

**Memorandum of Darjeeling District
Committee CPI on Gorkhastan
06.04.1947**

TO THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

In the opinion of the Communist Party of India, the District of Darjeeling belongs to the Gorkhas and it is their homeland. Further it is the considered opinion of the Communist Party of India that the Gorkhas living in Darjeeling District, the adjoining state of Sikkim and the so-called independent state of Nepal where their number is 3 lakhs, 1 lakh and 60 lakhs respectively, constitute a distinct nationality having a common language, a common culture and common historical tradition that date back to the days of Buadha and Ashoka. These three areas are contiguous to each other and here the Gorkhas on the whole, constitute the overwhelming majority community, nearly 85% of the total. It is the British who have, since their conquest of India as a whole forcibly divided the Gorkhas, disrupted their growth and checked their national development in their own imperialist interests. Beside their homeland as enumerated herein the Gorkhas live as an interspersed minority all over India, in Assam, Punjab, the United Province etc. Thus they are important minority whose legitimate interests must be safe guarded in the new constitution of India. So, any decision that is taken in regard to the future of the district of Darjeeling must be done in consultation with the trusted representatives of the Gorkha people to whom the district legitimately belongs.

It is the opinion of the Communist Party of India that the only way to further the national development of the Gorkha People is by granting them their right of determination on the basis of complete democracy which means that British imperialism and its satellites, the medieval feudal regimes of the native state of Sikkim and the so-called independent state of Nepal, must be ended.

The Communist Party of India, therefore, demands that after making necessary redivisions of the existing boundaries, the three contiguous areas of the Darjeeling district, Southern Sikkim and Nepal be formed into one single zone to be called "GORKASTHAN". On the basis of Adult Suffrage a Plebiscite may be held in all these areas on this issue and if the overwhelming majority of the Gorkha population living in these areas decide to reunite with each other in a single unit, it must be accepted. The other hill tribes and minorities belonging to other nationalities permanently residing in this zone shall have their rights and all legitimate interests, safeguarded by the constitution of the newly formed union. But this plan of the reunion of the Gorkhas living in Darjeeling District, Sikkim and Nepal can materialise only in the really free India when she has done away with the last vestiges of British imperialism and its satellites, the medieval feudal regimes of Nepal and Sikkim. Thus it depends on the politico-national development of the Gorkha people as a whole so in the interim period i.e. until "GORKHASTHAN" is formed adequate safeguards must be provided for the Gorkhas living in British India. The Communist Party recognises the limitations of the present Constituent Assembly and the British imperialist manouvers to sabotage the emergence of an agreed constitution, However....

The Communist Party of India vehemently oppose the sinister British imperialist plan of excluding the district of Darjeeling from the rest of India and its constitution into a separate Chief Commissioner's Province as has been put forward by the Darjeeling Hill Men's Association and its memorial to Lord Petrick Lawrence, Secretary for state of

India, in December, 1941. This association represents none but the local agents of the British imperialism. The Communist Party is also opposed to any such plan that might be put forward by the local agents of British Imperialism in a modified form. It has reasons to apprehend that the British Imperialists are hatching a plot to place the district of Darjeeling with other tribal peoples of Assam and Docars in a altogether new province to be called the North-Eastern Himalayan Hill Province.

The Communist Party of India demands that an immediate end must be made of the present status of the district of Darjeeling described in the Government of India Act 1935, as a "partially excluded area" and with it all the special powers of the bureaucracy, as a preliminary step to further the political, economic and culture conditions of the Gorkhas and other Hill tribes living in this district.

1. PRINCIPAL OF FRANCHISE

The principal of ADULT SUFFRAGE must be introduced so that all persons who have been deprived of their right of franchise but who are eligible for the same might be enfranchised. In the last General Election only about 27 thousand had the right to vote i.e., little over 7% of the- population. Of these, 25 thousands Darjeeling Sadar Tea Garden (labour) constituency. There are 105 Tea Gardens with a total population of over 21 lakhs and out of these 89 gardens are with complete Gorkha population and in the rest 16 also, they live and work although they are in minority there. In the last election only 12 of these gardens inside the Darjeeling Sadar Sub-Division were grouped together to form the Tea Garden Labour Constituency. If the principle of ADULT SUFFRAGE is introduced at least 60 thousands in the rural area and one lakh in the tea gardens, will have the right to vote.

2. PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

Under the present constitution there is no provision for the representation of the three lakhs Gorkhas of Darjeeling District in the Provincial Legislature although on the basis of proportion and even under the present constitution, they can claim two seats in the house of 250 members. In a vast country like India where the problem of minorities has become the problem of problems, the most democratic form of representation is undoubtedly proportional representation. The Communist Party of India demands that the principal of Proportional Representation must be introduced so that the smallest minorities like the Gorkhas, does not go unrepresented.

3. SPECIAL REPRESENTATION & GROUPING OF CONSTITUENCIES

In view of the extreme backwardness of the Gorkhas and other Hill tribes living in the District of Darjeeling and with a view to speedily bring them in line with other advanced people of India, they must get special representation and the constituencies be formed in the following manner:

(a) Tea Garden Labour:

We have seen above that there are 150 tea gardens in the district with a population of over two lakhs of which one lakh are eligible for vote on ADULT SUFFRAGE, is introduced. These 105 Tea Gardens should be grouped in six constituencies of 16-17 gardens with 6,250 votes in each so that we get six tea garden labour constituencies and accordingly 6 seats must be reserved for them in the Province Legislature.

(b) Rural Area:

Under the present system, the whole of the district of Darjeeling is grouped into one single constituency from the Bhutan border in the east to the Nepal border in the west. On the basis of Adult Suffrage there will be over 60,000 voters and they can easily be grouped into two constituencies Darjeeling and Kurseong sub-Divisions into one and Kalimpong sub-Division into another. Accordingly in the Provincial Legislature two seats must be reserved for the representation of the rural areas of the District of Darjeeling.

(c) Railway Labour:

The number of the workers in the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway is 7 thousands and majority of them are Gorkhas who have no right to vote at present. They can easily be grouped into one constituency to be called the Himalayan Railway Labour Constituency and one seat must be reserved for them in the Provincial Legislature.

The right of the Gorkhas and persons belonging to the resident hill Tribes alone to stand as candidates for election must be recognised and none but the Gorkhas and resident hillmen shall have the right to stand as candidates for election. The reasons for this are obvious.

4. COMMITTEE OF REPRESENTATIVES

A Committee with above nine representatives, to be called the Committee of Representatives, shall be formed to render advice to the Legislature on the following subjects without whose advice to the Legislature on the following subjects, without whose advice and consent no bill in regard to the following subjects shall be passed into law. (a) Agriculture (which naturally include Agricultural Lands) (b) Industries (c) Tea Industry (which must be completely nationalised) (d) Education and (e) Public Health and Local Self-Government. The Committee shall have the right to initiate bill on subjects enumerated herein provided that the majority of the members of Committee agree to the same.

The Committee elects a Chairman who shall co-ordinate the administration of the district with that of the Province as a whole and he shall also be responsible to the people as well as the Provincial Legislature for the administration of the district.

(a) Schools and Colleges:

With a view to ameliorating the backward culture, conditions of the Gorkhas and other hill tribes, the Communist Party of India demands that more schools, Colleges and one technical institution must be opened in the district of Darjeeling.

(b) Grant of Scholarships:

The backward hill students do not get any opportunity to develop their intellectual faculties for reasons of their extreme poverty and no provision has been made so far for their education outside this district and abroad nor any special grant has been made in the Provincial Budget in this respect. The Communist Party of India demands that special scholarship must be granted to deserving students for their education outside the district and abroad and the same shall be arranged through the Committee of Representatives.

(c) Use of Nepali Language and other local Vernacular as medium of instruction in Schools, Colleges and other public Institution:

Nepali Language must replace English and other language as medium of instruction in schools and colleges as NEPALI, the language of the Gorkhas is the common language in this district. Local vernaculars such as Tibetan should also be used as medium of instruction in the case of Tibetan students.

Nepali must also replace English and other languages in the court, Government Offices and other public institution.

(d) Right to start Newspapers, Periodicals, Magazines etc.:

There cannot be any cultural development of the Gorkhas and other hill tribes if there are no newspapers in the Nepali language to mould public opinion. At present there is only one fortnightly journal called the "Gorkha" the organ of the All India Gorkha League, coming out of this district. Full facilities must be granted to the Gorkhas and other hill tribes to start daily, weekly and other newspapers in Nepali and other local Vernaculars and Government must give encouragement in this respect. Existing Press Laws must be rescinded or amended to facilitate the development of newspapers in this District.

PROBLEMS OF GORKHAS LIVING IN THE OTHER PARTS OF INDIA .

It has already been pointed out that the problem of the Gorkhas is not confined to the district of Darjeeling alone. They live in other parts of India as well such as Assam, United Province and Punjab in substantial numbers. The Communist Party of India reminds the honourable members of the Constituent Assembly that their questions cannot be shelved, it must be solved effectively in order to solve the general problem of the minorities of India. If the Principles of adult suffrage and PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION is introduced in the country as a whole the Gorkhas living in Assam, U P., Punjab etc can get representation in the Legislature of the province concerned. The Communist Party thinks that the Constituent Assembly can make provisions for their representation so said herein.

If the Gorkhas of Darjeeling District are backward no less but more backward are their brothers, living in other parts of India. The Communist Party of India demands that the Constituent Assembly provisions in the constitution to include all the cultural safeguards enumerated in Para (II) herein above with necessary modifications to suit the conditions of the localities concerned.

The Communist Party of India demands the above safeguards not in a separatist spirit or to encourage separatist tendencies but with a view to rapidly bring the Gorkhas and other backward hill people in line with other advanced peoples of India so that the dreams of a free and happy India where the general prosperity of all is ensured, might be realised in practice. It will be not only surprising but a country continue the British imperialist legacy of keeping the Gorkhas and other hill peoples in backwardness and ignorance in a new India of their vision. If they give the Gorkhas encouragement and support in their fight for democracy, self-determination and a creation of a single union out of the feudal states of Nepal and Sikkim and the British administered district of Darjeeling as laid down herein above, the Communist Party of India feels sure that the Gorkhas will not only join the All-India Union but will become the best defenders of the common freedom of the people of India as a whole. Their super fighting quality is universally known and given proper facilities and opportunities for development they will become a cause of pride for India and fear for the enemies of India's freedom. To minimise their importance, to ignore their problem and to spurn their legitimate demands

is to play into the hands of India's enemies and their age-long game of Divide and Rule.

The Communist Party of India, therefore, places this memorandum before the Constituent Assembly and the Country's main political organisations through the Sub-Committee of the Advisory Committee on minorities that has been sent here for gathering reports on the excluded and partially excluded areas. And it hopes that it will receive their due attention and serious consideration.

Sd/- **Ratanlal Brahmin** M L A

Sd /-**G.L.Subba,**

For Darjeeling District Committee

COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA, DARJEELING.

Submitted on the 6th April, 1947

Copy to :

(1) Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Vice-President of the Interim Government,

(2) Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan, Finance Member, Interim Government, Leader of the Muslim League Assembly Party

R. Moktan > Sikkim Darjeeling
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