels a repugnance for all democratic movements and attacks them most brutally.

In Sikar, the Rao Raja, the feudatory chief, with the armed support of his people, was driven to resist the design of the Jaypur State to reduce him to a mere vassal. This revealed how, not only the conflict between the people and the feudal regime but also the dissension among big and small States are sharpening threatening to take the form of armed clashes.

In Nilgiri State, there has broken out a mass movement of tenants against the barbarous practice of forced labour for reduction of exorbitant rent and the restoration of the right to the free use of forests.

In Travancore, extolled as one of the most advanced States, a ban is put on the Congress leaders like Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya prohibiting their entry into the State. The "enlightened" Government of Travancore Reinforces the existing arsenal of "legal" weapons to suppress the legal struggle for democratic rights and Responsible Government, by the further addition of the Criminal Law Amendment Act on the pattern of that governing British India. The brave people of Travancore refuse to be cowed down and, in the face of state terror, organizes a Mass Civil Disobedience Movement to assert their rights of freedom of speech, assembly and association and to secure the people's control, through democratic representative institutions, over the affairs of the State. At this, the State Authorities at once proscribe the Youth League and the State Congress Organization which are leading the mass struggle of the people, arrest the leaders, and further call into action the armed forces of the State which open a series of firings on the people rallied to demonstrate their indignation against the

suppression of their rights. The State repression only strengthens the will of the people to fight feudal oppression with greater energy. The "enlightened" government stands unmasked with its real autocratic and terroristic complexion. The lie of Gandhi that "Princes have the welfare of their people at heart" stands exposed and the fiction of the united front of the Princes and their subjects against the common Imperialist opponent is exploded. Through actual experience, the people of Travancore are learning the truth that the "enlightened and advanced State regime" is a myth and that as soon as the people demand their elementary democratic human rights, a fusillade of bullets is fired at them, their organizations which are their organs of struggle are broken up and popular leaders arrested.

In Baroda, an enlightened king is attacking, with the armed might of his State, the growing struggle of the workers against the textile magnates (Billimora) and peasants against landlords (Lavet). Though the struggle is restricted merely to a demand for redressing the immediate grievances of tenants, kisan workers are being arrested and meetings banned. As soon as the masses begin to stir and organize the most elementary forms of struggle for minimum demands, the crushing weight of the armed feudal State is hurled against them.

In Rajkot, the State resorted to the weapon of brutal lathi charges to suppress the agitation against an unpopular minister and picketing of gambling. That an insignificant issue as the right to organize picketing against gambling, precipitated mass indignation and mass movement against the State, proves the enormous

discontent and determination accumulated among the people. The struggle continues and deepens under broader slogans like grant of democratic rights and Responsible Government and the State arrests and imprisons popular Praja Mandal leaders like Dhabar and the State police starts a campaign of harassment in the villages against all Praja Mandal propagandists and organizers.

In Hyderabad, one of the most reactionary States, the Nizam feels such repugnance for all popular and democratic movements that he proscribes movements before they are launched, declares organizations illegal even before they are formed. Though no State Congress is still organized nor any large-scale popular movement initiated in his territory, the Nizam prohibits both these *in advance*. He takes steps even before the menace of a powerful popular movement led by Praja Mandal, has emerged on the horizon. Just as the early Nizam, forestalling the future conquest of India by the British, capitulated *in advance* to the latter, the modern Nizam, the scion of the early farsighted ancestor, rushes to proscribe movements and organizations even before they have seen the light of day. The Nizam commits infanticide even before the infant is born. Not only this. The Ruler of Hyderabad hurries to declare illegal all anti-recruiting propaganda even before any recruiting has begun or even any anti-recruiting agitation has started. For sheer foresight, (we won't call it panic) the present, Nizam like his illustrious ancestor remains unmatched.

In Kashmir, the theatre of a big mass peasant action only a few years back, a new wave of popular

struggle is growing and gathering strength, aiming to secure from the Ruler, Responsible Government, control over the revenues by the elected legislature, Representative Assembly, adult franchise, freedom of speech, press and association etc. The Ruler of Kashmir, who ruled by driving a wedge of communalism among his people, Hindus and Muslims, is confronted with a United People, united on the basis of a common struggle against the feudal regime which oppresses both Hindus and Muslims. The struggle of the United People of Kashmir continues to develop in face of hundreds of arrests, lathi charges etc.

In Dhenkanal, the State authorities have been so much enraged at the growing movement of the people to secure human rights and freedoms as also the abolition of feudal levies and forced labour that they have blockaded the entire town, promulgated the Criminal Law Amendment Act, arrested the leaders and threatened with arrest all those who merely put on Gandhi cap or khaddar. To terrorize the people, they have further called the military composed of Gurkha and British troops. The people's organizations like Prajamandal are declared illegal. Such atrocities are apprehended that the Prajamandal has issued a mandate to the people to migrate en masse to British India. When the people of the State migrates in thousands to neighbouring villages of British India, a fraternal welcome and help from the peasants of these villages are accorded to them, thus demonstrating *in practice*, the solidarity of the people of British and Feudal India in face of the armed alliance of the Princes and the British Government

embodied in the British troops going to the help of the State. In the face of State repression, the struggle continues, the people remain undaunted.

In fact, in entire Feudal India, in big as well as small States, a general movement of the people against autocratic feudal despotism and grinding economic exploitation has commenced and is gathering strength from day to day. The autocratic States by their very nature hates these popular movements and even the most progressive among them—Mysore, Travancore, etc.—are striving to suppress them.

The rapid growth of the democratic States peoples' struggle against the feudal regime is a new feature of the Indian situation causing anxiety both to the Imperialist Ruler who wants the States as secure and undisturbed basis of his strength and also to Gandhi and other Right Wing leaders of the Indian National Congress, who standing for the National United Front of all classes and sections of the Indian People, are opposed to any sharpening of the struggle, between the Princes and their subjects.

(b) The Indian National Congress and the States

The Right Wing Congress leaders desire a United Front of the feudal rulers and their people defending it on the ground that both the Princes and their subjects are sections of the Indian people. To Gandhi, the struggle between the oppressing Feudal Princes and the oppressed Feudal subjects is a fratricidal struggle and as such disruptive of national unity. Gandhi and the Right Wing leadership of the Congress do not therefore desire any development of anti-feudal

struggle in the States' territory. They view with alarm these struggles and to prevent them, they call on the Princes to make some timely concessions to their people (Gandhi's advice to Mysore, Travankore, etc.). They do not hail these struggles, the first assertions of the militancy and democratic urges of the States' people to emancipate themselves from feudal tyranny, but consider them as destructive of national unity and homogeneity as also tending to antagonize the Princes. This is based on the assumption that the Princes, as Indians, hate foreign domination or can be persuaded to hate that domination and fight for National Freedom.

The attitude of Indian National Congress towards the struggle of the people in the States against the feudal regime is determined and its policy in relation to it fixed by the above conception of Gandhi who dominates the entire Congress organization.

This is what Gandhi says :—

"I would like the States to grant autonomy to their subjects and would like the Princes to regard themselves and be in fact trustees for the people over whom they rule, drawing for themselves only a small and definite percentage of the income. I have certainly not lost hope that the Princes will deem it a pride to become real trustees of their people. I do not seek to destroy their status. I believe in the conversion of individuals and societies."

And further,

"The traditional attitude of the Congress has been one of friendliness towards Indian States and of non-interference with their administration, and it is but meet to expect reciprocity from the States."

Under the pressure of the extending and deepening struggles of the people in the States' territory as also of the Left forces within the Congress who want the Congress itself to develop and lead these struggles against the feudal States, the Right Wing leaders were forced to commit the Congress to give moral support to these movements though not actual lead.

This pressure of the Left forces, in and outside the Congress, has compelled the Congress leadership to give spasmodic and unwilling support to the movements of the States' people but the policy as a whole is to discourage and sabotage these movements. The Congress leaders while appealing to the Princes to grant Responsible Government and fundamental rights to their people, oppose the mass struggle of these people *to extort those rights from their rulers.*

This is clearly seen to-day when the President of the Travankore branch of Indian National Congress "beseeches" the leaders of the Travankore State Congress to wind up the Mass Civil Disobedience organized by the latter to combat the State repression of the popular movement.

This is what the Resolution on the States passed at Haripura session of the I. N. Congress states :—

"The Congress, therefore, stands for full Responsible Government and the guarantee of Civil Liberties in the States and deplors the present backward conditions and utter lack of freedom and suppression of Civil Liberties in many of these States.....

"The Congress, therefore, directs that, for the present, Congress Committees in the States shall function

under the direction and control of the Congress Working Committees and shall not engage in parliamentary activity nor launch any direct action in the name and under the auspices of the Congress. Internal struggles of the people of the States must not be undertaken in the name of the Congress."

The same policy of non-interference and general friendly attitude towards the Princes while criticising the isolated acts of State repression is reiterated in the A. I. C. C. Resolution recently passed at Delhi.

From this, it is clear that forced to recognize the rising tide of the democratic movement of the people of the States, but reluctant to develop and lead it, lest it may assume "dangerous" forms and challenge the very reactionary institution of the States itself and may even come in collision with the Imperialist Overlord, the protector of Native Feudalism, the attitude of the Congress under the leadership of pro-feudalists like Gandhi, is kept deliberately vague. No effective help is to be given to the struggles of the States' people but only moral support.

Controlled by the Working Committee, the majority of whose members are opposed to serious mass struggles in the territory of the States aiming at *extorting* from the Chiefs democratic freedoms etc., the Congress units, at present existing in the States (the formation of new units is banned under the Haripura Resolution), can only be organs of sabotaging the developing struggle or at best instruments of conciliation and compromise between the subjects and their rulers.

This was visible at Mysore, when in the midst of a developing struggle, developing due to tremendous popular indignation evoked by the State Police firing on an unarmed and peaceful meeting killing many, Vallabhbhai Patel brought about a "compromise" between the people and the Prince, when he persuaded the people to associate the State flag, the flag of feudal oppression, with the National flag, the flag of ending that oppression, at all popular meetings.

The Mysore State readily accepted "the compromise" for nothing could please it more than that the movement of the people struggling to shake off feudal bondage should be committed to respect the State flag, the flag of preserving that bondage. Astute Patel, by this successful manouvre, injected the anti-feudal struggle of the people with the disastrous virus of the principle of harmony of interests of the Prince and his subjects, of collaboration between feudal exploiters and the exploited people. It was the master stroke of the tactical skill of Mr. Patel.

(c) All India States' Peoples' Conference.

Mention may be made here of the All India States Peoples Conference which stands for a united struggle of the people of British and Feudal India against both British Imperialism and the States. In fact, it is this organization which supports and frequently leads the struggles of the States' People. It is this organisation which stands for the principle of the Indian National Congress leading the struggle of the people of Feudal India against the States

Both, the President and the General Secretary of this organisation have expressed on innumerable occasions that the Indian National Congress which claims to

fight for the emancipation of the *entire* Indian people, should logically lead the democratic struggle of the States against their feudal masters, for democratic freedoms and representative institutions. It is this organization which is at present the focal point of conscious discontent against and opposition to the States regimes.

VI

THE STATES AND THE NATIONAL LIBERATION STRUGGLE

The States Peoples' Struggle, A Part Of Anti-Imperialist Struggle

The struggle of the States' people for democratic liberties and Responsible Government, for the annihilation of serfdom, "forced labour", feudal levies and a thousand other oppressions, is a struggle against the States which are the allies of British Imperialism. As such, it has objectively an anti-Imperialist character.

It is clear that an attack on the pillar which supports an edifice, is an attack on the edifice itself. So, the struggle of the States' people against *the Princes who are the support of the structure of the Imperialist Domination of India*, is thereby also an attack on the Imperialist Domination itself. To the extent that this democratic mass struggle undermines and weakens the Feudal States, the feudal prop of the British Rule, it undermines and weakens the British Rule itself. This leads us to an unescapable conclusion that the struggle of the States' people is a part of the National Liberation struggle of the entire Indian People to shake off the yoke of British Domination based on the support of Indian Feudalism.

That the movement of the States' people against the feudal regime is also a struggle against British Government is most vividly and convincingly proved when we

consider that the latter openly renders armed assistance to its feudal ally as soon as the popular struggle seriously threatens it. As soon as the movement of the people of Dhenkanal State became sufficiently powerful as to endanger feudal autocracy, the British Government sent troops (British and Gurkha) to prevent the autocracy from being overthrown by the indignant people.

Thus, the democratic struggle of the States' people first brings them into clash with the State Authorities. Later on, when the popular movement gathers more volume, depth and militancy, it brings them into conflict with the forces of the British Government itself which rushes to the rescue of the State, *thus revealing the basic alliance between the British Government and the States.*

The struggle of the States' people against the Princes has, therefore, an anti-Imperialist character and is *a part* of the National Liberation Struggle of the *entire* Indian People against the Feudal—Imperialist bloc.

Its Denial By Gandhi

Gandhi and other Congress Right Wing Leaders do not, however, recognize this fact of vital political importance for the victory of the National Liberation struggle.

They describe these basic allies of Britain as "our kith and kin." They stand for their "conversion." They make moral appeals to the Princes to "renounce luxuries", to grow into "trustees" of their subjects etc. They appeal to them to make some timely political concessions to the people.

These leaders do not expose the Princes as the historical allies of Britain, whose existence is bound up with that of Britain, whose fall will synchronize with the fall of the Imperialist Overlord.

These leaders do not consider the States' people struggle against the feudal regime as a struggle *against*

the ally of the British Ruler and as such do not recognize it as a part of the anti—Imperialist National Independence struggle of the Indian People. They interpret it as a *domestic dispute between two sections of the Indian People* to be settled amicably.

These leaders are exponents of the doctrine of class harmony, of a united front of *all* sections of the Indian People, the capitalists and the workers, the zemindars and the kisans, the Princes and their subjects.

Hence, they consider the developing struggle between the Princes and their subjects as a regrettable domestic strife and not as a necessary part of the anti-Imperialist struggle. *Consistent with this outlook, they stand for settling it rather than sharpening it.*

Not recognizing the anti-Imperialist character of the States peoples' struggle against the feudal regime, the Congress leaders prevent the Indian National Congress from leading it. They Stand for the policy of "non-interference" in the States. They are opposed to the unification of these two streams of the anti-Imperialist struggle (viz. the National Independence struggle of the people of British India and the anti-feudal struggle of the people of Feudal India) into an all-India National Liberation struggle against the Feudal-Imperialist bloc, under a single political and organizational leadership. The leaders consistently oppose the Left proposal that the Indian National Congress should *unify and lead* both these struggles.

Dangerous Illusions

Gandhi and the other exponents of "the kith and kin" theory, "conversion" doctrine, "the united front of all classes and sections of the Nation" programme, sow dangerous illusions in the mind of the Indian people.

By proclaiming that the Princes are "our kith and kin," they blind the people to the fact that these Princes are the support of the British Rule and further create the illusion that they are our potential allies and can be won over to the National Independence struggle. From this stand point, the States peoples' struggle is not a necessary part of the anti-Imperialist struggle (the struggle against the allies of Britain) but the fratricidal struggle among the Indians.

By interpreting the States Peoples' Struggle against the feudal regime as a regrettable domestic strife between two sections of the Indian people, these leaders, even when they give "moral support" to this struggle, strive to divert it into feudal-reformist channel instead of developing it into a struggle for overthrowing the Feudal-Imperialist System.

By propagating these misconceptions about the role of the Princes, the real nature of the States peoples' struggle against this Princes, these leaders prevent the Indian people from getting a correct estimate of the various forces and a correct perspective of the real alignment of these forces in the National Independence struggle. They, thereby, prevent the formulation of the correct strategy and tactic of the National Liberation struggle. They represent as potential allies those who are already, by the very logic of their class position, open and die-hard defenders of British Domination.

These leaders, by refusing to unify the two struggles under a single political and organizational leadership, prevent the mobilization of all our national forces under a single direction, which alone can guarantee our victory.

They also, thereby, prevent the building up of all-national resistance under a single leadership to Imperialist schemes like the New Constitution.

Again, as we already saw, the States are the War reserves of Britain and only if the struggle of the people of British India is lined up with the States peoples' movement, can the Indian people as a whole prevent effectively the utilizing of the resources of the States by Britain in war time.

Just as the hurried assurance of the Princes that they will put all resources of their States at the service of Britain during wartime, proves that they are the allies of Britain in war time, their incorporation in the New Constitutional Machinery by Britain establishes them as its dependable support in governing India during peace time.

The Unity Of The Two Struggles

British Imperialism for its own purpose, disrupted India into a Feudal India and a British India. While maintaining a live organic unity with the rulers of the Feudal India, it has divided the Indian population into two parts. While not for one moment relaxing its grip over the Princes whom it also protects from their subjects, while maintaining a united front with these Princes, British Imperialism has created a wedge in the living body of the Indian People by dividing them into two sections.

Gandhi and other Right Wing Congress leaders who stand for non-interference in the States and prevent the Congress from giving a lead to the States peoples' movement, thereby, objectively, adopt the standpoint of British Imperialism and support the division created by the latter. Instead of accomplishing one of the fundamental tasks of the National Freedom struggle, viz., a united movement of the people, both of British and Feudal India, they try to isolate the struggle of the people of the British India, thereby restricting and making it ineffective. They thereby serve the interests of Imperialism and the Princes, who are opposed to and obstruct the unity of the two sections of the Indian People, a unity which is against the interests of both foreign and native rulers.

In fact, as anti-Imperialist struggle becomes more and more bitter, Imperialism will bring, more and more, its feudal reserves into action. To-day, it has brought them into action to the extent of incorporating them in the New Constitutional Machinery to help Imperialism in checkmating progressive groups in the Legislatures. To-morrow, it will summon them to direct military aid when the mass tide rises.

As the struggle for National Freedom grows, the States will more and more be revealed as the active support of the British Rule in India.

We cannot separate mechanically the two problems, the problem of Independence and the problem of Native States. The problem of freedom from foreign domination includes the problem of the States which support this domination.

It is a dangerous illusion to imagine that there are two *separate* struggles, the struggle for National Independence of the people of British India and the struggle for the democratic liberation of the people of the States from the chains of the Princes. In fact, there is no line of demarcation between these two struggles. Both these struggles are merely the two fronts of the same struggle, viz., the struggle against the Imperialist-Feudal Bloc, the struggle for destroying the Imperialist-Feudal economic structure based on the serfdom of peasants, the wage slavery of workers and the exploitation of the general mass of people.

To sum up.

It is essential to understand that the States are not a separate, parallel, passive force in the political scheme of India. If the presence of British Imperialism is necessary in India for the States to defend their existence threatened from internal revolt, the States themselves are vitally useful to British Imperialism to maintain its rule in India. The interests of the Princes and British Imperialism are identical and indissolubly bound together. The united front of the relics of Indian Feudalism and foreign Imperialism already exists and is indispensable

for the continued existence and prosperity of both. The one falls with the other.

It logically follows from this fact that the democratic struggle for freedom of the population of the States from their feudal masters would inevitably involve them into a struggle with the Imperialist Power which defends these feudal masters. Hence, the anti-feudal struggle of the people of the States is a part of the general struggle of the Indian People for Independence from the yoke of British Imperialism.

Again, since the States are the buttress of the Imperialist Rule, it logically follows that the people of British India who conduct a struggle against Britain for liberation, should be prepared to fight—the collision is unescapable—the States. They cannot defeat Imperialism without attacking and defeating its prime social support, Indian Feudalism. This logically leads to the conclusion that the people of British India should assist the people of Feudal India in the latter's struggle against the Princes for democratic rights. A united Front of the struggles of both sections of the Indian people against the already existing United Front of British Imperialism and Indian Feudalism

The existence of the States is a hindrance to social and political freedom, and cultural and economic advance of India. Feudalism is a bitter and obstinate opponent of all progress. It is interested in maintaining serfdom and backward feudal (purely agricultural and artisan) economy and obstructs the growth of modern industries. It is also interested in perpetuating ignorance which is the support of its dark regime and attacks brutally every attempt to spread modern democratic and scientific ideas. No real progress, social, cultural or economic, is possible under feudalism. The history of all European peoples in the past or the Asiatic nations like the Turks and the Chinese in recent times, conclusively proves it.

The abolition of the States is the precondition for the real advance of the Indian Society to higher forms of social and cultural existence.
