

The Paper Tiger Of Kashmir

In early January the restrictive orders on Sheikh Abdullah were withdrawn by the Government of India and he was released after about fourteen years in prison or detention with only two brief spells of freedom in 1958 and 1964. In 1953, when he was Prime Minister of the State of Jammu and Kashmir, he met Adlai Stevenson of the United States and got himself involved in U.S. imperialism's intrigues to grab Kashmir. That landed him in prison a little over fourteen years ago.

After his release Sheikh Abdullah has reiterated his demand for the right of self-determination of the Kashmiri people. At a reception held in Delhi, he declared:

"The people of Kashmir will not allow India, Pakistan or any other power to grab their birthright to decide the future of the state by their free will."

He pointed out that Kashmir had acceded to India on the condition that its fate would be finally decided by its people. He would not, he added, resile from his pledge that the people of "Kashmir alone are masters of their fate."

How does he propose to realize this demand? As, according to a PTI message, Jaya Prakash Narayan, one of his confidants, said in Monghyr on January 15, the Sheikh was anxious to seek a peaceful solution to the Kashmir issue. In his report dated January 10, the staff correspondent of the *Statesman*, wrote: "The final solution of the Kashmir problem depended on normalization of ties between the two countries [India and Pakistan], they [Sheikh Abdullah and Narayan] felt." (*The Statesman*, 11.1.68). In his reply to a questioner during a public meeting at Vithalbhai Patel House in Delhi, he regretted that "the period since independence had been full of hatred and strife between India and Pakistan and both of them had become satellites of big powers."

What is the nature of the solution of the Kashmir problem the Sheikh is seeking? At his press conference on January 4, he "pledged" to devote the rest of his life to promoting friendship and amity between India and Pakistan by working out a solution of the "Kashmir dispute" which would be acceptable to India, Pakistan and the people of Kashmir. Elaborating this, he referred to his discussions with Jawaharlal Nehru in 1964 and said that there had been agreement that *the formula for solution should be such that all the parties could sell it to their constituents*, and that would not create more difficulties. Asked whether he thought President Ayub Khan would be able to sell to his people a solution acceptable to India, *the Sheikh said that if the solution was considered fair by the world he (Ayub) must accept it*. At the same press conference, he endorsed the Tashkent Declaration and said:

"No tribute can be more meaningful to Gandhiji's memory than a nation-wide effort to infuse life and reality into the Tashkent Declaration."

When the State of Jammu and Kashmir acceded to India in October 1947, it was agreed by both India and Kashmir that "the question of the state's accession should be settled by reference to the

people." In a broadcast from Delhi on November 2, 1947, Pandit Nehru reiterated that India, when accepting the accession of Kashmir, accepted at the same time the position that the ultimate future of the State should be decided by the Kashmiri people. He said, "We have no intention of using our troops in Kashmir when the danger of invasion is past. We have declared that the fate of Kashmir is ultimately to be decided by the people. That pledge we have given. The Maharajah has supported it, and we wish to give it again not only to the people of Kashmir but to the whole world." Though repeated many times, this pledge was never redeemed and Kashmir remains divided by an artificial cease-fire line with a little over one-third of the area being ruled by the Pakistani authorities through a so-called Azad [Free] Kashmir Government and the rest forming part of India. Even the special status that the Indian portion enjoyed under the Constitution of India for some years has now been ended. Gilgit in the north, one of the most important strategic areas of the world, as it borders on China, the Soviet Union, India and Pakistan, has been presented by the Pakistani ruling class to the U.S. imperialists to serve as one of their bases.

The Sheikh rightly demands for the Kashmiri people their inalienable right to determine their own fate. But he expects (particularly after all that has happened) that his very revolutionary demand will be conceded to them by the reactionary ruling classes of India and Pakistan! And his game seems fully exposed when he endorses the Tashkent Declaration and says that if the solution was considered fair by the world he (Ayub) must accept it. At present there are two worlds in mortal conflict with each other — one dominated by the U.S. imperialists with whom the Soviet revisionists are collaborating, the other led by Socialist China and the Marxist-Leninists of various other countries. When the Sheikh speaks of 'the world', he must be referring to the former which in its frantic attempt to unite India and Pakistan in a front against China, imposed the Taskhent Declaration — a Declaration that solved none of the outstanding problems between India and Pakistan and led not to any improvement but to the deterioration of the relations between them. It is not difficult to understand that no solution considered "fair" by the U.S. imperialists, 'the chief bulwark of world reaction', and their Soviet collaborators can really be fair to the people of Kashmir, India or Pakistan or serve their interests. For quite a long, long time the British and U.S. imperialists have used the Kashmir people as a pawn in their game, a game that has brought indescribable misery and suffering to the people of Kashmir, India and Pakistan. The Sheikh must be playing their game when he looks up to them for a peaceful and "fair" solution of the Kashmir problem. He has justly accused India and Pakistan of being satellites of big powers but the status that he is himself seeking for Kashmir is no better than that of a neo-colony of the U.S. imperialists and Soviet revisionists — a hot-bed of war and aggression against Socialist China and the people of India and Pakistan. He has used many hackneyed, hollow and moth-eaten phrases about Indo-Pak friendship and the will of the Kashmiri people but those honeyed phrases cannot hide the real design. The Sheikh is striving for a reactionary solution which he wants the U.S. imperialists to impose on the reactionary governments of India and Pakistan.

Marxist-Leninists should support the right of the Kashmiris on both sides of the cease-fire line to determine their own fate. If the toiling people of India refuse to support this very just demand and to adopt a revolutionary programme on the national question and continue to rally behind their common enemy, the imperialist-feudal-comprador combine, that oppresses both the toiling people of Kashmir and themselves, they can never be free. **In their own interest they must link**

the revolutionary struggle for People's Democracy with a revolutionary programme on the national question. While fighting for the overthrow of the rule of the imperialists, the big landlords and the big bourgeoisie, they should uphold the right of self-determination of Kashmiri and other peoples. Lenin said:

"Never in favour of petty states, or the splitting up of states in general, or the principle of federation, Marx considered the separation of an oppressed nation to be a step towards federation, and consequently, not towards a split, **but towards concentration, both political and economic, but concentration on the basis of democracy**" ("The Revolutionary Proletariat and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination", *Collected Works*, Vol. 21, p.410).

To quote Lenin again,

"We demand freedom of self-determination, i. e., independence, i. e., freedom of secession for the oppressed nations, not because we have dreamt of splitting up the country economically, or of the ideal of small states, but, on the contrary, because we want large states and the closer unity and even fusion of nations, only on a truly democratic, truly internationalist basis, which is *inconceivable* without the freedom to secede". (Ibid)

On the national question the Dangeites and the neo-revisionist leaders of the CPI (M) have completely surrendered to the reactionary classes and serve as their lackeys. Of course, they try hard to cover up their shameful betrayal of Marxism-Leninism with anti-imperialist phraseology but their stand on this issue is essentially no different from that of the rabid Hindu chauvinists. While the Dangeites, like the Congress rulers, claim that the will of the Kashmiris has already been expressed in favour of accession to India and that no change in the status quo can be permitted, the neo-revisionists hold that though the will of the Kashmiri people has not yet been ascertained, the status quo must continue. (Cf. Communist Party Statement issued by E. M. S. Namboodiripad, *People's Democracy*, November 7, 1965). In other words, both support the present stand of their masters — the ruling classes of India — that the portion of Kashmir they have grabbed, must remain theirs while the other portion of Kashmir may go to Pakistan. The people of Kashmir on both sides of the cease-fire line are mere chattels to be disposed of as the imperialists and their lackeys decide! This is Marxism-Leninism, indeed!

The right of self-determination can never be obtained by a nation as a gift from its oppressors. It is by waging an uncompromising struggle against them that a people can achieve this right. The toiling people of Kashmir, who during the British rule led the people's struggles in princely states against feudal and imperialist oppression, will have to take to the same path again. **Our struggle and theirs will be directed against the same enemy — imperialists and their lackeys, the big landlords and the big bourgeoisie.**

Sheikh Abdullah, instead of relying on the people of Kashmir, is depending on the imperialists, especially U.S. imperialists, and the reactionary ruling classes of India and Pakistan to achieve his goal. He is thus playing a very reactionary role, which may prove extremely harmful to the interests of the Kashmiri people, whom he claims to represent. As the people of Kashmir become more and more conscious of the sinister designs of U.S. imperialism and its ally Soviet revisionism, and of the reactionaries of India and Pakistan, they will also see through his game,

rid themselves of his influence, and choose the correct path — and the Sher-e-Kashmir (the Lion of Kashmir) will prove to be a mere paper tiger.

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