

The
Karnik-Roy-Shetty
Group

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The Karnik-Roy-Shetty Group.

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In one of the recent documents of the Roy group, many objections to the attacks of the Communists were raised. In the present conditions of the labour movement in India, particularly in Bombay, an answer to those complaints of the Roy followers may serve some useful purpose and keep to fight reformism in all its shades. Let us quote the main points of their complaint:

“We are not told how the Roy group deserves that title ... anti-proletarian, anti-revolutionary... CI line is wrong and had resulted in the ruin and disruption of the Indian working-class movement ... the next charge is that the Roy group was against the formation of the CP. Nothing can be further away from the truth ... It is a malicious libel to cry that the Roy group advocates the formation of a left party under the leadership of the bourgeoisie ... You have charged the Roy group with spreading distrust amongst the workers ... it is a lie ... the split took place not on difference in principle or policy, etc.”

In short, the Roy group claims that they are the Communists, true and good and that it is the Communist International, which is carrying on an anti-Communist line in India.

The Roy-Karnik-Kandalkar Group fights the Communist movement (or as they say, bogus Communist movement) under the colors of “communism”. It represents the most harmful group of reformists. All the workers will easily see that it is the line of the Roy-Karnik group, which is treacherous and harmful for the working class movement. True facts will justify it.

The Indian Communists claimed and justly claimed that the basic question of the revolutionary proletarian movement is to define clearly its attitude towards the bourgeoisie and its political organizations. The Communists declare that in India there are *three* camps, *first* — the imperialist camp composed of the imperialists, princes, landlords, moneylenders and compradors; *secondly* — national-reformist camp composed of the bourgeoisie, liberal landlords and upper strata of the petty-bourgeoisie connected with the Indian upper classes; and *thirdly* — the revolutionary camp composed of the working class, peasantry and town poor.

The process of differentiation is still going on and the biggest task of the Communists is to help the toiling masses to understand that the national-reformist camp, which, although it has its differences with the imperialist camp, comes closer and closer to the imperialists to fight jointly the growing workers’ and peasants’ revolution. The tasks of the Communists are to enlighten the toiling masses, explain and prove in practice that independence can be achieved only through a revolution carried out by

the third camp led by the working class under the direction of the Communist Party. The task of the Communists is to expose the true role of the reformist camp and isolate the reformists from the masses, destroy the influence of the reformists and *this is the main condition* to be established, so that the toiling masses should be able to march forward towards the revolution.

Now the Communists justly clears that the Roy-Karnik-V. N. Joshi group helps the reformist camp and as a matter of fact plays the role of the most harmful agents of the reformist camp in the labour movement. And it can be supported by many facts. One of the most important questions of the revolutionary movement is correctly to explain the class nature of Gandhism and of the Indian National Congress. If Gandhism represents the interests of the Indian bourgeoisie, then the workers must at the present time continuously fight and expose it without making any alliance with it, because the Indian bourgeoisie has proved that it is opposed to a revolutionary struggle for independence. If Gandhism represents the interests and aspirations of the petty-bourgeoisie, then, even while exposing, the workers can make agreements, etc., i. e., take a friendly attitude, trying to get it to our side in the fight against imperialism, because the majority of the petty-bourgeoisie is ready at the present time to fight the imperialists.

Now the platform of action of the Communist Party of India openly stated that Gandhism, from beginning till the end, represented the interests of

the bourgeoisie and liberal landlords and is nothing else but a liberal servant of British imperialism.

The Roy-Karnik group is of an opposite opinion. It claims that Gandhism represents the interests of the petty-bourgeoisie and that the National Congress thus was led by the petty-bourgeoisie. Therefore this group agitated for an all united national front (see the slogan during Bombay “Labour Week” of 1930 — workers and peasants are arm and leg of the Congress) with the bourgeoisie and proposed to put pressure on the Congress leadership through its left-wing (Nehru, Bose, etc.) in order to improve its policy. They recommended to win the Congress from within and at the same time to abstain from criticism of the Congress leadership. In short, they proposed to the working class not in attempt to come forward as an independent class force but remain as an obedient servant of the Indian bourgeoisie. Even at the present time (in 1933) when the Roy-Karnik-Kandalkar group is compelled to admit that the National Congress is run and led by the bourgeoisie (“Mahratta”, October 15, 1933, page 5) it continues to state (see an article by Karnik) that:

“Gandhi represents nothing but petty-bourgeois humanitarianism hopelessly bewildered in the meshes of the staggering forces of human progress”.

Gandhism is petty-bourgeois humanitarianism obsessed with wrong economic ideals — that is how the national reformists try to fool the masses and conceal the fact that Gandhism represents the interests of the bourgeoisie. The purpose of such an

agitation is clear. The Roy-Karnik group hopes to succeed in fooling the masses, but it will be sadly disappointed. The working class will understand that all actions of Gandhism and INC, including their participation in the Round Table Conference, collection of taxes from the peasants in UP and so on and so forth, can and should be explained only by the fact that *Gandhism represents the interests of the bourgeoisie and liberal landlords*. That is why Gandhism, after fourteen years of manoeuvres, proved now its bankruptcy. Because the reformist camp is not able to carry a fight for independence, it is not able to defend the interests of the workers and peasants, it is only able to make compromises with imperialism, it does its best to disorganize the Indian revolution.

When the bankruptcy of bourgeois Gandhism became now so clear, the Roy-Karnik-Shetty group is trying to save the situation by inviting *Nehru* to get rid of Gandhi and assume complete leadership of the INC and save the country (see the same article of Karnik). The National reformists invite the workers to give support to Nehru, who in his numerous articles and statement zealously uses pseudo-Marxism to spread the following basic Gandhi idea:

“Personally I have accepted the non-violent method, because not only did it appeal to me in theory, but it seemed to be peculiarly suited to present conditions in India. ... I believe that for a long time to come our most effective methods must be non-violent”. (*Bombay Chronicle*, 21-11-1933.)

And so, it is clear that the Karnik group, while shouting at the top of their voices that they are against capitalism and imperialism, are doing their best to defend Gandhism and INC, describing it as petty-bourgeois and Nehru as revolutionary-Marxist and in this way save the leadership and positions of the bourgeoisie and bourgeois National Congress and bring confusion in the minds of the workers. Because, after all, how can the workers fight imperialism and drive away its liberal servants, the bourgeoisie, if to them the capitalists appear without political organisation, if Gandhism and his lieutenants are simply bewildered petty-bourgeois humanitarians. And after that the Roy group has the audacity to complain of and slander the Communists, because they, the Communists, accuse them of being the servants of the reformist bourgeoisie who help, in this way, the imperialists to keep the country in subjugation.

The Karnik group recently began to claim very loudly that it believes in the hegemony of the working class. Well, let us see what are the facts. Mr. Karnik described the political development of the working class in the following way:

“But the backward of the Indian people (i. e., workers and peasants. — *Ed.*) are not yet politically conscious. ... *They are not able to grasp big political issues.* National independence must be made intelligible to them”. (*Mahratta*, October 15, 1933)

These national reformists (Karnik, Shetty, etc.) are willing to accept the political development of the

workers and recommend their participation in the political struggle when the workers submit to the leadership of the bourgeoisie and support the reformist National Congress. But when the workers begin to fight reformism and are opposing the Congress, the workers at once become in their eyes politically backward.

That is why in the eyes of the national reformists the workers are not politically conscious and cannot grasp big political issues, such as national independence. But that is a glaring lie. Even Bose, Gandhi, etc., were compelled to admit that the workers and toiling masses in general not only readily came forward to support the independence movement (1929-1932), but that it was precisely the pressure of the toiling masses that compelled the Congress leadership to start unwillingly the mass movement, but to start in such a way as to finish it as quickly as possible. And then, maybe the Roy-Karnik, etc., group heard about the boycott of the Simon and Whitley commissions movement or saw workers' demonstrations in the cities of India and heard the slogans put forward by the workers. And now our poor, innocent babies complain when the Communists declare that the Roy group is "spreading mistrust among the workers ... is an anti-proletarian group", which fights against the hegemony of the working class and the formation of the CP.

Or maybe the Karnik-Lalji-Pendse, etc., group will say that they are for the leadership of the working class because it is politically unconscious and cannot understand the need to fight for independence. This

statement of Karnik explains their appraisal of the role of the working class. In the same article it is further said:

“They must be given a programme of action. They must be led in the struggle for partial demands and *then* out of that struggle mass organizations will grow. ... Thus mobilized in the struggle with this programme of action, the masses will learn by experience that even their minimum demands cannot be satisfied under imperialism *and then* their economic struggle should be linked up with the major political issue of national independence”.

This is a programme of national reformists, and it is clear why. According to the Karnik-Kandalkar group, the working class and the toiling masses in general are not able to understand the need to fight against imperialism, that there is no use to raise before them “big political issues” and therefore it is necessary to limit their struggle to economic, trade unionist activity and put forward only partial demands. In future, promises Mr. Karnik, we will link up the economic struggle with the political one, but now, not at all. Well, innocent babies of the Karnik group, where is the difference between you and the liberals and all those who recommend the totting masses to limit themselves to legitimate struggle for economic demands and not bother with the struggle for independence, with an organisation of a mass campaign against the constitution, etc.? Is it not a programme of a national reformist, or an agent of the bourgeoisie, whose chief task is at the present time to stop and disorganize the mass

movements? A task, which now is being carried out by the liberal, Congress, Gandhi, Nehru and others.

The Karnik group tries to describe their reformist policy as a Bolshevik one and accuse the Communists of ultra-radicalism. But it is clear to everybody that this policy of the Karnik group has nothing to do with Bolshevism. The Bolsheviks always stressed the need to carry on the struggle for the partial demands and the need to carry the tactic of united front from below, both in the period of reaction, or rising a revolutionary mass movement.

“The economic, trade union struggle is one of the permanent expressions of the proletarian movement, which under capitalism is always necessary and at all times obligatory” (Lenin), and this the Communists will always remember and carry out. And it is stated in the platform of action of the Communist Party of India. But this Bolshevik definition of the policy of struggle for partial demands has nothing in common with the policy of the Roy group, which under the pretext of partial demands does its best to *limit* the working class to trade unionism only, does in best to convert the working class into an appendage of the reformist bourgeoisie, as appendage which would voluntarily clear up the political field free for the bourgeois Congress, so that it should be able together with Nehru, etc., to maintain the leading positions and control the mass movement. This policy of the Karnik-Shetty group is the policy of the agents of the bourgeoisie and must be combated in the sharpest way, because the leadership of the Working class and the formation of the Communist Party can be

achieved only when the Communists will learn to combine the struggle for partial demands with the struggle for independence and other basic tasks of the coming Indian revolution.

But Karnik-Kandalkar, who invite the workers to wait with the struggle against imperialism under the false pretext that the workers are politically not conscious, those people should not complain when they are accused of being agents of the bourgeoisie in the labour movement, because they are. Therefore, the clamour of the Roy group about alleged sectarianism of the Communist International is raised by them in order to cover up their reformist position, their fight against the independent role of the working class, against the hegemony of the working class in the mass movement, against the interests of the workers and peasants.

Therefore, it is clear why the Karnik-Roy-Shetty group is against the actual formation of the Communist Party and proposes to create a left-wing bourgeois party. *As a matter of fact the creation of a left nationalist party represents the central idea of this group*, which they try to realize all the time, although each time under a different name.

The same Mr. Karnik in his article “Retrospect of last three years and the need of the present hour” (*Mahratta*, October 1, 1933), after criticizing (!) the National Congress, declared:

“A party of the revolutionary *radicals* voicing the demands of the inarticulate masses must come forth. That is the need of the hour. The task before this

party is to champion the interests of the masses by voicing their demands and starting country-wide organisation for enlisting definite support for them and fights for their realization on every possible front and every opportunity”.

A party of radicals as the leader of the masses, to *substitute or to be more correct to assist the National Congress*, that is the old idea of the Roy group, that is clear enough. Where does the leadership of the working class come in? And after that the innocent babies are complaining. They claim that they never had the intention to subordinate the working class to the bourgeoisie. Who will believe them? One of the leaders of the “Bombay Provincial Working Class Party,” *Shetty*, wrote an article in *Mahratta*, November 19, 1933, where he explained. In a more detailed way their idea of the role of the working class.

“While admitting the necessity of the organisation of the party of the proletariat to lead the struggle, the *immediate* question of organizing the anti-imperialist forces which is presented by the present situation has to be faced. This situation has to be tackled with political realism. ... The *left-wing radicals* should make a determined effort to forge themselves into a party with a scientific programme of national-democratic revolution ... the formation of the Congress left-wing into a well-disciplined and functioning party is the correct approach to the Congress rank and file by the cadre of convinced Marxists”.

Yes, the “Marxists” (!) say, we admit the need of building a party of the proletariat (and “Bombay Provincial Working Class Party” was created to which we shall refer later), but the *immediate* task is to form a left-wing Congress Party with us “convinced Marxists” at the head of it. What for? In order to lead the national-democratic revolution. Well, there is consistency in the theories of the Roy group and this consistency is the constant light against the hegemony of the working class, against the formation of the CP. The Roy group stands by its old idea to form a left-wing (!) bourgeois party to lead the masses which they sometimes try to describe as a petty-bourgeois party that includes workers, peasants, artisans, etc., sometimes as a workers’ and peasants’ party, sometimes as workers’ party, etc. At the head of this party they visualize besides themselves Nehru, Bose, Ruikar, etc. And so, to lead the masses, the left national reformists propose to create a left nationalist party which is nothing else but a bourgeois party with a more radical programme, but to throw dust in the eyes of the workers, to satisfy their desire to form an independent proletarian organization, to fool the workers and chain them to the bourgeois chariot, the “convinced Marxists” have formed a *Bombay Provincial Party* (see *Mahratta*, November 19, 1933). The programme of this party has a number of demands, which are distinguished by their vagueness. However, it contains two clear points which constitute the very essence of it. First point: a promise to “fight all disruptive elements” (according

to their explanation — the Communists) and second point — to contest elections.

This party is a necessary supplement to the party of radicals and is put forward to keep the masses under the leadership of the Congress bourgeoisie and bring a split into the working class movement. Still, it is more typical for “convinced Marxists” that instead of placing the main stress on developing at the present time mass resistance to the constitution, instead of developing the non-payment of rent, taxes and debt campaign, instead of organizing strikes to resist the offensive of the employers, i.e., instead of putting forward a programme of action, they orientate the masses to the rash of “contesting elections”. That is exactly the task which the reformists are putting through at the present time. That is why Mr. Karnik expressed their willingness to co-operate with the democratic swarajist party. *The policy of class collaboration and splits of the working class ranks, that is the main task of this party.* Therefore one need not be surprised that one of the close followers of this party, Mr. B. R. Shinde, proposed (see *Mahratta*, October 1, 1933) to create industrial courts to settle the strikes. Can anybody be surprised after all that was said that “the convinced Marxists” *have split* the GKU, GIP, AITUC, etc., and refused the offer of unity in the GIP railway men’s union? At the meeting of the Railway Federation in Delhi (November, 1933) it was declared by the Secretary that it was on the instructions of Joshi, Mehta and other traitors of the labour movement that Kulkarni and other class-conscious workers

were expelled from the GIP Railway Union, because they fought for the interests of the workers and condemned the treachery of reformists who betrayed the GIP strike and the M. and SM Railway strike, Mr. Ruikar declared, answering the charge of Nehta, that he did not fight sufficiently strongly against the revolutionary wing of the trade union movement: "Have I not repudiated the action of Mr. Kulkarni, when I stated that he (and many workers. — *Ed*) has been expelled for his disruptive tactic?" Mr. Ruikar says, the difficulty is not with me, but to repeal formally the resolution "it means that an extraordinary general meeting has to be called for. Further, who knows *whether the workers will agree to dance* to the tune of Jammadas Mehta?" (*The Indian Labour Journal*, December 3, 1933.) The splitting policy of Ruikar, Karnik, Khedigaz, etc., is expressed very clearly. They expelled Kulkarni and many others because the reformist Mehta demanded it, because they want to crush the struggle of the workers, they want to keep the workers as voiceless slaves of the mill owners, railway bosses, etc. That's why they split the trade unions. They (Ruikar, Karnik, etc.) would have gone even farther and would have repealed the Jhansi resolution, but are afraid of the workers. The working class will see through their game and understand that *Ruikar, Karnik, Kandalkar are the real splitters of the workers' ranks and serve the interests of the bourgeoisie.* "The convinced Marxists" explained the Nagpur split of the TUC, engineered by the reformists, as ultra-radicalism. Lately they were compelled to admit that

the split took place over the vital issue whether the trade unions should fight or support imperialism.

The Communists rejected a theory that the trade union movement should be neutral in the independence movement and Nehru, Bose, etc., were compelled to support the revolutionary wing of the trade union movement on this question, although they demanded that the workers should submit to the leadership of the bourgeois National Congress. But the “convinced Marxists” sides with the agents of British imperialism. Later on the Roy group took the initiative and split the Calcutta TU Congress over the question of what should be the attitude towards the National Congress and its participation in the Round Table Conference. The Karnik-Roy-Kandalkar group accused the revolutionary trade union movement of ultra-sectarianism because it disapproved of the policy of the INC and condemned its participation in the Round Table Conference. The Roy-Kandalkar group demanded from the revolutionary workers to support the National Congress policy and under the pretext of sectarianism split the TU Congress, thus trying to crush the revolutionary labour movement. It is enough to read the articles and statements published by Bose at the same time to see that *this was the issue*. And “convinced Marxists” are trying now innocently to assert that they have split the TUC in Calcutta just over the mandates of GKU, and on no questions of policy and principles. Who will believe them? Nobody. Their sister workers’ patty in Nagpur, with Mr. Ruikar at the head, proposed to convince the Indian National Congress and the democratic

swaraj party of its (workers' party) goal and programme of action. (*Mahratta*, November 26, 1933) The role of the workers' parties that were formed by "convinced Marxists" of Karnik, Shetty, Ruikar, Lalji Pendse type *is to help* the national bourgeoisie to preserve its positions and destroy and isolate the Communists, to split the working class *and subordinate it through a party of radicals* (and its weapon—reformist workers' parties) to the leadership of bourgeois National Congress. This is the role of the Karnik group and their practice is the best proof of that. The innocent babies — "convinced Marxists" — have no right to be offended by the attack of the Communists, because they are not misrepresented. Their line is anti-revolutionary, anti-proletarian. The harm done by Roy's policy still has its effect in the working class movement. It is true that the harm is aggravated by a number of serious mistakes committed by the Indian Communists. But these mistakes of the Communists that were pointed out and explained in the open letter of the Chinese, British and German Communist Parties (in 1932) and in the open letter of the Chinese Communist Party (1933) will be rectified by the Indian Communists and the movement will grow, but the fight against the ideology and practice of the Karnik-Shetty-Kandalkar, etc., group will not stop, because the influence of the agents of the bourgeoisie in the working class movement must be destroyed so that the proletariat should be able to march forward to the victory of the peoples' revolution.

Now it is worth while to explain what are the reasons of this new left manoeuvre of the Karnik-Miss Kara. etc., group. Our memory is not short and we can remind “the convinced Marxists” that just a year ago they preached a unity with the Joshi-Shiva Rao group, claiming that the latter have accepted the platform of class struggle. This alliance the Karnik-Kandalkar-V. N. Joshi, etc., group broke off, because of the dissatisfaction of the rank and file workers. And this Mr. Karnik admitted in one of his articles in the “People” (Lahore).

The present “left” turn of this group finds its explanation *in the general collapse of the illusions of the united national front*, which swept over considerable masses of the people in 1930. The present bankruptcy of Gandhism and the policy of INC brought a strong disillusionment among the workers, considerable masses of the peasantry and revolutionary sections of the petty-bourgeoisie. The working class has seen once more Gandhism in practice. The class-consciousness of the proletariat grew very strong and the desire to have an independent working class party assumed tremendous strength. A number of workers’ parties have been formed. It is hard and practically impossible at the present time to fool the advanced workers under the color of the National Congress, they will simply refuse to follow. That is why the “left” national reformists are changing their “grab” but leaving intact their political programme, its substance. They are trying to get control over the disillusioned toilers and get a mass basis for their

group. Many Congressites claim now their loyalty to Marxism, Communism. The rank and file is sincere. Many of the rank and file followers of the Karnik-Shetty-Kandalkar group are sincerely turning to revolutionary Marxism-Leninism. They need help. It is to be explained to them that their sincere desire to follow revolutionary Marxism is being exploited by the “left” national reformists who are trying under pseudo-Communist phrases to put through bourgeois, reformist ideas.

The present policy of the Roy group is a logical continuation of its previous programme and must be sharply combated and exposed.

This fight is being carried out by the Communists. However, one point must be stressed here once more. The present offensive of the capitalists and the growth of the labour movement brought with it a growth not only of the Communist influence and organizations but of “left” reformists as well. The task of educating and enlightening those workers who follow the reformists and national reformists has to be solved. *The problem of unity of the workers’ ranks and resistance to the employers’ offensive assumed a great importance.* The national reformists are doing their best to split the trade unions and use it as an excuse not to fight the imperialists and capitalists. It is clear, therefore, that it is in the interests of the revolutionary movement not to give a chance to the reformists to fool the workers; it is in the interests of the revolutionary workers to show clearly who is splitting the labour movement; it is in the interests of the revolutionary movement to close the ranks of the

workers and develop the economic and political struggle of the proletariat.

Therefore, while carrying out sharp struggles against the Karnik-Shetty group and their ideas, it is necessary at the same time, as some leaders of the revolutionary labour movement declared, to propose to all those trade unions who follow the reformist and national-reformist leadership (only those trade unions who have masses), a *united front* to combat the capitalist offensive. Such an offer, not of simple negotiations between the leaders, but which would *include* the calling of a conference of workers' delegates elected at the mills, or conferences which should elect strike committees and prepare and organize resistance of the textile workers, resistance carried out to the point of a general strike, such a united front offer is necessary to carry out. And the same applies to the railways. This would help to show the workers who stands for the working-class interests. It would eliminate many obstacles that give extra difficulties for the revolutionary Marxists to spread their ideas among the proletariat. And it is not a cunning scheme, it is in the interests of the workers, and all those who sincerely stand by the working class will welcome such a step on the part of the revolutionary trade unions. We repeat at the same time, it does not mean that the fight against national reformism has to be stopped; on the contrary, it has to be increased.

The strength of the "left" national-reformist group (Karnik, etc.) is conditioned by the general support given to it by the "left" Congressites, by the

bourgeoisie as a whole. The present weakness of the Communist movement indirectly helps the Karnik-Lalji-Pendse-Miss Kara group to keep their hold. But they will not find a strong social base among the working class. It depends entirely upon the Communists to destroy among the workers the influence of this group in a short time. And it must be done.

Roy played a treacherous role in the Chinese Communist movement. He played a harmful role in the Indian labour movement; the results of his policy are known; there is no Communist Party in India yet. Now the CP is being formed. And it will be formed in the struggle against imperialism and *all agents* of British imperialism and the Indian bourgeoisie in the labour movement. It will be formed in persistent everyday struggle, in the mills, in the trade unions, in the villages, etc. And it must be done. In spite of the difficulties, it is the only way.

