

DOCUMENT<sup>1</sup>

## **Programme of National Liberation**

### THE PROGRAMME

Our movement has reached a stage when the adoption of a definite Programme of National Liberation as well as of action can no longer be deferred.<sup>2</sup> A programme of National Liberation must be formulated in order to state the position of those who do not believe in half way and the so-called “evolutionary” methods advocated by the compromising Liberals. The ambiguous term *swaraj* is open to many definitions, and in fact it has been defined in various ways according to the interests and desires of the different elements participating in our movement. Such a vague objective is certainly not conducive to the strengthening of a movement; on the contrary, it makes for weakness. Therefore, a militant Programme of Action has become indispensable in order to mobilize under the banner of the National Congress all the available revolutionary forces. The nation is not a homogeneous whole: it is divided into classes with diverse and often conflicting interests. All these various social classes struggle for their respective interests. They all believe that national liberation will remove their grievances. Therefore the Programme of the National Congress which is not a cohesive political party, but the traditional organ of our National Struggle, cannot be according to the interests of one certain class. The National Congress is a Coalition of all the forces oppressed by foreign domination; therefore its programme must be a coalition Programme.

First of all, we must define what form of National self-government is needed for the welfare of the majority of the nation; then is to be formulated the methods of the struggle which will lead to the realisation of this National self-government.

### PROGRAMME OF NATIONAL LIBERATION

It is a well-known fact that the domination of foreign imperialism has led to the economic ruin, industrial stagnation, social degeneration and intellectual backwardness of the people of India. The woeful tale of the unlimited exploitation and heartless suppression suffered by the Indian people at the hand of the British rulers has soiled the pages of history. The basis of our National movement is the necessity of the Indian people to free itself from this slavery. So long as the political State power is controlled by the foreign imperialist, no substantial economic and social

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<sup>1</sup> Submitted by M.N. Roy, on behalf of CPI, to Gaya Congress in 1922.

<sup>2</sup> *Documents of the Communist Movement in India*, Vol. 1, pp. 176-197.

progress will be permitted to the masses of the population. Therefore, the first and foremost objective of the national struggle is to secure the control of the National Government by the elected representatives of the people. But this cannot be achieved with the sanction and benevolent protection of the imperialist overlords, as the renegade patriots of the Liberal-League think, because any measure of self-government or Home Rule or Swaraj under the imperial hegemony of British, will not amount to anything. Such steps are calculated only to deceive the people. They are camouflage. As the leader of the struggle for National Liberation, the Congress must boldly challenge such measures and declare in unmistakable terms that its goal is nothing short of a completely independent National Government based on the democratic principle of Universal Suffrage.

#### THEORY OF EQUAL PARTNERSHIP A MYTH

The theory of "equal partnership in the British Commonwealth" is but a gilded version of imperialism. Only the upper classes of our society can find any consolation in it, because the motive behind this theory is to secure the support of the native landowning and capitalist classes by means of economic and political concessions allowing them a junior partnership in the exploitation of the country. Such concessions will promote the interests, though in a limited way, of the upper classes leaving the vast majority of the people in political subjugation and economic servitude. The apostles of "peaceful and constitutional" means are nothing but accomplices of the British in keeping the Indian nation in perpetual enslavement. It is needless to point out that England did not conquer India in order to "civilise" us, so to believe that the Indian people will attain the state of complete political autonomy under the guidance of, benign British rule is simply to entertain an illusion. But those believing in co-operation with the British Government are too hard headed businessmen to be under any illusion. If they advocate the policy of "peaceful and constitutional" means, it is because such a policy is more conducive to the interests of their class than a sudden radical change in the political administration of the country.

#### OUR LANDLORD AND CAPITALIST CLASS

The landowners are interested in the security of their estates and preservation of their right to suck the blood of the peasantry by rack-renting and innumerable other forms of exploitation. Any Government offering them this security will win their loyal support. The nationality of the rulers will make little difference. The moneyed upper classes seek expansion in the industrial and commercial field. Any Government providing facilities for this expansion will have their support and co-operation. If the British Government will insist on the old policy of obstructing the industrial development of the country our capitalist classes will militate in the nationalist ranks. But convenience of exploitation, as well as exigencies resulting from the disastrous effects of the World War today demand a change in the method of Imperialist economics. Ever increasing popular discontent forces the British ruler to seek an alliance with some powerful native element, which will find it profitable to help maintain a Government preserving

law and order. It offers economic concessions and political privileges in consideration for such help. Thus the landowning and capitalist classes find it possible to have their interests protected and aspirations satisfied within the framework of Imperialist suzerainty.

Their property rights protected, and the avenues of their economic development open under the British rule, the landowning and capitalist classes have no reason to quarrel with the former. In fact, their economic interests demand peaceful conditions, which are enforced under imperial coercion. They are afraid that a sudden change in the political status of the country will disturb the "peace and order" so indispensable for the security of property, and prosperity of commerce and industry. A clear programme of National Liberation cannot be carried through without risking a revolutionary action of the masses, who may not be so willing to go back to their socio-economic slavery after conquering the political power for the native upper classes. In order to avoid these unwelcome possibilities, the landowning and capitalist classes prefer a peaceful gradual progress. They find it wise to take as much as can be got with the least danger to themselves.

This policy of caution and compromise, however, leaves the interests of the Indian people out of consideration. It is calculated to secure and promote the interests of the thin upper strata of the people. Therefore, it goes without saying that the National Congress must declare that the realisation of the programme of the Liberal League, or any other programme fundamentally of a similar nature, does not bring the Indian nation as a whole any nearer to freedom. Because under "equal partnership in the Commonwealth" or "Dominion Self-Government" or "Home Rule within British Empire," the Indian people will still continue to be under British domination which will function with the aid and connivance of the native capitalist class.

#### NO CHANGE OF HEART

Those preaching the doctrine of "change of heart" on the part of the British rulers fail to disassociate themselves clearly from such halfway measures. Such a doctrine admits the possibility of reconciling the interests of the Indian people with those of imperialism, consequently it is a dangerous doctrine and the Congress must be freed from it. This ambiguity of its position and the vagueness of its objective have contributed to the vacillation and weakness that characterised the activities of the Congress during the last twelve months. A determined fight, which is required to conquer National Independence for the Indian people, is conditional upon a clearly defined programme and only such a programme will draw the masses of the people into the national struggle as it takes into consideration the vital factors affecting the lives of the people.

Therefore, the Indian National Congress declares the following to be its PROGRAMME OF NATIONAL LIBERATION AND RECONSTRUCTION:

1. Complete national independence, separated from all imperial connection and free from all foreign supervision.
2. Election of the national assembly by union suffrage. The sovereignty of the

people will be vested in the National Assembly, which will be the supreme authority.

3. Establishment of the Federal Republic of India.

#### SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROGRAMME

The principles which will guide the economic and social life of the liberated nation are as follows:

1. Abolition of landlordism. All large estates will be confiscated without any compensation. Ultimate proprietorship of the land will be vested in the national state. Only those actually engaged in agricultural industry will be allowed to hold land. No tax farming will be allowed.
2. Land rent will be reduced to a fixed minimum with the object of improving the economic condition of the cultivator. State Agricultural Co-operative Banks will be established to provide credit to the peasant and to free him from the clutches of the money-lender and speculating trader.
3. State aid will be given to introduce modern methods in agriculture. Through the State Co-operative Banks agricultural machineries will be sold or lent to the cultivator on easy terms.
4. All indirect taxes will be abolished, and progressive income tax will be imposed upon incomes exceeding 500 rupees a month.
5. Nationalisation of Public Utilities, Mines, Railways, Telegrams and inland waterways will be owned and operated by the State under the control of Workers Committees not for profit, but for the use and benefit of the nation.
6. Modern industries will be developed with the aid and under the supervision of the State.
7. Minimum wages in all the industries will be fixed by legislation.
8. Eight hour day. Eight hours a day for five and a half days a week will be fixed by law as the maximum duration of work for male adults. Special conditions will be laid down for woman and child labour.
9. Employers will be obliged by law to provide for a certain standard of comfort as regards housing, working conditions, medical aid, etc., for the workers.
10. Protective legislation will be passed about old age, sickness and unemployment insurance in all the industries.
11. Labour organisation will be given a legal status and the workers' right to strike to enforce their demands will be recognised.
12. Workers councils will be formed in all the big industries to defend the rights of labour. These councils will have the protection of the State in exercising their function.
13. Profit sharing will be introduced in all big industries.
14. Free and compulsory education. Education for both boys and girls will be free and compulsory in the primary grades and free as far as the Secondary. Technical and vocational schools will be established with State aid.
15. The State will be separated from all religious creeds, and the freedom of belief and worship will be guaranteed.

16. Full social, economic and political rights will be enjoyed by the women.
17. No standing army will be maintained, but the entire people will be armed to defend the National Freedom. A National Militia will be organised and every citizen will be obliged to undergo a certain period off military training.

#### HOW TO REACH OUR GOAL

The aims and aspirations of the great majority of the Indian people are embodied in this programme, the realisation of which will bring progress and prosperity resulting from National freedom within the reach of all the classes. Now the object before us is clear. Everybody knows what he is fighting for. Swaraj is no longer a vague abstraction open to any interpretation, nor is it "a mental state." Swaraj - national independence - which still continues to be the summary of our Programme represents a clear picture of the national life breathing in the healthy atmosphere of freedom.

The goal fixed, we must now find the ways and means for reaching it. It goes without saying that a bitter and protracted struggle separates us from the goal we are striving for. The "civilising" character of British imperialism will be tested by the brutal resistance it will put up against the Indian people in its attempt to realise a programme which proposes to raise India to the status of any free civilised nation. The patriotism of the liberals will be measured by the adhesion they give to this programme of ours — a programme which does not injure them but requires of every sincere Indian nationalist the courage and determination to struggle against the foreign ruler, and which aims not at the economic development of and comfortable position for a few, but for freedom, progress and prosperity for all. We know however, what to expect from both quarters; British imperialism will never "change its heart" and our upper classes will never risk a comfortable present and promising future assured to them, for real freedom to the nation. Our immediate task, therefore, is to involve in the struggle all those elements whose welfare demands the realisation of our programme.

#### ANALYSIS OF OUR FORCES

Now, in a fight it is indispensable to make a correct estimate of the available and reliable forces and to mobilise them so as to have their fullest might brought to bear upon the situation. Great masses of our National Army are just on the point of awakening. Their understanding is still limited and their vision not far reaching. The abstract conception of national liberation leaves them indifferent nor does the picture of a happy and prosperous life far ahead appeal strongly to their imagination. They are wrapped up in more immediate affairs, those affecting their everyday life. In order to lead them step by step in the greater struggle, we must take up their immediate problems. These, however, cannot be solved unless there is a radical politico-economic change; but by standing shoulder to shoulder with them in their struggle against immediate grievances, we will help them develop their revolutionary consciousness. We will convince them in actual struggle how their everyday life is bound up with the destiny of the entire nation.

It is a known fact that intensified economic exploitation has at last exhausted the patience of the Indian masses and shaken their traditional resignation. During the last years they have repeatedly demonstrated their will and readiness to fight. This rebelliousness of the masses is the solid foundation on which the activities of the National Congress should be based. To develop this, spontaneous revolt against unbearable conditions therefore will be to strengthen the national struggle. With the purpose of developing all the forces oppressed and exploited under the present order and to lead them in the struggle for national liberation, the Indian National Congress adopts the following:

#### ACTION PROGRAMME

1. To lead the rebellious poor peasantry in their struggle against the excesses of landlordism and high rents. This task will be accomplished by organising militant peasants' union which will demand: (a) Abolition of feudal rights and dues, repeal of the permanent settlement and taluqdary system; (b) Confiscation of large estates; (c) Management of confiscated estates by councils of the cultivators; (d) Reduction of land rent, irrigation tax, road cess, etc.; (e) Fixed tenures; (f) No Ejection; (g) Abolition of indirect taxation; (h) Low prices; (i) Annulment of all the mortgages held by moneylenders; etc.
2. To back the demands of the peasantry by organising country-wide mass demonstrations with the slogan of "Nonpayment of rent and taxes."
3. To organise mass resistance against high prices, increase of railway fare, postage, salt tax, and other indirect taxation.
4. To struggle for the recognition of Labour Unions and the workers' right to strike in order to enforce their demands.
5. To secure an eight hour day, minimum wage and better housing for the industrial workers.
6. To back up these demands by mass strikes to be developed into a general strike at every available opportunity.
7. To support all strikes politically and financially out of Congress Fund.
8. To agitate for the freedom of press, platform and assembly.
9. To organise tenants' strikes against high home rents in the cities.
10. To build up a country-wide organisation of National volunteers.
11. To organise strikes of the clerks and employees in the Government and commercial offices for higher salaries.
12. To enter the Councils with the object of wrecking them.
13. To organise mass demonstrations for the release of political prisoners.

#### THE FINAL STEP

The realisation of this programme of action, every clause of which corresponds to the immediate interests of one or another section of the people, will increase the fighting capacity of the nation as a whole. The National Army will be drilled, so to say, ready for action. Every class will find the Congress striving for its welfare. In face of a gigantic mass movement thus organized and involving larger and larger sections of

the population, the authority of the Government will break down. Non-co-operation of the productive elements of society will paralyze the life of the country, thus dealing a death blow to the Government. Inauguration of the campaign of nationwide Civil Disobedience will precipitate the final stage of our struggle to be crowned inevitably by the conquest of Independent National Existence, in which the people of India will have the opportunity of progressing in social, economic, and intellectual realms, in connection with the principles contained in our Programme of National Reconstruction.