

# The Comintern and the East

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## A Critique of the Critique

*The Falsifiers of Leninist Strategy  
and Tactics in the National Liberation  
Movement Exposed*

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# THE GREAT VICTORY OF OCTOBER 1917, THE COMINTERN AND THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION OF THE 20th CENTURY

## IN LIEU OF INTRODUCTION

BY R. A. ULYANOVSKY

### I

The 20th century will go down in the history of mankind as the age of the most wide-ranging and far-reaching remaking of the world and one that has seen the revolutionary process spread globally and socialism score sweeping and irreversible victories. It has been the age of "the socialist international revolution against imperialism".<sup>1</sup>

Lenin pointed out that a socialist revolution must not be seen as a single battle on a single front: socialism versus imperialism. "This revolution," Lenin wrote, "will be an entire epoch of intensified class struggles and all kinds of social upheavals, a whole series of battles on most diverse fronts over all kinds of economic and political changes which have long been overdue and which require a fundamental recasting of old relationships. These democratic changes, *making up* the notion of social revolution, cannot but comprise a restructuring of ethnic relations as their component."<sup>2</sup> To resolve the totality of conflicts arising from all the outstanding economic and political issues will mean making a social revolution, Lenin indicated.<sup>3</sup> It is this historic process of world-wide importance that Lenin described as "the socialist international revolution against

<sup>1</sup> See: V. I. Lenin, "Socialism and War", *Collected Works*, Vol. 21, Progress Publishers, Moscow, p. 317.

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, "To the Article 'The Revolutionary Proletariat and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination'", *Complete Works*, Vol. 54, p. 464 (in Russian).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

imperialism". It was started over six decades ago when the heroic proletariat of Russia, under the guidance of the Bolshevik Party led by Lenin, burst the chain of imperialism and for the first time in history the struggle of the working people against exploitation and social and national oppression was crowned with a full victory, the victory of the October Revolution—the key event of the century which radically changed the course of mankind's evolution.

As a result of "a whole series of battles on most diverse fronts" consequent upon the Great October Socialist Revolution, this planet's socio-economic and political panorama greatly changed due, ultimately, to the operation of the natural historical laws governing the development of human society. A world socialist system emerged and consolidated itself. All the attempts to restore capitalism undertaken by internal and international reaction fell through. The international communist movement has become the most influential political force of modern times. Scores of former colonial and dependent nations have become independent. It will not be too long before the last seats of colonialism are stamped out. The working class is strengthening its position in the developed capitalist countries where the influence of the political forces working for a socialist remaking of society is growing. In the context of international detente, the balance of forces in the "socialism-imperialism", confrontation continues to tilt in favour of socialism.

The victory of the October Revolution marked a new starting point for the liberation movement of oppressed nations. Its development acquired basically new qualities. It generated unprecedented power, to begin with. The events in Russia touched off an urge for liberation everywhere. The emergence and consolidation of existing socialism, first in one country and then in a large group of countries, compelled imperialism to concentrate its forces on the "central battlefield" against the international anti-imperialist revolution. The USSR and, subsequently, other socialist countries went on expanding their political, economic and military assistance to the national liberation movements. The very example of existing socialism and its performance (in the USSR, first and foremost) in all areas of social and

political life and in resolving the national question have had a tremendous effect.

Even in the years immediately following the October victory, the struggle of oppressed nations took on a different aspect. Imperialism came under global pressure from its colonial and semi-colonial provinces, with hundreds of millions on the move. A sharply intensified liberation movement of the Indian people, the winning of Afghanistan's independence, the anti-imperialist peasant war in Gilan (Persia), the Kemalist revolution in Turkey, numerous uprisings of Arab peoples, widespread ferment in Indonesia which led up to the armed insurrections of 1926-1927, the anti-imperialist revolution in China, the victory of the Mongolian revolution—all that occurred in the first ten years after the October Revolution. The intensity of the anti-imperialist struggle was rising.

A further flare-up of anti-imperialist action by the mass of the people of the East marked the postwar period. In a new setting—after the oppressed peoples of many countries had played their full part in the struggle against the “Axis Powers”, after bourgeois-democratic countries had to turn to the people of “their” colonies for support in their war effort, after the strength and invincibility of the Soviet Union had become an obvious fact and its prestige and influence in international affairs had greatly increased, and after popular-democratic revolutions had triumphed in a number of countries—the national liberation movement entered a new stage. It started to win victory upon victory, while in earlier times victories (in the sense of gaining national independence) had been rare (Mongolia, Afghanistan, Turkey). After the Second World War, the East actually entered the period of formation of national states. This was a fast developing process. India became an independent nation over 30 years ago, in 1947. Southeast Asia was in the heat of a liberation struggle, and China, where the People's Liberation Army led by the Communist Party was on the offensive against the US- and British-backed Kuomintang, was the scene of a continuing civil war. Africa was still an enslaved continent. Now there are nothing but a few “islands” left of the colonial system of imperialism, the system which had taken centuries to put up and 25 to 30 years to pull down.

And it was perfectly natural for the independent states arising in place of the last (Portuguese) colonial empire to have consolidated themselves upon the foundations of a revolutionary-democratic form of government with internationalist assistance from the Soviet Union and other socialist states. Just as effective has been the socialist community's aid to the Vietnamese people who did away with the pro-US puppet regime in the South and formed a united socialist state.

## II

Another basically novel trend gained ground in the liberation movement of oppressed peoples after the victory of the Great October Revolution. The only attainable object of all struggles for national liberation prior to the October Revolution (whether in Europe or in oppressed continents) was to form bourgeois-national states, with a socialist revolution in prospect, far or near, depending on the intensity and "freedom" of the development of capitalism. The movement for national independence was, consequently, democratic and anti-feudal in its social respect. The course of events subsequent to the October Revolution bore out Lenin's prediction that the movement of oppressed peoples, originally directed against imperialism, would become anti-capitalist. Now that oppressed nations could rely on the victorious proletariat for help, the anti-capitalist aspirations of the revolutionary national democratic forces powerfully influenced by Marxist ideology became *feasible*. In other words, there appeared an alternative to capitalist development, an alternative that had not existed before.

It must be emphasised that to recognise the possibility of skipping or interrupting capitalist development (this possibility was comprehensively proved by Lenin) has nothing in common with the idea that it is enough for a particular people to grasp the indisputable fact that "capitalism is bad" to take a non-capitalist course. "Capitalism is bad", there is no capitalist structure established as yet or, if there is, it has other forms beside it; so, the only thing to do, as the partisans of such views theorise, is to "choose" a pre-capitalist structure and "develop" it into socialism

(as they see it), while the very understanding that capitalism is intrinsically "foreign" to a particular people will ensure success. This means losing sight of the fact that in the West, too, capitalism had once been nothing but one of the social structures in existence, that in the West, too, it had been "foreign" to traditional existence and traditional thinking and, in spite of that, capitalism in the West had successfully "digested" other structures and became a social formation.

Lenin's idea of non-capitalist development is basically opposed to concepts of this kind. It follows from the assumption that a capitalist phase can be skipped or interrupted at a certain level of development of world capitalism; that means also that it follows from the definition of capitalism as a world system (this definition was given by Lenin after a searching analysis of the imperialist stage of capitalism). Owing to the uneven development of nations—a process that operates in full measure and on a global scale in the context of imperialism—the countries of the East turn out to be the oppressed province of the imperialist system but, nonetheless, a part of the system of world capitalism; the same process creates the conditions for the victory of socialism, first in one country and then in a group of countries; world socialism becomes a powerful force providing support and all-round assistance for the oppressed nations to rely on in advancing to socialism even before capitalism has established itself as a social formation within their national frontiers. In other words, Lenin's theory of non-capitalist development infers this possibility from the laws governing the evolution of world capitalism after socialist revolution has been carried out and socialism established in one or in a number of countries.

The feasibility of skipping or interrupting capitalist development largely depends on the pattern of political force that comes to rule a liberated nation. If this is a national bourgeois force, then the prospect for non-capitalist development remains impracticable as long as this force is in power. If this is a revolutionary-democratic, anti-capitalist force, it brings with it a political opportunity of embarking on a non-capitalist path of development. If this is a Communist party, then capitalist development is stopped through a socialist revolution. The possibility of a revolution-

ary-democratic force turning towards capitalism does not in any way indicate that non-capitalist development led by such a force is impossible; on the contrary, it only underlines the specific quality of non-capitalist development or socialist orientation as distinct from the socialist remaking of society under a Communist party's guidance. One point to stress is that in such a case the force that finds itself in power in a liberated country is the one which held the dominant positions in the struggle for liberation or which is strong enough to crowd out its rival after independence has been achieved. In any event, the political possibility of non-capitalist development, the forms of its realisation and the time of transition to this type of development largely depend on the balance of class forces while the struggle for independence is still on.

The Mongolian People's Republic was the first to take the road of non-capitalist development soon after the October Revolution in Russia. For decades it had been the only case of such a trend outside the Soviet Union. One should not forget, however, that the trend for non-capitalist development could show itself in full, first, only as world socialism consolidated itself and, second, when the formation of national states was no longer a rare occurrence, but a common development throughout the East. At the present time, there is a large group of socialist-oriented countries with a total population of around 150 million.

The distinguishing feature of the present situation is the great variety of ways followed in their development by the countries which have gained their political independence. Three groups of emergent nations of Asia and Africa stand out: the states that are choosing socialist orientation; the states with capitalist trends predominating; and the states where the progressive forces and internal reaction are still locked in a hard battle for a course to follow, with a further prospect yet to be cleared up.

There are, in consequence, two options before the former colonial countries: progressive separation from capitalism or association with it. The former offers an opportunity to secure social and economic progress to the benefit of the large mass of the people and genuine political independence along with resolving social conflicts by eliminating neo-colonialist and pro-imperialist elements, the

forces of reaction and capitalism and thus gradually raising the working people's standard of living. Historical experience indicates that the development of capitalism in African and Asian countries cannot ensure fast growth rates, and that it exacerbates class contradictions, condemns the mass of the people to more suffering, and tends to leave them open to neo-colonialist domination by imperialism.

While regarding socialist-oriented states as the vanguard of the national liberation movement, the Marxists-Leninists never ignore the anti-imperialist potential of other ex-colonial and dependent countries. They welcome consistent anti-imperialism, stout defence of economic and political independence, the policies of forward-looking change pursued by the ruling classes from positions of patriotism and anti-colonialism, and are prepared to support the political forces which have not lost these qualities. Obviously, socialist orientation is the best possible expression of the aspirations of the working masses of Asia and Africa in modern conditions, and it is bound to be embraced by many more nations. Consistently democratic revolutionary elements are strengthening their positions in many countries of Asia and Africa, and the prestige of Marxists-Leninists as well as the popularity of scientific socialism are growing there. There has been enough evidence since World War II to attest to the mounting role of the working class and Marxist-Leninist parties in developing countries. The Communists have all along been active in the national liberation movement as well as in initiating social and economic change and fighting for the complete economic and political independence of their countries.

The peasantry, too, has a growing part to play in the process of progressive social and political change now going on in liberated countries. It has been the largest force of the national liberation movements which unfolded after the victory of the October Revolution in Russia and led to the collapse of the colonial system of imperialism. In those early years it was fighting already not only for national liberation, but also against feudal and landowner dominance, for restructuring agrarian relations and for land. The sweeping movement of the peasantry, anti-feudal in general and anti-capitalist at its "lowest level", is a factor largely instrumental in shaping the position of the ruling circles of

liberated countries but, naturally, this factor affects the policies of these circles in a different way depending on their social and political orientation and their class character. The programme of revolutionary democracy reflects the peasantry's anti-feudal interests in large measure. But the anti-capitalist interests of the grass-root peasantry form the subject of controversy and divisions within the framework of revolutionary democracy over how far these must be reflected in its plans and practice. The ruling national bourgeois circles, having a stake in the fullest possible "freedom" of capitalist development, are giving preference to anti-feudal agrarian reforms leading to a further stratification of the peasantry. The reactionary regimes, expressing the interests of big landowners and the bureaucratic bourgeoisie, operate as an anti-peasant force; in some instances these classes resort to a military dictatorship precisely in order to suppress the social energy of the peasantry. Marxists-Leninists in the countries of Asia and Africa see greater political activity by the peasant masses as one of their major objectives.

What the Marxist approach to deciding on the position of the peasantry in the revolutionary process in Asia and Africa implies is not choosing between the proletariat and the peasantry. It implies taking into account the possibilities of either of these classes, bringing them closer together, of their unity and alliance, not opposition. Such an alliance of the working class and the peasantry is not only possible, but it has actually been formed in dozens of countries.

The alliance of the working class and the peasantry in the countries of Asia and Africa is the kernel of a larger problem, that of welding all the anti-imperialist forces together within a national democratic united front. Experience indicates that the struggle for independence will be doomed to failure unless it brings together all the national anti-imperialist and patriotic forces behind its banner.

Direct forms of colonial plunder have now given way to neo-colonialist exploitation. Nominal independence cannot satisfy the people and its democratic forces. They aim to win real independence which continues to be principally obstructed by the involvement of former colonial countries in the world capitalist economic system on terms of predatory, non-equivalent exchange. Emergent nations found for

themselves that they could not obtain fair trade terms if they fought for them one by one. That gave rise to the idea of concerted action to modify the world system of economic exchange which has fetched a widespread response from developing nations and has already been translated, in part, into actual reality. The struggle for a fundamental restructuring of international economic relations becomes a paramount precondition for eradicating neo-colonialist exploitation. This struggle has the full support of the socialist community.

While upholding their economic independence, developing nations are showing great interest in the experience the USSR and other countries of the community have gained in building socialism, and are increasingly anxious to develop business cooperation with the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance and its members whose internationalist policies they know very well and value.

### III

One precondition for the defence of the political independence the developing countries have won, for the achievement of their economic independence and for their effective resistance to neo-colonialism and racism is the preservation and consolidation of international peace. It is for this particular reason that the developing nations are most anxious for the relaxation of tensions to continue and for detente to become an irreversible process and a permanent factor of international politics. Detente is conducive not only to economic and cultural development, but also to the struggle for national and social liberation as it creates the best conditions for acts of solidarity and international aid to embattled peoples. It is in the context of detente that there have been such major victories of the national liberation movement as the abolition of the puppet regime in South Vietnam and the unification of all Vietnam into one socialist state, the winning of independence by the people of the former Portuguese colonies as well as such history-making shifts as the entrance of more nations upon the path of non-capitalist development, intensification of the democratic movement and resolute and concerted action by emergent nations in the world arena.

The easing of tensions does not mean a status quo for the racially and colonially oppressed nations, that is, a reconciliation with racism, colonialism, imperialism and reaction. It implies more action by the entire international community and, above all, by the democratic progressive forces, and leaving the peoples free to decide their own destinies, without outside interference. Opposing racism, colonialism and imperialism, opposing reaction means promoting, not impeding, detente, for only a just settlement of international conflicts and equality of nations create a reliable basis for unbreakable peace.

The drive to ease tensions does not at all mean that the socialist countries and the international working-class movement are in any way repudiating their internationalist duty to support the liberation movements in whatever form may prove necessary. In its policy, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union is invariably guided by the great principle of Communists--the principle of proletarian internationalism. Leonid Brezhnev referred to it in his speech to the 25th Congress of the CPSU: "Our Party supports and will continue to support peoples fighting for their freedom. In so doing, the Soviet Union does not look for advantages, does not hunt for concessions, does not seek political domination, and is not after military bases. We act as we are bid by our revolutionary conscience, our communist convictions."<sup>1</sup>

There have been what one may well describe as sweeping revolutionary changes in the countries of Asia and Africa in the recent period. Never yet has the anti-imperialist movement been so extensive and militant. Never yet have the ideas of socialism had so much appeal to the broadest masses of the people in the former colonial countries. Never yet have the nations free from colonial dependence played so eminent a role in international affairs. Never yet has the cooperation of the developing nations and the socialist community been so comprehensive, stable and consistent.

The socialist system and the international working-class and communist movement now have a sustained wide-ranging revolutionising impact on the modern evolution of the

<sup>1</sup> *Documents and Resolutions. XXVth Congress of the CPSU*, Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, Moscow, 1976, p. 16.

peoples of former colonial and dependent countries.

“The socialist international revolution against imperialism” continues. This is a gigantic process with nothing to match it in all previous history, one in its diversity and diverse in its oneness. While retreating, imperialism continues to resist. It is capable of counterattacking and even winning some ground for a time. It works hard to adapt itself to the new conditions, revamps its strategy and tactics, tenaciously holds on to its privileges, hoping, by means of economic domination, to regain what it has lost. Neo-colonialism, as a system of economic, political, military and ideological pressures, is the means the imperialist powers are now using in an effort to retain their positions in the developing countries. Imperialism in these countries has the bureaucratic bourgeoisie, the landowning class and the reactionary militarists as its allies. But there is more to it. Socio-economic backwardness and the consequent weakness of the working class; centuries-old traditions of dissociation on the grounds of tribe, religion or caste (these really durable traditions are still often said to die harder than they actually do, which is an exaggeration; the very fact of their subsisting alongside the social and economic mobility of the population in industrial centres is a paradox in its own way); the distrust in the oppressor nations in general, even in their proletariat,<sup>1</sup> which is due to the oppression that lasted for centuries; massive lumpenproletarian segments of the townspeople, a product of enormous rural overpopulation; no experience of political democracy—all these circumstances combine to help imperialism keep the nations of Asia and Africa in its sphere of influence, and cannot be eliminated within a historically short space of time. Not even do they disappear automatically with one or another particular country dropping out of the imperialist orbit, and so finally to overcome the consequences of backwardness is one of the major objectives of the socialist transformation of the world. If you look back, however, upon the road the nations of the East have travelled since the victory of the Great October Revolution, you will see that this vast region has gone through some

<sup>1</sup> See: V. I. Lenin, “Preliminary Draft Theses on the National and the Colonial Questions”, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 150.

fundamental change during a historically brief period of time. This has been a result of the alliance between the forces of socialism and the national liberation movement redounding to their mutual advantage.

Progressive change in the East, just as the great political alliance which has made it possible, has been achieved in the course of mankind's historical advance from capitalism and even pre-capitalist formations to socialism and communism. At the same time, it has been a product of the conscious activity of mankind's vanguard—the Marxist-Leninist parties which exert a comprehensive, scientifically-grounded and, therefore, effective influence on the historical process. The Leninist Party—the leader of the first victorious socialist revolution in history—has become the leading and guiding force of Soviet society; fraternal Communist parties lead the other countries of the socialist community; the international communist movement, guided by Leninist ideas, has been, ever since its inception, striving to build an alliance of the working-class movement with the liberation struggle of oppressed nations and rally the revolutionary forces together around the Soviet Union and, subsequently, around the socialist community. This has meant translating into reality, both internationally and nationally, Lenin's great ideas of cooperation of the main revolutionary forces of modern times involved in "the socialist international revolution against imperialism". Internationally, this has been the struggle for the unity of the states of the victorious proletariat, the working class of capitalist countries, and oppressed peoples of the East. Nationally, this is the united front of all anti-imperialist elements and the application of the Leninist theory of non-capitalist development of economically backward peoples, put forward at the Second Congress of the Comintern.

#### IV

Lenin's principles were adopted by the Third, Communist, International. The Comintern called on the Communists in colonial and semi-colonial countries to follow the strategy and tactics of united front and to work with the mass non-communist organisations of the working people and,

above all, the peasantry, without failing, however, to do everything necessary to promote the independence of the working-class and communist movement, even if embryonic in form.

The united front policy, reaffirmed and creatively developed by the Seventh Congress of the Comintern, contributed towards launching a massive anti-imperialist movement of oppressed nations and led to the Communist parties winning vanguard positions in this movement. And after the need for Communist parties to stand united within a single organisation had ceased to exist, the Comintern's basic theoretical, tactical and strategic ideas on the national and colonial question remained and still are a strong weapon of Communists. Subsequently, they had been updated to apply to the new, changed conditions. A tremendous contribution towards developing them has been made by the congresses of the CPSU and international forums of Communist and workers' parties. Thus, experience has shown that there are at least four possible varieties of the united front in the countries of the East today: 1) the national bourgeoisie is still capable of fighting imperialism and feudalism and can, therefore, participate in a united anti-imperialist front; 2) revolutionary democrats and Communists (wherever the Communist parties are strong enough) are the principal forces of a united front; 3) undivided leadership of the workers, peasants and the petty bourgeoisie is exercised by the revolutionary democrats; 4) the liberation movement is led by Communists who subsequently come to power. The latter three varieties are for a situation in which the national bourgeoisie can no longer play a positive part in a united front, in cases when the process of social change has come into conflict with its class interests.

The foregoing makes quite evident both the continuity and the creative power of the policy of Marxists-Leninists in respect of the liberation movement in the East. This is an effective policy most closely connected with other activities of Communist parties. The contribution of the international communist movement to the progressive remaking of the developing world is tremendous indeed; its part in unfolding the "Eastern flank" of "the socialist international revolution against imperialism" is decisive in the long run.

It is only natural, therefore, that bourgeois ideologues should be attacking the theory and practice of Marxist-Leninist parties in dealing with the problems of the liberation movement of oppressed nations. What are the most common features of these attacks?

Let us point out, first of all, that, in attacking the policies of the USSR, the socialist community and the Marxist-Leninist parties, bourgeois ideologues, as a rule, turn to history: they strive to prove that the "defects" they have invented and claim to be typical of the policies of Marxists-Leninists are immanent to the communist movement in general.

Bourgeois ideologues and historians are trying to belittle and distort the significance and effect of the policies of the USSR, the socialist community and fraternal Communist parties in respect of developing nations. They do so not only by downright fact-twisting in the manner, for instance, of Leopold Grünwald who, in an attempt to demonstrate the "failure of the Soviet strategy for the third world", has resorted to a simple trick of listing certain progressive regimes along with reactionary ones (and claiming maliciously that the number of states with a ruling establishment reflecting the interests of reactionary elites is still great).<sup>1</sup> There is yet another, more "respectable" method. It is the argument that the only aim of the Marxists-Leninists' policy towards the East is to have Communist parties actually brought to power in all Eastern countries, and that the only purpose behind the declared principle of fusing Marxism-Leninism with the liberation movement of oppressed peoples is to impose communist ideology on their many millions. The rest is simple: since these "aims" have not been achieved, that means that communist policies in the East have failed. The Communists, however, have never set themselves such aims, as all honest students of the problem know quite well.

Bourgeois ideologues and historians assert that the Soviet Union is striving for hegemony in Asia and Africa. However, there is not a single fact in the record of the Soviet Union's relations with the nations of Asia and Africa

<sup>1</sup> See: Leopold Grünwald, *Legend des Weltkommunismus*, Vienna, Cologne, 1974.

to demonstrate an intention of the first socialist state, so typical of capitalism, to seize their land or wealth. The aims and intentions of the Soviet state in dealing with liberated nations have always been perfectly clear and honest. Soviet foreign policy has never had anything to do with a doctrine of subjugating the nations of the East. The Soviet Union has never looked, nor is it looking now, for any "vacuum" in Eastern countries for organising military-strategic bridge-heads and putting together aggressive blocs.

Bourgeois ideologues and historians declare that the Leninist strategy of forging an alliance of the international proletariat and the Land of Soviets with the national liberation movement is a "departure from internationalism" and a "turn towards nationalism". The combining of international, national, class and anti-imperialist objectives, a feature typical of Leninism which has always placed the class-proletarian interests ahead of everything else, remains beyond the comprehension of bourgeois ideologues and historians.

Bourgeois ideologues and historians misrepresent the relations between the Comintern and the Communist parties of Eastern nations (just as they do, incidentally, when writing about the communist movement in the countries of Europe and America). In their publications the Comintern and its Executive Committee look like "bodies with special powers", which, they claim, imposed a political line on Communist parties, a mistaken one at that. In actual fact, the Comintern rendered massive assistance to the member parties in coping with urgent issues in their life and activities by bringing into play the vast generalised experience of the great communist movement; the Comintern's advice and recommendations served to correct the policies of the Communist parties of Eastern nations from more realistic positions than those held by the local core of party workers inexperienced in class warfare. They claim, for example, that the Comintern was "responsible" for the defeat of the Communist Party of China in 1927, while ignoring, of course, the now indisputable fact that Chiang Kai-shek had tremendous superiority of forces; or speaking about the crushing of the Communist Party of Indonesia (CPI) in November 1926-January 1927, they just as self-righteously forget to mention the Comintern's numerous

warnings and sensible, thoroughly conceived and most appropriate recommendations which were not accepted by the sectarian-minded CPI leaders. As one can well see, for instance, from the books, articles and other publications of the leading spokesmen of the Communist parties of Vietnam, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, the countries of the Arab world and other regions as well as their communist historians, these parties highly value the assistance which the Comintern rendered them in party-building, in mapping their political course, and taking specific decisions, and they do not, certainly, need any "compassion" of their class adversaries wishing to put them into backdated opposition to the Comintern.

Bourgeois ideologues and historians turn and twist the actual history of the communist movement in the East, nurturing the illusion that they can discredit the banner of Marxism-Leninism in the eyes of Eastern peoples. This is the object behind the claim that the Comintern is "responsible" for the defeat of the Chinese revolution, that the Comintern imposed leftist and sectarian precepts on the Communist parties of the East and that the Comintern had decided to start its work in the East by immediately organising Communist parties which were to establish the Soviet form of government under their leadership, in other words, a dictatorship of the proletariat, etc.

Bourgeois ideologues and historians assert that Marxist historiography sees the Comintern as something like an "icon" and does not notice any flaws or mistakes in its activities. Suffice it to turn to the resolutions of the Seventh Congress to find out that the Comintern did see its mistakes and corrected them. Let us note those affecting the Comintern's Eastern policies. There is no doubt that the slogan of a revolutionary democratic dictatorship and the power of the Soviets, enunciated at the turn of the 1930s, proved to be premature practically for all the Eastern countries with Communist parties in action; neither is there any doubt about the fact that the call for a united anti-imperialist front and an underestimation of the anti-imperialist potentialities of the national bourgeoisie following the Sixth Congress of the Comintern were a contradiction; nor is there any doubt about the fact that the problem of a non-capitalist development, raised by Lenin at the Second

Congress, was never worked out thoroughly enough in the Comintern. Moreover, the Comintern misjudged Gandhism for quite a long time showing elements of a sectarian approach to this question.

An outstanding leader of the CPSU and the international communist movement, O. W. Kuusinen (at one time the man in charge of the Eastern Secretariat of the Comintern Executive Committee), said at the 20th Congress of the CPSU: "We have, in fact, taken the initiative in correcting the sectarian mistakes which in earlier years found expression in some pronouncements by Soviet orientalists and in certain publications of the Communist International. Proceeding from nothing but a criticism of Gandhi's philosophical views, which are known to be a far cry from Marxism-Leninism, some of our political journalists were as one-sided as to dismiss Gandhi's positive role altogether.

"I want to add that our historians and propagandists have enough reason to make a critical study and re-examination of some of our other publications, as the well-known theses of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern on the colonial question. Specifically, I mean the definition and evaluation in the theses of the role of the national bourgeoisie in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. Such an evaluation, even at the time when the said theses on the colonial question had been drawn up, betrayed a certain sectarian approach. In the changed circumstances of modern times, with the greatly increased prestige of the Soviet Union, such an evaluation does not correspond to reality at all."<sup>1</sup>

There were many circumstances to account for such miscalculations: an insufficiently realistic assessment of the situation—the "Great Depression" was expected to produce conditions for capitalism to be crushed, the vacillating, conciliatory policy of the national bourgeoisie incurring the mistrust of Communists and, finally, the inadequate information the Comintern had to go by. Such mistakes can be made by any living and fighting organisation, especially such a huge, ramified and trailblazing one. But those were by no means the miscalculations and mistakes which have been and still are ascribed to the Comintern by its oppo-

<sup>1</sup> O. W. Kuusinen, *Selected Works*, Politizdat, Moscow, 1966, p. 509 (in Russian).

nents, i.e., those mentioned earlier on.

Bourgeois ideologues and historians feign ignorance of the Comintern's service to the liberation movement of the Eastern nations. Let us note at this point one important issue which never, as a rule, receives more or less serious treatment in their writings. The Comintern, following the Leninist principle of self-determination of nations (Lenin, may we remind you, interpreted the right of nations to self-determination as the right to secede and to form an independent state), consistently upheld the demand for the complete national independence of colonies and semi-colonies, and urged Communists to rally the mass of the people on this basis. What is important, besides, is that the Comintern had stood by that demand ever since its inception, while the bourgeois, national-reformist forces, which subsequently led many Eastern nations to independence, still found this slogan too radical, and limited themselves, at best, to that of "self-governing". The progress of the struggle vindicated the historical rightness of the Comintern which had advocated the independence principle right from the start. The Comintern, furthermore, committed itself to the pursuit of a united front of all anti-imperialist forces first launched at the Second Congress. Of course, the anti-imperialist potentialities of some social groups were not always adequately appreciated, but the Seventh Congress put paid to the "touch of sectarianism", reaffirmed and amplified the basic guidelines of the Second Congress. It is, in fact, difficult to overestimate the Comintern's contribution towards building up a front of all anti-imperialist forces in a number of countries of Asia and Africa, which became the major condition for the liberation of those nations.

One more thing to note is that the Comintern never saw the winning of national independence by colonies and semi-colonies as an end in itself, but closely linked national objectives with social objectives, thereby contributing towards the involvement of the mass of the people into the anti-imperialist and national liberation struggle; thus, even in the national stage of the revolutionary process, the Comintern constantly and consistently urged the Communist parties to fight feudalism and press for fundamental agrarian reforms. Great agrarian revolutions have, indeed,

taken place since liberation in the countries which came to be ruled by Communists; notable headway was made in the struggle against feudal vestiges in many of the countries with other anti-imperialist forces in commanding positions. Much of the credit for this, too, goes to the Comintern which, while constantly urging the Communist parties to combine the national liberation struggle with the anti-feudal struggle, greatly contributed towards unfolding both. Now, this is precisely what bourgeois and reformist historians are trying to blame the Communist International for.

This is the position of bourgeois and reformist historiography regarding a number of major problems of the history of the Comintern and its Eastern policy. The objects of investigation chosen, the material used and the specific conclusions drawn by Franz Borkenau, Edward Carr, Hugh Seton-Watson, Branko Lazitch and Milorad Drachkovitch, Julius Braunthal, Carl Landauer, Walter Laqueur, Ruth McVey, Benjamin Schwarz, Conrad Brandt and many other bourgeois and reformist historians who have dealt with the history of the Comintern's Eastern policy, are different. But their common class position brings them together on basic, fundamental problems and induces them to present the Eastern policy of the Communist International in a false light.

Soviet researchers feel it is their duty to disprove the fabrications of historians whose views arise from the philosophy of the bourgeois class. Truth is the best weapon in this battle. To counter the attacks of bourgeois historiography the contributors to this book draw the true picture of the battle waged by Lenin, the Comintern and Communist parties on the Eastern flank of "the socialist international revolution against imperialism". Principled and scientific criticism of bourgeois and reformist writings on the history of the international communist movement in the East is relevant to, and consistent with, the aims which the present-day communist movement sets itself in dealing with the problems arising from the liberation struggle of the peoples of Asia and Africa. These aims consist in promoting closer cooperation of the forces of socialism and national liberation based on a community of interests so as to counter the divisive tactics of imperialist and reactionary circles by the real and everyday unity of action directed against

imperialism, for independence, peace and social progress. Leonid Brezhnev, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, pointed out the exceptional importance of this task. "In these conditions," he said in his message to the 12th session of the Council of the Afro-Asian Solidarity Organisation, "it is a matter of still greater importance to have the unity of action of the nations of world socialism and the national liberation movement, and the developing countries—natural allies both in the struggle for the freedom and independence of all peoples and in the battle for equal cooperation of all nations, for mankind's peaceful future."<sup>1</sup>

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The present book follows up and elaborates on the study of the Comintern's Eastern policy which has earlier been undertaken by the Institute of the International Working-Class Movement of the USSR Academy of Sciences and summed up in a collection published in 1979.<sup>2</sup>

This new edition is to mark the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Communist International.

<sup>1</sup> *Pravda*, September 18, 1975.

<sup>2</sup> *The Comintern and the East. The Struggle for the Leninist Strategy and Tactics in National Liberation Movements*, Ed. by R. A. Ulyanovsky, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1979.

## THE COMINTERN'S ORIENTAL POLICY

A. B. REZNIKOV

The non-Marxist historiography of the international communist movement practically has no monographic studies on the oriental policy of the Communist International and dealing with the entire period of this organisation's activity. On the other hand, there are many publications on the Comintern's history, with its oriental policy being one of the subjects of investigation. It is these general publications that are dealt with in the review that follows.

The authors of these publications, holding various positions inside the non-Marxist political spectrum and having a different educational and professional background, proceed from more or less uniform postulates in terms of their class content, turn their attention to generally the same subjects, and arrive, by this kind of analysis, at what are, naturally, similar conclusions. In criticising their positions, this writer follows the trail blazed by Soviet researchers: the Marxist-Leninist doctrine opposes bourgeois, reformist and left-wing revisionist constructions by a thorough study of the theory, policy-making and actual performance of the Comintern, the revolutionary organisation of the international working class, which was, for its day, an historically conditioned and necessitated form of development of the international communist movement.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See: *The Communist International. A Short Historical Essay*, Politizdat, Moscow, 1969; *V. I. Lenin and the Communist International*, Politizdat, Moscow, 1970; *The Second Congress of the*

Let us have a look at some studies by bourgeois, reformist and revisionist historians; we shall see that they have some views, notions and concepts in common.

Franz Borkenau was a pioneer of the bourgeois historiography of the Comintern: his book *World Communism* had its first printing in 1939. Borkenau noted that Lenin considered that the peoples of the colonies could become the proletariat's allies in the struggle against world imperialism. He went on to conclude: "Though the defence of nationalism was hardly compatible with socialist internationalism, Lenin, pushing aside all objections of principle, had from the earliest days of his career insisted upon the right of every nation to acquire complete political independence if it is so desired."<sup>1</sup> This judgement is not just typical of non-Marxist historiography, it is a kind of its "supporting structure".

However, it is perfectly clear to anyone who has made a serious study of Lenin's ideas regarding the national and colonial question that what Lenin favoured was not nationalism at all, but its anti-imperialist aspect, and that he stood by the class-inspired view that it is the principles of proletarian internationalism, of united action and of bringing together all anti-imperialist forces that dictated the support of the liberation movements of oppressed peoples. Borkenau dismissed all that out of hand. He went on to claim that "where communism became an element of native risings, it

*Comintern. Ideological, Tactical and Organisational Guidelines for Communist Parties*, Politizdat, Moscow, 1972; *Georgi Dimitrov, an Outstanding Leader of the Communist Movement*, Politizdat, Moscow, 1972; *The Third Congress of the Comintern. Developing the Political Line of the Communist Movement. Communists and the Masses*, Politizdat, Moscow, 1975; *The Comintern and the East. The Struggle for the Leninist Strategy and Tactics in National Liberation Movements*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1979; *Lenin in the Struggle for a Revolutionary International*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1970; G. Z. Sorkin, *Reality Versus Fiction. Critique of Bourgeois and Reformist Historiography of the Communist International*, Mysl Publishers, Moscow, 1974; V. M. Leibzon and K. K. Shirinya, *A Turn in the Comintern's Policy*, Mysl Publishers, Moscow, 1975 (all in Russian).

<sup>1</sup> Franz Borkenau, *World Communism. A History of the Communist International*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1962, p. 285.

was mostly a communism which had little practical connection with Moscow".<sup>1</sup> Borkenau referred to Indonesia as a case in point but, in describing the communist movement in that country, he did not say a word about its rather important contact with the centre of the international communist movement. As to India, Borkenau asserted that it had taken the Comintern "nearly ten years to form a communist party in British India"<sup>2</sup> (in actual fact, the Communist Party of India was formed five and a half years after the Second Congress of the Comintern). He claimed that, excluding China, the Comintern's influence on the national liberation and communist movement in those countries was negligible. In reality, as the studies by Marxist historians have shown, the Comintern's links with the Communist parties of India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam and other Eastern countries were unbroken and stable, while its influence on the development of the revolutionary process over there was lasting and far-reaching.

Borkenau paid certain attention to the discussions on the national and colonial question at the Second Congress. It is worth noting at this point that Borkenau started what has proved to be a rather convenient tradition for bourgeois historiography—to make as little analysis as possible of the subject of "Lenin, the Second Congress of the Comintern and the National and Colonial Question", but to mention it with the aim of hammering a certain "cliche" into the reader's head. That was an obvious trick. To have done otherwise would have meant, above all, informing him about the actual sum and substance of Lenin's theses and statements at the Congress suggesting the guidelines for the Comintern's oriental policy in the closest association with its world-wide policies. That is something that no bourgeois or reformist historians, not even some non-Marxist or anti-Marxist historians venture to do. To tell everybody about it would mean altogether refuting their own assertions about "nationalism", "unprincipled pragmatism", etc.

Here is how Borkenau presented the "V. I. Lenin-M. N. Roy Discussion". Roy considered that only two classes—the workers and the peasants—could wage an anti-imperialist

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 287.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 288.

struggle; hence, therefore, the main task, as Roy saw it, "was not so much to support the ephemeral fight of feudal elements, muftis, and pashas against the great powers of the West, but to form and strengthen Communist parties"<sup>1</sup> (the reference, in actual fact, was not so much to muftis and feudal lords, as to the national bourgeoisie). The Congress, Borkenau wrote further on, could either accept or reject Roy's point of view, there was no other way. But the Congress approved both resolutions, Lenin's and Roy's. One called for the "unconditional support" of the national liberation struggle in the East, while the other denied the usefulness of such support. It has earlier been shown in some publications by this writer that Roy's theses in their final form were not an *alternative* to Lenin's in any way (although they can be seen to bear certain traces of "leftism"), and that before Roy's theses were accepted by the Congress, Lenin had stricken off their original text a number of sectarian propositions making up a leftist system of views.<sup>2</sup> The odds are that Borkenau knew nothing about Lenin's editing of Roy's theses. But even if he did not, it is contrary to fact to claim that Lenin's theses and the final text of Roy's cancelled each other out by their meaning.

One chapter in Borkenau's book deals with the problems of the Chinese Revolution. His argument is that after the events of March 1926 the Communists should have broken with Chiang Kai-shek, but they were stopped from doing so by the Comintern which thereby condemned the Communist Party of China to defeat. Borkenau's arguments were in full accord with the views of Trotsky. In general, bourgeois critics of the Comintern's policy very often borrow their arguments from Trotsky (this point will yet be dealt with). Along with him, Borkenau asserted that the Executive Committee of the Communist International "was responsible" for the defeat of the Chinese revolution and the crushing of the Communist Party of China in 1927. "To Stalin," Borkenau writes, "only two logical courses were open: either to drop the generals and support the Communists, or to support the generals Chiang and Feng, and drop

<sup>1</sup> Franz Borkenau, *Op. cit.*, p. 292.

<sup>2</sup> See: *Kommunist*, No. 7, 1967, pp. 91-102; *Narody Azii i Afriki*, No. 6, 1974, pp. 45-56.

the Communists. Both courses promised a certain amount of success. The course he chose presented no chance of success.”<sup>1</sup> That meant reducing the whole of that most complicated task of the policy of China’s Communist Party in a national revolution to a quite elementary thing, all deliberately oversimplified to the extent of an absurdity. But even so primitive a presentation makes it clear that the “solutions” suggested by Borkenau would have been fatal both to the Communist Party and the revolution. Had the Comintern broken with the national revolutionary generals—as Trotsky had stubbornly insisted—that would have meant smashing the Communist Party forthwith and drastically holding up the revolution. Had the Comintern broken with the Communist Party (one would have to follow Borkenau’s logic to make such a crazy supposition), the generals would just as well have torn the Communist Party asunder right away, and would have stopped the advance to the North in collusion with imperialists. The whole point was that the task in hand was twofold and complex. Borkenau showed an utter reluctance to see that the core of the Comintern’s oriental policy was its attitude to the national and class tasks of the proletariat in an anti-imperialist revolution as interrelated, complementary and mutually conditioned tasks.

This “masterpiece” in its line is conspicuously devoid of factual material of any substance. Bourgeois writers, who got down much later than Borkenau to studying the particular aspects of the communist movement in particular countries, at least set themselves the task to study the actual state of things (as did, for example, Ruth McVey in her book about the Communist Party of Indonesia).<sup>2</sup>

Borkenau repeated the allegation of anti-communist propaganda that “Moscow was out to trigger off a world war” and to that end the Soviet Union was looking for new allies. That was, he claimed, the background to changes in the Comintern’s policy in the mid-1930s and to its case for democracy. He practically passed over the substance and significance of the decisions of the Seventh Congress for the East. For an honest analysis of these would certainly

<sup>1</sup> Franz Borkenau, *Op. cit.*, p. 309.

<sup>2</sup> See: Ruth T. McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1965.

have shown their theoretical groundwork to have been laid back in the infancy of the world communist movement.

Borkenau's book had a second printing in 1962, with an introduction by Raymond Aron.<sup>1</sup> Some space in that introduction was given to the "oriental question". Aron approvingly quoted Borkenau as having condemned the policy of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) and of the Comintern with regard to the Chinese revolution, and welcomed Borkenau's Trotskyist interpretation of the Chinese events of 1925-1927<sup>2</sup> (claiming that the Chinese revolution failed because the Comintern had ceased to be a revolutionary organisation).

A certain amount of space has been given to the Eastern problems in the book *The Pattern of Communist Revolution. A Historical Analysis* published in Britain by Hugh Seton-Watson.<sup>3</sup> He followed Borkenau in his interpretation of the Comintern's history. Incidentally, he treats the Second Congress of the Comintern, which voted to accept Lenin's fundamental theoretical, tactical, policy and organisational conclusions, as no more than the congress that approved the terms of admission to the International.<sup>4</sup> So the national and colonial question as dealt with at the Congress could therefore be left aside. There is a special chapter "Communism in Asia 1919-1935". Seton-Watson views the oriental policy of the Comintern and the CPSU (B) from what is a common standpoint of a bourgeois historian. He considers that in 1920 the Comintern had to choose between supporting "the forces of social revolution" or "the existing nationalist leaders".<sup>5</sup> This is the same set of false alternatives as that proffered by Borkenau: internationalism and the pursuit of social emancipation alleged to cancel out support for non-proletarian national forces; if, however, the Comintern had combined both in its policy, that must be taken as evidence that it was "unprincipled and dogmatic". The rest was simple: the Soviet Government is said to have abided by the latter point of view, while the

<sup>1</sup> Franz Borkenau, *Op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3-7.

<sup>3</sup> Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Pattern of Communist Revolution. A Historical Analysis*, Methuen and Co., Ltd., London, 1960.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 73-75.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

“pure communist internationalists” adhered to the former. The latter point of view increasingly predominated as years went by. Yet neither did the Comintern and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union stop supporting the forces of social revolution. The result was, Seton-Watson wrote, that they did not earn the confidence of the nationalists and lost that of “many revolutionaries”.<sup>1</sup>

For one thing, let us note that Seton-Watson meant leftists and, first of all, Trotskyites when he spoke of “pure internationalists”. For another, the Comintern never had to make the kind of “choice” Seton-Watson referred to. The headquarters of the world communist movement considered that it must encourage the utmost development of the communist movement in the colonies and semi-colonies, while supporting the forces of national liberation in general. Just as the Communists uphold the vital everyday interests of the working class, which, far from distancing them from their ultimate goal, brings them nearer to it, so the most consistent and steadfast struggle of the Communists for national liberation is a bridge for them to traverse in building up the influence of the working class and of the entire working people in the national liberation movement so as to pass on to resolving the problems of social reorganisation. But there is more to it. Communists most honestly fought for national liberation since the interests of the people were their own interests as well. The “dilemma” Seton-Watson wrote about had never confronted the communist movement as a whole; only some individual Comintern spokesmen, like M. N. Roy, believed it necessary for the Communists to give up direct action for national liberation. That abandonment was part and parcel of the system of Trotskyist views, opposing that of the Comintern, and had always been under fire from Marxism-Leninism in all the parties of East and West. Finally, Seton-Watson is utterly wrong in contending that the Comintern’s policy had caused it to lose the confidence of “many revolutionaries” (meaning Communists). In actual fact, the Comintern’s prestige among the Communists of colonial countries was very high and rose as the communist movement developed in more and more of Asian and African countries.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

After a cursory review of the problems connected with the nationalist and communist movements in Turkey, Persia, Arab countries and in Indonesia, Seton-Watson takes a somewhat closer look at the various questions of the Chinese revolution. But the reason why he was so keen on the Chinese issue was, above all, because the Communists in China had suffered defeat for which he blamed the Comintern. Besides, in considering the irreconcilable differences over the Chinese question between the opposition, on the one hand, and the CPSU(B) and the Comintern, on the other, Seton-Watson favours the Trotskyites. Contrary to reason and fact, he likens the Chinese scene of 1927 to Russia's of 1917, exaggerating the Communist Party of China's influence with the masses and explicitly claiming that what took place in Russia in October 1917 could have happened in China ten years later.<sup>1</sup>

Seton-Watson pays some attention to the problems of a united front in China subsequent to the Seventh Congress of the Comintern. However, while trying to put the blame for the 1927 defeat on the Comintern and the CPSU(B), he naturally prefers to pass over the Comintern's intervention after the Seventh Congress, which prevailed on the CPC leadership to seek a united front. The way he presents the Hsiang events of December 1936 would suggest that the Comintern had nothing to do with their outcome. In actual fact, the CPC leaders had intended to execute Chiang Kai-shek who happened to be in their hands, which would have ruled out the possibility of a united front, and it was the Comintern's intervention alone that deterred them.

In a later book, *Nationalism and Communism*,<sup>2</sup> Seton-Watson reverted to the Comintern's policy in China during the revolution of 1925-1927 in an attempt to vindicate the position of those who had set about splitting the international communist movement. Here is how he presented the case: in the 1920s Moscow advised the Chinese Communists to enter into a close alliance with Chiang Kai-shek, and it restated that recommendation even after Chiang Kai-shek had come out as an overt enemy. It was for that reason that the Chinese Communists had done nothing

<sup>1</sup> Hugh Seton-Watson, *Op. cit.*, p. 149.

<sup>2</sup> Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nationalism and Communism. Essays 1946-1963*, Methuen and Co., Ltd., London, 1964.

against Chiang Kai-shek, which led to the beating-up of workers in Shanghai in April 1927 and to other reprisals by the Kuomintang. Those disasters were not forgotten by Mao Tse-tung who, Seton-Watson claims, during the subsequent ten years salvaged the remnants of communist forces in desert areas and created a "nucleus of power" there.<sup>1</sup>

That is all contrary to fact. To begin with, the Comintern had never unconditionally recommended "a close alliance with Chang Kai-shek" to the Communists. It was in favour of a united front with the Kuomintang in the anti-imperialist struggle, provided only that the CPC preserved its independence. Furthermore, if the Comintern had insisted on action by scattered workers' squads and individual communist companies and battalions against the national revolutionary armies, the defeat of the revolution would have been quicker in coming and heavier in proportion. Besides, in 1927 (that is, before the reactionary coups), Mao Tse-tung held a rather moderate position and did not favour a clash with Chiang Kai-shek and, subsequently, with the left Kuomintang. Finally, the policy that salvaged the remnants of Chinese Communists had been worked out by a whole group of leading Chinese Communists, using the recommendations and instructions of the Executive Committee of the Communist International.

Considerable space is given to the tactics of the Comintern and the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) with regard to the national and colonial question in a multi-volume work by Edward Hallett Carr.<sup>2</sup> In the third volume, Carr, referring to the "V. I. Lenin-M. N. Roy Discussion", in the chapter entitled "Revolution over Asia", suggests that "the theses of Lenin became henceforth the accepted basis of Bolshevik theory and practice in the national and colonial question".<sup>3</sup> He is convinced, as, incidentally, all bourgeois and reformist historians, that Lenin's theses were not as revolutionary as Roy's. Carr fails to see that Lenin's theses dialectically combined a revolutionary approach and political realism, although, on the other hand, he realises that the idea behind the theses was to bring about a socialist

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224.

<sup>2</sup> Edward Hallett Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-1923*, Vols. 1-3, Macmillan and Co., Ltd., London, 1950-1953.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, p. 257.

transformation of the world with the vast mass of oppressed Eastern peoples involved in the struggle to achieve it. Carr, like almost all bourgeois and reformist historians, believes that Lenin gave in to Roy by consenting to substitute "national revolutionary" for "bourgeois-democratic" as the definition of possible temporary allies of the proletariat. He is certainly mistaken. There is no indication at all to prove that it was Roy, not Lenin, who was the first to suggest the term "national revolutionary". On the contrary, it was Lenin who, pointing out the inconsistency of the Eastern bourgeoisie, suggested that it would be right to replace "bourgeois-democratic" by "national revolutionary". But since the question at issue was that of bourgeois allies and it was suggested that an alliance should be concluded with them only if they were "truly revolutionary", it must be owned that Lenin proceeded from the assumption that the Eastern bourgeoisie could, in principle, play a revolutionary role. But having said that, let us stress once more that Lenin was referring in this case to the national bourgeois element, not the peasant masses. The foregoing makes it quite clear that, far from giving in to Roy, Lenin took one more step forward in elaborating his idea about the possibility of a temporary alliance with bourgeois democracy in colonies and semi-colonies.

Further on, Carr accentuates the distinction between the theses of Lenin and Roy after the latter's had been revised by Lenin and a commission of the Second Congress. Unlike many bourgeois historians, Carr does not see Lenin's theses on the national and colonial question as prompted by sheer practical necessity. He tries to analyse them in the general context of Lenin's views and perceives the connection between the basic ideas behind Lenin's theses and Lenin's principle of an oppressed nation's right to secession. Carr writes: "The new line also corresponded with the conception 'of manoeuvring, of conciliation, of compromises with other parties, including bourgeois parties', which Lenin had propounded so trenchantly three months earlier in *The Infantile Disease of 'Leftism' in Communism*."<sup>1</sup> Carr gives a fairly detailed account of the proceedings of the Congress of the Peoples of the East in Baku. Carr's book,

<sup>1</sup> Edward Hallett Carr, *Op. cit.*, Vol. 3, p. 257.

however, contains no circumstantial analysis of the Comintern's policy in the East.

The West German historian Günther Nollau in his book *The International. The Roots and Forms of Manifestation of Proletarian Internationalism*,<sup>1</sup> deals with some problems of the Comintern's strategy and politics in respect of the national and colonial question. But he has just a few paragraphs describing the relevant decisions of the Second Congress. Nollau uses current bourgeois literary cliché to present Lenin's approach to the subject: Lenin proposed that, for tactical considerations, the Communists in colonies and semi-colonies should support "bourgeois-democratic liberation movements". That is to say that he reduces Lenin's entire scientific system of views to a rough-hewn pragmatic proposal. Nollau does not say a word about Lenin's major ideas of an anti-imperialist united front, the vanguard role of the Communist parties in the national liberation struggle, the launching of a mass struggle of the working people in the East and the indispensable preservation of the independence of the communist movement, etc. Nollau's line of reasoning is to suggest that it was by no means a revolutionary policy that Lenin advocated for Asia; it was, he appears to claim, Roy alone who adhered to revolutionary positions.

The author reverts to the Eastern problems when he writes about the Comintern's Chinese policy. That, too, is no more than a brief essay abounding in misestimations and inaccuracies. Thus, Nollau followed the Trotskyites in asserting that in 1926 the Comintern admitted the Kuomintang as a "sympathising member".<sup>2</sup>

The book by James W. Hulse *The Forming of the Communist International*<sup>3</sup> has some space devoted to the national and colonial question as treated at the Second Congress of the Comintern. Hulse misunderstood the basic difference between the views of Lenin and Roy. He thought it to consist in that Lenin was in favour of supporting the

<sup>1</sup> Günther Nollau, *Die Internationale. Wurzeln und Erscheinungsformen des proletarischen Internationalismus*, Verlag für Politik und Wirtschaft, Cologne, 1959.

<sup>2</sup> Günther Nollau, *Op. cit.*, p. 87.

<sup>3</sup> James W. Hulse, *The Forming of the Communist International*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1964.

bourgeois-democratic liberation movements in the colonies, while Roy contended that the liberation movement could not be confined to the bourgeois-democratic elements, but must involve landless peasants as well.<sup>1</sup> But, first, Lenin favoured supporting the bourgeois-democratic movement, having in view that this was primarily the peasant struggle. Second, as far as the aid to the bourgeois-nationalist elements was concerned, Lenin considered it necessary, above all, as a means of "breaking through" to the masses of the working peasantry. Third, Roy in no way believed that the movement should not be confined to supporting the bourgeois-nationalist elements; his point of view was different: he contended that these elements did not deserve any support at all. No less confusion is to be found in Hulse's cursory speculation about a difference between Lenin's and Roy's viewpoints regarding the possibility of non-capitalist development. According to Hulse, Lenin considered such development to be possible only if Europe turned communist; Roy, he argued, held an opposite view. But Lenin had never claimed anywhere, whether directly or indirectly, that the victory of a socialist revolution in Europe was an indispensable condition for skipping capitalism in the Eastern countries. All he did was to point out that one of such indispensable conditions was assistance from the victorious proletariat of the Soviet republics, without identifying them with a "communist Europe".

Hulse, however, was keen enough to observe that Lenin's consent to a revision of the theses to make them support the national revolutionary elements was not a concession to Roy. Hulse writes: "Lenin gave the Congress to understand that he still considered 'bourgeois-democratic movements' within this category"<sup>2</sup> (i. e., the national revolutionary movements—*Auth.*).

Arthur Rosenberg in his book *History of Bolshevism* largely passes over the problems of the Comintern's policy with respect to the national and colonial question. In his interpretation of the ideas put forward by Lenin at the Second Congress of the Comintern, Rosenberg oversimplifies Lenin's scientific concept by a tactic which is already

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 201-02.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203.

familiar to us, that is, by ascribing a purely pragmatic character to it. Rosenberg presented Lenin's line of reasoning at the Second Congress of the Comintern in this way: "The majority of the earth's population lives in oppressed, not imperialist countries, and, therefore, the proletarians of the Western nations must turn to the oppressed peoples for help."<sup>1</sup> Rosenberg cannot, of course, pass over the problems connected with the Comintern's policy towards the Chinese revolution, for that revolution was defeated. His arguments are imitative: either there had to be unconditional support for the Kuomintang, or else, if the Chinese revolution was believed to have gone beyond the bourgeois framework, the Communists ought to have pursued an "independent" policy.<sup>2</sup> The Comintern risked a compromise, trying to combine the two policies, and that resulted in a defeat, Rosenberg writes. This idea—loosely linked with a false dilemma—Lenin and the Comintern ought to have *either* favoured the social emancipation of the Eastern peoples, *or* supported the non-proletarian anti-imperialist forces—runs through one book into another, as we have already seen.

Dietrich Geyer's article "The Communist International"<sup>3</sup> devotes little space to the national and colonial questions as they were dealt with in the Comintern. The author casually refers to Lenin's theses at the Second Congress and to their emphasis on "special alliances with anti-imperialist movements for independence". He draws the attention to the fact that the "power of agitation" these theses had showed itself at the congresses of the peoples of the East in Baku and the peoples of the Far East in Moscow, and goes on to remark: "In subsequent years this concept of alliance became politically important, above all, for the Comintern's cooperation with Dr. Sun Yat-sen's Kuomintang." He reverts to the Comintern's oriental policy when he writes about the "disaster of communist policies in China". And, of course, the author of the article claims, without any

<sup>1</sup> Arthur Rosenberg, *Geschichte des Bolschewismus*, Europäische Verlagsanstalt, Frankfurt on the Main, 1966, pp. 169-70.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 239.

<sup>3</sup> Dietrich Geyer, "Kommunistische Internationale". In: *Sowjet-system und demokratische Gesellschaft. Eine vergleichende Enzyklopaedie*. Vol. III, Herder, Freiburg, Basel, Vienna, 1969, pp. 771-91.

evidence to bear him out, that the opposition was right in its polemic with the Comintern over Chinese policy.<sup>1</sup>

Geyer's article contains not only misjudgements but gross factual mistakes and spurious assertions. For example, speaking about Lenin's work in preparation for the establishment of the Communist International, Geyer writes that Lenin attached fundamental importance to the contradiction between the rich states and the "poor nations" under colonial oppression; therefore Lenin abandoned the notion that the European working class is the vanguard of the world revolution; its leading sections—Lenin is alleged to have presumed—are corrupted by imperialism and involved in colonial exploitation; this is said to have led Lenin to conclude that the most vulnerable spot of the imperialist system is no longer to be found in the Western industrialised countries, but in the outlying regions of Europe and beyond its confines.<sup>2</sup> But Lenin made no contentions of this kind. What he really did was to emphasise: the world is divided into two unequal groups of countries—the imperialist powers, the colonialists, and the colonial nations they oppress. However, the conclusions Lenin drew from this are not those which Geyer writes about, but diametrically opposite. He did not oppose the revolutionary movement in the East to the proletarian struggle in the advanced Western countries, but pointed to the community of interests between both movements.

A book entitled *Lenin and the Comintern*, by Branko Lazitch and Milorad M. Drachkovitch, published in the United States,<sup>3</sup> pretends to be objective. Its Chapter 9 is called "The National and Colonial Questions and the Comintern's Initial Policy in the East". The authors have considered Lenin's work on the theses for the Second Congress. They find that the only reason why the national and colonial question was raised at the Second Congress at all was because of the difficulties experienced by the revolutionary movement in the West and the gains of Soviet Russia's oriental policy. The authors do not attach paramount importance to the fact (actually they do not men-

<sup>1</sup> Dietrich Geyer, *Op. cit.*, pp. 776, 778.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 773.

<sup>3</sup> Branko Lazitch, Milorad M. Drachkovitch, *Lenin and the Comintern*, Vol. 1, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford, 1972.

tion it at all) that the Second Congress laid the theoretical foundations of communist strategy and tactics in general and, for that very reason, the national and colonial question, as part of the problem of world revolution, could not have been left out at that fundamental congress. In contrast to many other Western researchers, Lazitch and Drachkovitch turn to the substance of Lenin's "Preliminary Draft Theses" and stress in particular the idea about the need for Communists to enter into temporary alliances with bourgeois democracy of colonies and semi-colonies without losing their own political independence in the process. The authors write: "This simple sentence at the end of the theses was to become, the very next month, the official creed that would guide the acts of all sections of the Comintern."<sup>1</sup> The authors go on to sum up the comments Lenin received on the "Preliminary Draft Theses" which he had published. They conclude that Chicherin, Stalin and Preobrazhensky expressed their disagreement with the theses. Let us note here that this conclusion is far from being accurate because Preobrazhensky and Chicherin expressed their disagreement with some of Lenin's propositions, while Stalin's remarks were of no consequence in point of principle. The authors believe that Lenin carefully reacted to Roy's critical comments, and in that sense they are right, of course. The idea of supplementary theses occurred to Lenin because he met Roy, as Lazitch and Drachkovitch think<sup>2</sup>. In this context they follow Roy who writes in his *Memoirs* that Lenin offered him to produce supplementary theses because he had been impressed by the convincing arguments of his opponent. In reality things were different. The reports on the national and colonial questions at the Second Congress were made by two speakers—Lenin and a representative from an oppressed nation. The latter was Roy as a revolutionary from the world's largest colony and, besides, an educated and talented man. The authors give a rather casual account of the latest studies by Soviet historians of Lenin's work on Roy's theses.

They go on to say: "After the modifications made first by Lenin and then by the Commission, Roy's supplemen-

<sup>1</sup> Branko Lazitch, Milorad M. Drachkovitch, *Op. cit.*, p. 384.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 385-86.

tary theses contained nothing that contradicted Lenin's, though their emphasis was more pronouncedly Eastern and revolutionary."<sup>1</sup> Roy's theses, too, contained, in their opinion, a warning against ultra-revolutionary action, that is, they referred to the idea that "the Revolution in the colonies is not going to be in its first stages a Communist revolution".<sup>2</sup> Along with that, they remark that "Lenin did not find it necessary to enter into public debate with Roy over nuances".<sup>3</sup>

By and large, the section of the book by Lazitch and Drachkovitch dealing with the national and colonial questions in the Comintern is the most substantive study of this subject in bourgeois historiography.

Nevertheless, in their interpretation of Lenin's attitude to "left" Communists, the authors peremptorily assert that Lenin has turned out to be wrong in the historical sense. He supposedly believed that the right-wing and centrist Socialist parties of Europe would be discredited and defeated. Is it worthwhile recalling that Lenin, unlike the "left"—and against them—described the struggle against social-reformism as a hard and time-consuming job? Lenin's book "*Left-Wing Communism—an Infantile Disorder*" was largely devoted to making out the case. History has, undoubtedly, proved Lenin to have been right when he said that the reckless "left" course had no prospect before it. Now, the partisans of that course, openly acting against Communist parties, find themselves in the political backyard both in Western and Eastern countries—from Italy all the way to the Philippines.

So distinguished a bourgeois historian as Arnold J. Toynbee, who did whatever he could to appear objective and respectable, presented the development of the communist movement in the East as a continuation of the traditional "Russian expansion". He considered that Russia's expansion to the East had begun a long time ago, military reverses interrupted it, but with Communists in power it was resumed with renewed force. "Marx's secular gospel of Communism gave Russia a psychological appeal which naked Czarism had not been able to make. Hence the

<sup>1</sup> Branko Lazitch, Milorad M. Drachkovitch, *Op. cit.*, pp. 391-92.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 392.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

Soviet Union could command in China—as elsewhere—a formidable ‘fifth column.’”<sup>1</sup> This is a mixture of everything: the desire to make communism look like a “purely Russian doctrine” and the intention to picture the Communist parties of the East as “agents of Russia” and a total reluctance to find out for sure which particular internal conditions in many countries of the East have led to the origin, development and victories of the communist movement. Toynbee’s allegations do not square with the facts of reality; moreover, his very method in this case holds no water. Of all the numerous factors which, interacting, led to the emergence of the international communist movement, in the East in particular, Toynbee has chosen only one—the “influence” of Russia—and even that he distorted. This is a common occurrence: a big-calibre bourgeois scholar stops being professional and objective whenever he has to deal with a subject arousing his class ill-feeling.

The lack of understanding of the substance of Marxist dialectics often leads scholars, holding social-reformist views (even those of them who are doing their best to remain objective), to distort the real history of the Communist International. In a large work *European Socialism* by the reformist Carl Landauer, the author devotes just a few paragraphs to communist views on the national and colonial questions.<sup>2</sup> Landauer believes that the “Declaration on the Nationality and Colonial Questions”, adopted by the Second Congress of the Communist International, “shows considerable wavering between the tactical need for a broad alliance and the class-struggle concept”. The same old cliché! To begin with, the Second Congress did not adopt any “declaration” at all and what Landauer has in view, of course, are the theses on the national and colonial questions. The above-quoted phrase makes it clear that, according to Landauer, the “class-struggle concept” in principle is incompatible with a policy of broad-based alliances. However, neither exists separately in the Marxist

<sup>1</sup> Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, Abridgement of Vols. VII-X, Oxford University Press, New York, London, 1957, pp. 184-85.

<sup>2</sup> Carl Landauer, *European Socialism. A History of Ideas and Movements from the Industrial Revolution to Hitler's Seizure of Power*, Vol. 1, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1959, p. 806.

concept of the revolution. The class struggle does not reject the policy of alliances, but implies it as a condition for this struggle to be won by the proletariat. Suffice it to turn to the *Communist Manifesto* and the "Address of the Central Authority to the League" (March 1850) and to dozens of other works by Marx and Engels to show that they took that dialectical idea for granted.

Landauer goes on to quote a well-known passage from the resolution of the Second Congress to the effect that the Comintern was to support the national revolutionary movement in the colonies and backward countries so that elements of future proletarian parties, communist more than in name, could be grouped and organised everywhere alive to their special objectives—those of the struggle against the bourgeois-democratic movement inside their nations. This, naturally, referred to the subsequent, properly communist objectives, and the idea behind this principle was to stress the necessity of preserving the independence of the proletarian movement, even in its most rudimentary form. Landauer believes that Communists set their faces, through that decision, against bourgeois democracy and, consequently, against the revolutionary peasantry. Having thus described the Comintern's guideline, Landauer remarks that the "non-Communists of colonial and semi-colonial nations" cannot be reproached with having regarded such tactics of Communists as the worst form of treachery. Landauer must be unwilling to reckon with the fact that Lenin's tactics of work in the non-party bourgeois-democratic organisations implied that Communists would be fighting most sincerely, persistently and resolutely for anti-imperialist objectives proclaimed by these organisations and would even die for them, if necessary. There was nothing "subversive" at all in Lenin's policy of a united front. Incidentally, that is why he had enunciated it so openly. Lenin believed that in the struggle for the attainment of "pre-communist" progressive objectives, the Communists must act as a vanguard, push non-communist democratic and anti-imperialist forces into that struggle and, if these forces failed or declined to cope with such problems, get down to resolving them on their own. Trotskyite-Zinovievite tactics, on the other hand, were based on an entirely different principle: non-proletarian forces

(peasantry, petty bourgeoisie, national bourgeoisie, etc.) would under no circumstances and in no way cope with the "pre-communist" progressive tasks in the East. That would be up to the Communists to do when they, with no solutions in evidence to such problems and in face of the political impotence of bourgeois democracy, would have seized power. According to this logic, Communists are not interested in the success of anti-imperialist movements not led by them—"the worse, the better". It is these tactics, which some tried to impose on the Comintern, that were "subversive" indeed. Landauer thus mixed up two entirely different, even opposite, political methods which, in fact, cancelled each other out.

Let us note in this context that the public proclamation by Lenin of political guidelines, presupposing, notably, the most earnest support for the national liberation aspirations of bourgeois democracy, was a scientifically-grounded, competent and politically indispensable act. As to the Trotskyite-Zinovievite orientation not towards supporting bourgeois-democratic movements—until these used up their progressive potentials—but solely towards discrediting these movements under all circumstances and regardless of their potentialities, the open enunciation of these principles, which representatives of the opposition advanced, supposedly on behalf of the Comintern, could only deter bourgeois democracy from an alliance with the proletariat.<sup>1</sup>

Landauer tries to apply his scheme to the complex situation in China during the revolution of 1925-1927. He holds that the Comintern's policy in China was essentially conflicting for he has already written about the "impossibility" of unfolding the class struggle and following the course towards an alliance with bourgeois democracy at the same time. He opines: the Comintern did not show enough moderation in China to avoid a blow from Chiang Kai-shek. So, we have before us once more one of the two sides of the brand of "organiser of the defeat" of the Chinese revolution, which bourgeois, reformist and "left"-wing revisionist historians try to apply to the Comintern.

<sup>1</sup> It was during the Chinese Revolution of 1925-1927 that Trotsky and Zinoviev worked the hardest trying to impose these views on the Comintern.

This time the reason behind the defeat is said to be the Comintern's "inadequate moderation". Landauer again ignores the fact that the policy of alliance presupposed, rather than denied, the class struggle, while the class struggle presupposed, rather than denied, the policy of alliance. Everything depended on how such a complex policy was to be pursued in actual practice, considering the specific features of China and each particular moment of the revolutionary process. That was an incredibly complex problem by itself.

It was not enough to rely on masterfully elaborated strategic principles to solve it. What was required, besides, to stick to military similes, was a fairly large army, a good supply of arms, experienced staff officers, enthusiasm of soldiers, fail-safe machinery of organisation and, finally, the superiority of forces on one's own side, or their parity, or at least an indecisive superiority of hostile forces. But if there were none of that, or if, at least, a substantial proportion of those essential things were missing, was that any reason to call in question the basic strategic principles of the Comintern's leadership? Far from always can a defeat be explained by strategic or tactical miscalculations.

A prominent British socialist historian G. D. H. Cole also dealt with the history of the Comintern. He devoted a separate chapter—"Communism in China in the 1930s"—to the Eastern question in Vol. V of *A History of Socialist Thought*.<sup>1</sup> Having described the situation which arose in the communist movement of China after the defeat of 1927, Cole writes: "In these circumstances, the Moscow Congress [the Sixth Congress of the Comintern—*Auth.*] had been driven to recognise the key importance of the rural problem and of land reform; but they had been severely hampered in seeking solutions by their dogmatic belief that the revolutionary leadership must be assumed by the industrial proletariat, without which the peasants would be incapable of any constructive revolutionary effort, and by their deep-rooted hostility to peasant agriculture and the tendency of movements among the poorer peasants to take as their objectives the equal redistribution of the land among peasant families."<sup>2</sup> Cole, a rather penetrating historian,

<sup>1</sup> G. D. H. Cole, *A History of Socialist Thought*, Vol. V, Macmillan and Co., Ltd., London; St. Martin's Press, New York, 1960.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 265.

builds his reasoning in this context on the "either-or" principle. It is difficult to explain otherwise why he failed to understand that the Comintern was right both when it attached immense importance to the peasant question (let us note that it had always attached such importance to it), and when it feared that the Communist Party could lose its proletarian nucleus unless it followed Lenin's principles.

Cole touched on the impact of the resolutions of the Comintern's Seventh Congress on the Communist Party of China.<sup>1</sup> From his point of view, the Comintern found for China an appropriate equivalent to its anti-fascist course in the slogan of a united front against Japan. In this case Cole made some essential mistakes. For one thing, Japan was a military-fascist state at war against China and the slogan of a united front against Japan directly followed an anti-fascist course. For another, the task in hand was not to look for an Eastern equivalent of a Western formula but to make a simultaneous turn both in the West and in the East so as to direct a major blow against fascism and war. Cole's line of reasoning was: the Comintern wished to exploit the popular resentment at the Japanese aggression to further its own interests. Cole did not take into consideration (and that was an outright blunder) that the Comintern began to act in that way in China because it had totally adopted one of the basic principles of Leninist policies which years of struggle had proved to be correct. That was the principle whereby the struggle for the immediate interests of the masses, and notably for their national interests, was an object of proper concern to the communist movement, a matter of its proper interest, as, for one thing, the resolution of democratic issues brought the Communists nearer their ultimate goal and, for another, the business of Communists is to bring off in the most consistent way all the stages of the revolution which precede the socialist stage. Cole passes over altogether the Comintern's role in organising the united front in 1937 to fight the Japanese aggression.

A well-known social-democratic historian Julius Braunthal in his *History of the International*<sup>2</sup>, unlike many bourgeois writers, attempts a broad outline of the Comin-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 273-75.

<sup>2</sup> Julius Braunthal, *Geschichte der Internationale*, Vol. 2, Verlag J. H. W. Dietz, Hannover, 1963.

tern's activities. Let us note some of his mistakes, directly or indirectly related to the subject under consideration.

Braunthal holds that, while creating the Communist International, Lenin came out "against Marx". For example, Braunthal refers to the establishment of an "exclusive workers' International" based not only on a common objective for the socialist movement, but also on a particular form of organisation of the parties which joined it and on the particular methods of struggle for the attainment of this objective. The establishment of such an International (that is, the Comintern) was, in the author's opinion, completely at variance with the idea which Marx put into effect while he was one of the leaders of the First International. "Nobody has recognised more clearly than Marx that the organisational form of the working-class movement in various countries, just as the methods of struggle, was conditioned, notably, by the political and social circumstances and traditions in individual countries," Braunthal writes. "Lenin, however, believed the theory of Marx to be the clue to working-class power in all countries."<sup>1</sup>

To oppose Lenin to Marx is altogether wrong. The First International and the Third International operated in historically different periods. At a time when Marx and Engels worked to create the International Working Men's Association, Marxism was still far from having gripped the minds of the masses; great revolutionary outbreaks, which involve an uncommonly quick and massive fusion of the ideology of Marxism with the working-class movement, were still to come; the painstaking work of German, French and other Marxists to overcome the influence of Lassalcanism, Bakuninism, Proudhonism and anarcho-syndicalism was yet to be done. No mass working-class parties were yet in existence. Marx and Engels were, therefore, creating a broad working-class organisation not yet of a party type (just on its way to becoming a party) within whose limits they and their followers were struggling to win over the mass of the working people. Naturally, there was no possibility as yet of creating an international party organisation with a single type of ideology for it was precisely the propagation of such ideology in a broad working-class

<sup>1</sup> Julius Braunthal, *Op. cit.*, p. 198.

movement that constituted one of the basic objectives of the First International. The state of affairs late in the second decade of the 20th century was entirely different. Social-Democratic parties had long been in existence in many countries of Europe. In their chequered history the leaders of most of them sided with the proletariat's class enemies at crucial moments. The imperialist war brought untold hardship in its train and was an eye-opener for the workers in many ways. Then came a revolutionary upsurge developing into full-scale revolutions in some countries. Large masses of workers were now in action to break out of the framework of the Second International. The Bolsheviks, led by Lenin, took the initiative in setting up the new International. The revolutionising of social-democratic workers was an objective process which was assisted in every way by the organisation of the Third International: in a setting of revolutionary upsurge and a general crisis of capitalism, the Comintern was "drawing in" large numbers of proletarians. That means that Lenin, acting as he did in 1919 as the founder of the Third International, eventually followed the same principles as Marx did in 1864: it was necessary, considering the actual situation, to unite the workers in their class struggle against capital. In 1913-1920 that struggle, naturally, took on entirely different forms from those of 1864. So, to declare the new International a "broad" non-party organisation meant simply changing the number of the Second International and yielding leadership to the former collaborationists.

Braunthal has practically disregarded the problems of the Comintern's oriental policy. Like bourgeois historians, he does not consider the Comintern's oriental policy to be an important line of action and underestimates its impact on the historical process. He examines nothing but the Comintern's tactics in the Chinese revolution but betrays an ignorance of the actual state of things. In Braunthal's opinion, Chiang Kai-shek struck his blow on April 12, 1927, because the Chinese Communists, "in obedience" to directives from Moscow, had begun plotting his overthrow. In suggesting that Braunthal considerably overplays the influence of the CPC on the masses. While the Trotskyites insist: the CPC was defeated because it had acted as a conciliatory party (under the Comintern's instructions),

Braunthal, just like Landauer, believes that the Chinese Communists were smashed because they had acted with too much resolution (once again under instructions from the Comintern).<sup>1</sup> The author claims that a few weeks before the Chiang Kai-shek coup, the "Moscow Executive Committee" (Braunthal means the Comintern Executive Committee) confirmed Chiang Kai-shek as "its honorary member". Nothing of the kind happened. That was, of course, more than a simple factual mistake. Following the passage about the "honorary member", the author restated all those strong words about Chiang Kai-shek which the Comintern Executive Committee had used in its appeal "To the Proletarians of the Whole World". Braunthal, relating one "fact" to the other, wants to demonstrate the Comintern's inconsistency.

Braunthal finds that the "twilight of the Communist International" set in after 1923. As to the Seventh Congress, he goes out of his way, within the few pages he has devoted to its deliberations, to prove that democracy and communism are incompatible and that, in speaking up for democracy, the Seventh Congress departed from Lenin's positions.

Such a conclusion is totally inconsistent and akin to fabrications of commonplace anti-communism. Such assertions have been effectively disproved in Marxist studies of the Seventh Congress of the Comintern. For example, a major work by B. M. Leibzon and K. K. Shirinya *A Turn in the Comintern's Policies*, as well as a number of K. K. Shirinya's articles,<sup>2</sup> showed that the strategy worked out by the Seventh Congress, while indicating the actually feasible and most direct way to a socialist revolution in the new setting—through a general democratic and anti-fascist phase of the struggle—proceeded from Lenin's guidelines concerning the policy of the working-class party in the democratic stage of the revolutionary process. These guidelines were succinctly sketched out by Lenin: "Replying to the anar-

<sup>1</sup> On the Chinese revolution see: Julius Braunthal, *Op. cit.*, pp. 344-49.

<sup>2</sup> See: K. K. Shirinya, "The Comintern about the Main Political Objective of the Anti-Fascist Struggle". In: *The Communist Movement in the Struggle for a United Front*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1976 (in Russian).

chists' objections that we are putting off the socialist revolution, we say: we are not putting it off, but are taking the first step towards it in the only possible way, along the only correct path, namely, the path of a democratic republic. Whoever wants to reach socialism by any other path than that of political democracy, will inevitably arrive at conclusions that are absurd and reactionary both in the economic and the political sense."<sup>1</sup>

The fact that Marxism-Leninism views democracy as the way to socialism (for which, in particular, it has been attacked by Trotskyism) remains outside Braunthal's attention. In consequence, he could not make an objective study of the problem of a united front of anti-imperialist and democratic forces either.

A social-reformist historian Theo Pirker makes no more than a casual reference to the national and colonial question in his lengthy introduction to a collection of documents *The Utopia and Myth of World Revolution. On the History of the Comintern 1920-1940*.<sup>2</sup> Describing the decisions of the Second Congress of the Comintern, he speaks mostly of the terms of admission to the Comintern. The author finds the "greatest contradiction" to reside in the fact that the Comintern, having embarked upon a course towards a violent change of the existing social order, at the same time wants the movement along this course to be organised and disciplined. Another "contradiction", as Pirker sees it, is the following: "Faith in the natural flow of society's historical progress towards Socialism and Communism, which we consider to be historically utopian, exists side by side with the belief in the possibility of drastically accelerating this development with the aid of a world revolutionary party, that is, by military methods, by General Staff methods, so to speak."<sup>3</sup>

The reformist historians of the Comintern, in general, have, as a rule, been stressing the "contradiction" in the combination of inferences about society's natural move-

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution", *Collected Works*, Vol. 9, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> *Utopie und Mythos der Weltrevolution. Zur Geschichte der Komintern 1920-1940*, Deutscher Tagebuch-Verlag, Munich, 1964, pp. 7-51.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

ment towards socialism and the possibility of speeding it up. From a reformist's point of view, the recognition of the world's objective natural movement towards socialism is the way to justify the abandonment of all revolutionary endeavour and of all involvement in the unfolding process of remaking the world. For a Marxist-Leninist, the recognition of the objective character of the socialist transformation of the world is the starting point of planned and scientifically motivated struggle within the framework of a natural historical process with a view to passing as soon as possible through the "pre-historic" stages of mankind's development. This is the dialectics of Marxism-Leninism or, to be exact, one of its manifestations.

Pirker says absolutely nothing about the national and colonial question as it was dealt with at the Second Congress of the Comintern or about the world-wide character of the Communist International. The momentum of Eurocentrism of social-democracy has compelled this Social-Democrat to forget about the "extra-European" aspect of the activities even of this organisation which was set up as a counterbalance to social-democracy with its Eurocentrist views.

Pirker adverts to the Comintern's oriental policy only as it concerns the mid-1920s. From his point of view, the Comintern's strategy from the Fifth Congress to the defeat of the Chinese revolution was "purely pragmatic". Because Pirker did not take the trouble of looking into the decisions of the Second Congress on the national and colonial question, the Comintern's line with regard to the Chinese revolution remained a sealed book to him and, as always on such occasions, it was explained away by "pragmatic considerations". "Pragmatic considerations" are not foreign to any effective political organisation; the point is how far they follow from its fundamental guiding principles and ideas and to what extent this pragmatic approach corresponds and is subordinated to the ideological and political guidelines of a party organisation. What was the Comintern's "pure pragmatism" of 1924-1926 expressed in, according to Pirker? It expressed itself, in his view, in the fact that the Comintern considered "any development as proof that revolutionary opportunities will inevitably arise", be it the political events in China, the Berber uprising in

North Africa or the hope for a new unity of the international trade union movement.<sup>1</sup> Pirker does not see any "system" in the Comintern's action of that period. Yet, the Comintern's policy towards the British trade union movement and the General Strike of 1926 did not differ, in its criteria, from the policy towards China. Both expressed the fundamental idea of united front. According to Pirker, the reason why the Comintern turned to China was not because there had been a national revolution in China in the mid-1920s, nor because that was required by a consistent united front policy, but because the Comintern had but "one card" to play—that of a colonial revolution. At this point Pirker went too far. "In this sphere," he writes, "the Comintern ... from 1919 had some experience which indicated that revolutionary uprisings in the East do not pass as quickly and as identically in a communist way, as bid by Lenin's doctrine."<sup>2</sup> Even if one were to discount this "bid by", which means a lot by itself, one can state the following: Pirker holds that Lenin laid down a precept for the nationalist movement in the East to develop into a communist movement as soon as possible. In actual fact, however, it is the "precept" which Pirker writes about that met with a strong objection from Lenin and was rejected by the Comintern.<sup>3</sup>

Significantly enough, it is not the common philosophic views alone that unite nearly all bourgeois and reformist historians writing about the Comintern's policies. There is a noteworthy particular coincidence: it appears as if an invisible hand makes the historians, whenever they deal with the Eastern question in the Comintern, single out only certain aspects, notably, the decisions of the Second Congress and the Comintern's China policy in 1925-1927. The former reference is made primarily to show the "deep intrinsic contradictory nature" of the Comintern's policies (just consider that "the theses that cancel each other out by their meaning" were adopted!), and the latter, as a rule, in order to declare the Comintern responsible for the defeat

<sup>1</sup> See: *Utopie und Mythos der Weltrevolution. Zur Geschichte der Komintern 1920-1940*, pp. 41-42.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>3</sup> For details see: *Kommunist*, No. 7, 1967, pp. 91-102; No. 5, 1968, pp. 36-47.

of the Chinese revolution. Bourgeois and reformist historians pass over in silence the fact of the most influential international organisation of the proletariat turning to oppressed nations to bring them into the revolutionary struggle and offering great practical assistance to the communist and national liberation movements in the East. Had they done otherwise, then the most honest of them, at least, would have had to recognise that the Third International was the only international political organisation in world history to have treated the Eastern nations as protagonists, not just objects, of history.

These historians have one more feature in common. They are irritated by what they call "Marxist jargon", in particular, by such terms as "proletariat", "bourgeoisie", "class struggle", "anti-imperialist revolution". They seem to be unaware that these terms stood for complex everyday realities in the minds of the people who led the Comintern or acted under its leadership. For example, when those of the Comintern spoke about feudal survivals in China, they already had a fairly clear idea of such a complex phenomenon as Chinese militarism; whenever there was a discussion on the subject of the "proletarian vanguard" in the Eastern countries, nobody in the Comintern was in doubt that it referred to the prospect and the results of the proletarian movement and that the Eastern proletarians, in their mass, had first to reform themselves so as, in subsequent stages, to lead the struggle for reforming society; in speaking about the "national bourgeoisie", nobody in the Comintern took it to mean employers of the European type but related it to the specific environment of the colonial economic structures, that is, those under the control of imperialism of Europe and the United States. In other words, the Comintern saw the real movement of social entities behind those terms and designations.

Specialised Soviet literature has criticised the collection of articles and other material on the history of the Comintern which was published in Geneva in 1965, edited by Jacques Freymond.<sup>1</sup> In that collection Freymond states, incidentally, that the Comintern contributed, by its deci-

<sup>1</sup> See: G. Z. Sorkin, "Bourgeois and Reformist Historians on the Comintern's Policy in the National and Colonial Questions". In: *The Comintern and the East*, Moscow, 1979, pp. 276-77.

sions and by its organisation and propaganda work, towards strengthening faith in a world revolution and in the inevitable triumph of communism.<sup>1</sup> It has to be stressed, however, that Freymond writes about it in the closing lines of his article where he, wishing to be objective, enumerates certain "services" of the Third International. The bulk of the article, however, is designed to show that ever since the Second Congress, the Comintern was an "instrument of the policy of the Russian Communist Party which has taken power in Soviet Russia".<sup>2</sup> Moreover, in Freymond's opinion, the Comintern's leadership was increasingly subordinating the interests of the International to the "supreme interests of Soviet Russia".<sup>3</sup> Freymond appears to be particularly irritated by the indisputable argument that the interests of the Soviet state coincide with those of the international communist movement. He sees nothing positive in the decisions of the Seventh Congress of the Comintern, regarding them as nothing but a product of diplomatic considerations, not a generalised experience of the international communist movement and a realisation of the need to concentrate major forces on fighting fascism. It is in this context that Freymond wants to speak of the Comintern's "services", as he sees them. Of all the vast theoretical and political legacy contained in the Comintern's documents, Freymond singles out Roy's reasoning in opposing the national liberation movement in the East to the revolutionary struggle of the working class of capitalist countries. In so doing, Freymond applies, at least, two inadmissible techniques: first, he quotes the theses adopted by the Congress in an arbitrary, "mosaic" order and, second, he grossly distorts one of the basic ideas of the Supplementary Theses (as they were adopted by the Congress). To follow Freymond's line of reasoning, one would have to presume the Second Congress of the Comintern to have believed that a proletarian revolution in the colonies would topple world capitalism. In actual reality, however, the Second Congress of the Comintern arrived at this conclusion: "The breaking up of the colonial empire, together with the

<sup>1</sup> *Contributions à l'histoire du Comintern. Publiées sous la direction de Jacques Freymond*, Librairie Droz, Geneva, 1965, p. XXII.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. XI.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. XIV.

proletarian revolution in the home country, will overthrow the capitalist system in Europe.”<sup>1</sup> The Commission of the Second Congress, under Lenin’s direction, deleted from Roy’s draft Supplementary Theses the wording which could have been interpreted as opposing the interests of the oppressed nations of the East and the working class of the West.

A book *The Colonial Question in the Communist International*<sup>2</sup> by Rudolf Schlesinger was issued in the FRG in 1970. It is an essay on the Comintern’s oriental policy written, by and large, from positions of “left”-wing revisionism. Schlesinger concentrates his attention on the Comintern’s policy regarding the Chinese revolution. “But the actual subject involved,” a summary of the book points out, “was the contradictory and ambiguous policy of the Comintern Executive Committee with respect to the Kuomintang.” The author proceeds from the assumption that “the centre of gravity of the world revolution has shifted to China”. Further on we read: “The significance of the Communist International consists in the fact that it linked the experience of the Russian revolution of 1905 with the iron-will for struggle against imperialism and colonial prejudices in the working-class movements in the colonial powers.”<sup>3</sup> The whole idea behind Schlesinger’s discourse is that such a role is now being played by China although the author ostentatiously rejects this point of view and criticises the Russian and the Chinese revolutions in equal measure.<sup>4</sup> He twists the facts when he claims that Lenin’s “Preliminary Draft Theses” did not refer to the colonial question in principle and “proceeded mostly from the Russian situation”.<sup>5</sup>

The Chinese theme as such dominates Schlesinger’s book with just a few words about the Comintern’s policies towards other nations of the East. China serves as the focal

<sup>1</sup> *Theses and Statutes of the III Communist International Adopted by the II Congress, July 17th-August 7th, 1920*, Publishing Office of the Communist International, Moscow, 1920, p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> Rudolf Schlesinger, *Die Kolonialfrage in der Kommunistischen Internationale*, Europäische Verlagsanstalt, Frankfurt on the Main, 1970.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

point of the writer's historical analysis. Speaking of the Seventh Enlarged Plenum of the Comintern Executive Committee (ECCI), Schlesinger identified Stalin's idea that in China an armed revolution was fighting an armed counterrevolution with Mao's subsequent theory about the significance of the army, although Stalin's idea went together with that of a united front. Mao, on the other hand, set his theory against this idea.<sup>1</sup> Schlesinger, naturally, refers to the ECCI's directive of October 26, 1926, warning against an overacceleration of the agrarian revolution in China; it is this directive that the author comments on, without taking into account any of the subsequent directives. Besides, the dilemma posed by the ECCI-- an alliance with the peasantry or an alliance with the bourgeoisie--is oversimplified by Schlesinger (implying that either version is possible). In actual fact, the question was put in a different way: while acting within the framework of a united front, it will be necessary to choose none but the peasantry in the future when it is time to make a choice.<sup>2</sup> Finally, Schlesinger accuses the ECCI of having seen the radicalisation of the masses as the major danger at the Seventh Plenum.<sup>3</sup> He leaves out of account the ECCI's subsequent directives about the launching of a mass struggle. Schlesinger says nothing at all about the significance of the Seventh Congress of the Comintern.

As to the Trotskyite historiography of the Comintern's oriental policy, it is falsification from start to finish. Suffice it to mention, for example, an article by Li Fuzhen "The Revolutionary Teacher of Colonial Peoples", written in August 1944. He tried hard to prove that it was due to the Trotskyite prescriptions alone that the Comintern could achieve any success in China in 1925-1927. The author attacks Lenin's idea of the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the working class and the peasantry, alleging that this idea had been discarded by Lenin and revived by the Comintern without any reason.

A few admissions are worth mentioning. Trotsky, writes Isaac Deutscher, for instance, devoted much time and

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, *The Comintern in Documents. 1919-1932*, Partizdat, Moscow, 1933, p. 674 (in Russian).

<sup>3</sup> Rudolf Schlesinger, *Op. cit.*, p. 77.

attention to the social and political developments in China, Japan, India, Indochina and Indonesia, but he exercised an influence on small groups only. In his three-volume biography of Trotsky, Deutscher admits (writing about the 1930s): "The prospects were no better for it [Trotskyism—*Auth.*] in Asia, even though Asia was full of revolutionary ferment."<sup>1</sup>

It is even more typical of Trotskyite historiography than of bourgeois historiography to make libellous assertions about the "national egoism" of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks). What is meant by it? Trotskyite Deutscher, for example, writes about "the egoism that the doctrine of socialism in one country had elevated to a principle". This makes it obvious that whatever a Trotskyite may write about—whether Russia, or China, or the international revolution, etc., he will have every line fume hatred for the construction of socialism and communism in the USSR.<sup>2</sup>

The memoirs of personalities expelled from the Comintern provide an insight into the position of their authors, rather than into the actual state of affairs. However, if the author was a noted figure in the Comintern, even a distorted picture of the Comintern's life in the years when he was involved in it is of certain interest. For example, it may be a mention of some documents, facts or events. Quite often a simple check will show that the actual event was different from what the memoirist made it out to be, yet a study of the document he mentioned can produce an important result. Therefore, the reading of *M. N. Roy's Memoirs*<sup>3</sup> prompted us to note that Lenin had made important corrections in the Supplementary Theses at the Second Congress. Indeed, Roy says that at first Lenin disagreed with him on a number of cardinal issues, and then appeared to have virtually accepted his system of views. Suffice it to look through the authentic text of the Supplementary Theses to

<sup>1</sup> Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Outcast. Trotsky: 1929-1940*, Oxford University Press, London, New York, Toronto, 1963, p. 423.

<sup>2</sup> Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Unarmed. Trotsky: 1921-1929*, Oxford University Press, London, New York, Toronto, 1959, p. 326.

<sup>3</sup> *M. N. Roy's Memoirs*, Allied Publishers, Bombay, New Delhi, Madras, London, New York, 1964.

see that the latter contention does not correspond to reality: Lenin's corrections were those of principle.

Three volumes of memoirs by Jules Humbert-Droz, published in Neuchâtel in 1969-1972, have just a few lines dealing with the Comintern's oriental policy. Humbert-Droz cites no documents on this subject.<sup>1</sup> The section about the Second Congress of the Comintern is, perhaps, the only place referring to the national and colonial questions. Humbert-Droz emphasises that the Comintern decisions were rather different from those adopted by the Socialist International. Lenin insisted that the revolutionary proletariat should support the movement of oppressed nations for national liberation and the demands of the working peasants; this view of Lenin's, Humbert-Droz writes, came under criticism from Giacinto M. Serrati "in the name of internationalism and the proletarian character of the revolution".<sup>2</sup> Humbert-Droz thus misrepresents the substance of the polemics between Lenin and Serrati. Serrati opposed Lenin's views not from the positions of "proletarian internationalism", but out of entirely different considerations. He held that "only by means of a proletarian revolution and through the Soviet regime can the subject nations obtain their freedom. This cannot be done by temporary alliances of the Communists with the bourgeois parties called nationalist revolutionists." Serrati also believed that "the movement for national liberation can be revolutionary only when the working class maintains its own class lines".<sup>3</sup> Such a position can be called sectarian, but by no means internationalist, the more so since Serrati, in fact, belittled the significance of the liberation struggle of oppressed nations.

Little is said about the national and colonial question in the recollections of the Comintern's early years by Alfred Rosmer.<sup>4</sup> Rosmer offers his own summary of the

<sup>1</sup> Jules Humbert-Droz, *Mémoires*, Vols. 1-3, Editions de la Baconnière, Neuchâtel, 1969-1972.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, *Mon évolution du tolstoïsme au communisme (1891-1921)*, Editions de la Baconnière, Neuchâtel, 1969, p. 369.

<sup>3</sup> *The Second Congress of the Communist International. Proceedings*, Publishing Office of the Communist International, Moscow, 1920, p. 154.

<sup>4</sup> Alfred Rosmer, *Moscou sous Lénine*, Vols. 1-2, François Maspero, Paris, 1970.

Lenin-Roy debate. In his opinion, Lenin considered the national question to be of no less importance than that of the party.<sup>1</sup> Such a contention can in no way be accepted, since the idea that only under a Communist party's guidance could the revolutionary masses remake the world threads Lenin's entire system of views.

Further on Rosmer gives a brief assessment of Roy's views. He sums them up as follows. The Indian bourgeoisie is as much an "object of struggle" of the Communists as the British occupationists, for it is an "enemy of the working people".<sup>2</sup> According to Rosmer, Lenin patiently explained to Roy that for a more or less sustained period of time, the Communist Party of India would remain but a small organisation which would not be able to win over a sufficient number of workers and peasants to its programme; on the other hand, it would be able to mobilise the large mass of the people for a demand of national independence; only in that way would the Communist Party of India make its organisation strong enough to challenge the bourgeois order in India.

Such recommendations, alleged to have been given by Lenin, are not recorded in any of the documents we know of or in Roy's recollections. Besides, let us recall that Rosmer was not a member of the Commission on the National and Colonial Questions. However, there is no reason to claim that Rosmer ascribed to Lenin the contentions he had not made. It is clear from what Rosmer said that Lenin had simply taught Roy explaining to him the stage-by-stage character of the revolutionary process in the colonies and, in that context, the need for a Communist party to have a short-term programme, that is, a programme of national liberation. Such a conversation may well have taken place. But the following conclusion is absolutely improbable. Rosmer writes that Roy "yielded ground" by accepting the probability of some "joint action" by various sections of the population. As to the major differences, these were not resolved. Moreover, "while reporting his theses to the Congress, Lenin added to them those of Roy that made up a co-report".<sup>3</sup> In reality nothing of the kind

<sup>1</sup> Alfred Rosmer, *Op. cit.*, p. 117.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 118-19.

ever took place, which is irrefutably proved by Lenin's correction of Roy's theses. What prompted Rosmer to misrepresent the actual state of things is not difficult to see. Rosmer became an adherent of Trotsky whose views on the destinies of the Communist Party of India, set out in the 1930s, largely coincided with Roy's position of 1920, and he readily accepted Roy's version as stated in his memoirs.

So, it has been a standing practice for bourgeois, reformist and "left"-wing revisionist writers of the general publications on the history of the Comintern to single out the decisions of the Second Congress on the national and colonial questions as points of particular interest to them. This kind of selectivity is not accidental. Much depends on how—whether in conformity with historical realities or contrary to them—one is to set out Lenin's views which he put forward at the Second Congress of the Comintern. This is fundamental, for example, to deciding whether or not the Comintern adhered to Lenin's principles in its oriental policy. Few of the bourgeois reformist and "left"-wing revisionist writers, dealing with the history of the Comintern, take up the specific issues of its oriental policy. China is the only exception, but in relation to it a historical account is made by a usual method—instead of heading left, the Comintern turned right or, the other way round, instead of heading right, the Comintern turned left. The result was a defeat.

The works dealing with the history of the Comintern as a rule do not consider in detail the general theoretical problems of the Comintern's oriental policy. Practically in each case, these critics start from a false premise: backing anti-imperialist nationalism means giving up the principles of internationalism, while seeking an alliance with bourgeois democracy of oppressed nations means giving up a class approach. This is coupled with an attempt to prove that a "new course" cropped up at the Second Congress of the Comintern, that is, it emerged as *deus ex machina*, quite unexpectedly and ready-made—as a result of "Lenin's pragmatic considerations".

So, one of the postulates of non-Marxist historiography can be formulated as follows: the national element is said to have been preferred to the class element in Lenin's doctrine on the national and the national-colonial questions

which the Communist International accepted as a theory to go by. Lenin's principle concerning the right of nations to self-determination is alleged to have implied departing from internationalist principles and teaming up with the bourgeois democracy of the East and to have constituted a purely pragmatic move. Moreover, Lenin had not dropped the class element and this is said to have produced Leninism's "intrinsic contradiction" in its approach to the problems of liberation of oppressed nations and, equally, the "intrinsic contradiction" of the respective policy of the Communist International. Furthermore, non-Marxist and anti-Marxist historians contend that this property of the Comintern's policy was particularly manifest during the Chinese revolution of 1925-1927 and made it fail. To sum up, the far-fetched "postulate of contradiction" cements and supports the whole structure of the bourgeois, reformist and "left"-wing revisionist historiography on the national and colonial question in the Comintern and makes it look uniform. But is that a sure postulate? To find this out, we have to turn to Lenin's own system of views on the problem of "the social and the national", to the intrinsic logic of this system, and to see how it was built. That is what we are going to do in broad outline.

*DIALECTICS OF CLASS AND ANTI-IMPERIALIST  
OBJECTIVES - A CLUE TO UNDERSTANDING THE  
COMINTERN'S ORIENTAL POLICY*

A general theoretical solution to the nationalities problem was found by the pioneers of scientific socialism when they were still working out the fundamentals of the materialistic interpretation of history. They related the future of nations, national contradictions and national movements to the objectives of the class struggle of the proletariat whose vital interests are common in all countries. The founders of scientific socialism inferred that, having accomplished its historic liberating mission and socialist revolution, the working class would end the oppression of nation by nation. In elaborating the principles of the policy to be followed by the revolutionary proletariat, Marx and Engels laid major emphasis on its class interests and their

international community—proletarian internationalism.

While supporting the progressive movements of oppressed nations, Marx and Engels did not yet find it possible to postulate the right of nations to self-determination as the essential policy of the revolutionary proletariat on the national question. They felt that to have highlighted such a slogan would not have been in the working-class interest at the time: the slogan of self-determination of nations, had it been adopted by the revolutionary proletariat in the pre-imperialist phase of capitalism, could have damaged the cause of the revolution. At a time when bourgeois-democratic change in Europe was still in the making as were big national states, when the aspiration of small European nations to cast off the foreign yoke was being exploited to further the interests of the major politics of reactionary powers, and when the latter powers not infrequently managed to set the national movements against the revolution, the demand of the right of nations to self-determination would have practically signified a recognition of the rights not only of the national movements which helped forward the cause of the revolution and the cause of the proletariat, but also of those who were directly opposed to the revolution and the cause of the proletariat. Marx and Engels called for the independence of Poland, urging Europe's proletarian and democratic forces to press for it, upheld the cause of the oppressed Irish people, hailed the liberation struggle of the Hungarian and Italian peoples, and readily appreciated the uprising of the people of Prague in June 1848, yet they held the national movements used against the European revolution to be reactionary. In so doing, they did not depart an inch from internationalism: the founders of Marxism considered that a people might find itself in the reactionary fold only on account of a particular alignment of class and political forces and as a result of the specific character of the leadership of the national movement rather than on account of some national qualities said to be appropriate to that people.

By the end of the 19th century the situation had radically changed. The national question had been settled in the biggest countries of Western Europe as far as it could be settled at all within the limits of bourgeois-democratic change. Until the 1860s, Italy, for instance, had been an

agglomeration of big, medium, small and tiny states ruled by dull-witted and cruel provincial monarchs just as merciless in dealing with their subjects as subservient to the Hapsburgs. The black-yellow flags of the Austrian Empire flew over North Italy. In the 1870s, however, that was already a unified state within which the Italian proletariat was growing stronger and deploying its ranks. Germany had been united from top by iron and blood. And yet that was a step forward as it opened up a wide field for the proletariat for its coming battles against the bourgeoisie. About the same time the economic activity of the capitalist countries of Europe and North America underwent some change of world-wide historic importance, which entailed far-reaching change in the social and political area as well: the system of free competition was superseded by monopolies, powerful financial groups sprang up, the outflow of capital drastically increased, the partition of the world between monopoly groups was completed, and the struggle began between the capitalist powers for its repartition. Capitalism entered the stage of imperialism. Now the national question became a national-colonial question, with the onus of this problem having moved east; it must be emphasised that what is implied here is the national-colonial problem, not the entire complex of problems of the world revolutionary process.

The enslaved peoples of the East launched a struggle for the establishment of their own national states. That was the political meaning of the independence movements which surged in colonies and semi-colonies at the beginning of the 20th century, and, more particularly, after the 1905 Russian revolution. Czarist Russia lost its position as the bulwark of European reaction to be replaced by a whole group of imperialist powers.

In these circumstances, the liberation movements which gathered strength in the oppressed countries became anti-imperialist movements. The liberating storm, which swept through the colonies and semi-colonies (above all, in Asia) was directed against the powers which made up the nucleus of the imperialist system. In the meantime, the impending proletarian, socialist revolution was to strike precisely at imperialism; the anti-capitalist movement of the proletariat of developed countries was, therefore, an anti-imperialist

movement as well. In the new conditions, the anti-imperialist action of the peoples of colonies, even if led by the propertied classes, could not but acquire little by little a certain anti-capitalist character objectively and on a world-wide scale, for it was directed against the imperialist system as the product and mainstay of capitalism. Therefore, at that moment, the proclamation of the slogan of the right of nations to self-determination, including the right to form independent states, was a great service rendered by Lenin and the Bolshevik Party. This slogan was seen in direct association with the need for the international consolidation of workers—the task Lenin found supreme.

The special significance of the internationalist slogan of the right of nations to self-determination consisted in the fact that it was to contribute towards revolutionising the peoples who had not yet decided their national question; those who were just about to embark on the path of struggle for the creation of their national states—the path essentially covered in Western Europe; the peoples who by their action shattered the positions of the classes which were to be removed by the coming proletarian revolution. While putting forward this slogan, Lenin, on behalf of revolutionary social-democracy, called on the oppressed peoples to enter into an alliance with the revolutionary proletariat. In the meantime, in this new epoch, the very course of events and the very force of things were “turning” the liberation movements over sweeping expanses of Asia against imperialism. That is to say that the slogan of self-determination of nations as the “practical kernel” of the policy of the revolutionary proletariat had now been put forward precisely on the basis of the *class-proletarian and internationalist* considerations which kept Marx and Engels from proclaiming it as such.

In January and early February 1902 Lenin, in his “Draft Programme of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party”, called for the “recognition of the right to self-determination for all nations forming part of the state”.<sup>1</sup> In February 1903 he pointed out the special importance of the internationalist education of the working class. Lenin put

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, “Draft Programme of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party”, *Collected Works*, Vol. 6, p. 30.

the international consolidation of workers at the basis of all the policies of social-democracy on the national question.<sup>1</sup> This principle became the supporting base of the entire system of Leninism's theoretical, political, tactical and strategic guidelines connected with the struggle of oppressed peoples. Shortly before the Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, Lenin wrote an article "The National Question in Our Programme", in which he showed the significance of the slogan about the right of nations to self-determination. He explained that to recognise that right, which was seen as comprising the right to national secession, did not mean favouring *any* demand of national self-determination.<sup>2</sup> Lenin pointed out that the demand of national self-determination must be made to serve the interests of the class struggle of the proletariat.<sup>3</sup>

In 1908 through 1912, when a revolution succeeded a revolution in the East, following the Russian revolution of 1905, Lenin most carefully analysed the revolutionary potentialities of imperialist-dominated nations as he worked on the theory of imperialism and proletarian revolutions. In the middle of 1908 Lenin, in his article "Inflammable Material in World Politics", wrote about the movements of oppressed peoples as the "mass struggle against capital and the capitalist colonial system, i. e., a system of enslavement, plunder and violence".<sup>4</sup> He was the first to advance the idea that action by the peoples against the capitalist colonial system could eventually develop into a struggle against capital. That was an important conclusion about the part the enslaved peoples were to play in the socialist remaking of the world. In the same work, Lenin pointed out the growth of the political consciousness of the emergent proletariat of colonial countries. In his panoramic view of the liberation movements, actions and revolutions in the East, Lenin wrote about revolutionary tensions in Europe, the shooting of workers in France, the confrontation of the proletariat

<sup>1</sup> See: V. I. Lenin, "Does the Jewish Proletariat Need an 'Independent Political Party'?", *Collected Works*, Vol. 6, pp. 334-35.

<sup>2</sup> See: V. I. Lenin, "The National Question in Our Programme", *Collected Works*, Vol. 6, p. 454.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 454-56.

<sup>4</sup> V. I. Lenin "Inflammable Material in World Politics", *Collected Works*, Vol. 15, p. 182.

and the bourgeoisie in capitalist countries. In that article, Lenin, for the first time in the world socialist press, considered the liberation movement in the Eastern countries in association with the revolutionary movement in the West, as different sectors of a common revolutionary front in the making.

Revolutionary social-democracy was known to have sincerely condemned colonialist policy, developed a general understanding of its connection with the fundamental specific features of the capitalist mode of production, opposed the cruelty and violence of colonialists as well as intervention in the affairs of African and Asian nations which had not yet fallen prey to colonialism. However, Lenin was the first to see the embattled peoples of the East as allies of the revolutionary proletariat. This is a fact to be stated in no uncertain terms.

In his works from 1908 onwards, Lenin was crystallising what is now the modern idea of "anti-imperialist struggle". Prior to Lenin, imperialism was commonly regarded as no more than a policy of capitalism or, to be exact, as one of the aspects of its policy. Consequently, the struggle against imperialism was seen as nothing but action against aggression, occupation and colonial plunder. Lenin put socialist thought a leap ahead. Since imperialism is not just a policy of capitalism but a stage in its structural development, to oppose colonial oppression means, at the same time, challenging the capitalist system. Since capitalism's evolution into imperialism and the surge of the revolutionary tide in the East occurred at about the same time, the awakened East turned out to be the proletariat's ally in its struggle against capitalist oppression. That was a discovery of tremendous scientific importance. It was made by Lenin.

Lenin's theoretical conclusions immediately found expression in politics, as they always did. Lenin devoted more and more attention to substantiating the need for revolutionary social-democracy to uphold the slogan of self-determination of nations.

Lenin neatly identified three major social-political forces of the day: the imperialist countries divided into feuding blocs preparing for war; the proletariat of these countries having its parties, an international organisation, trade union federations, and some experience of political

and economic struggles; the oppressed countries whose peoples were increasingly active in pressing for national liberation. Those were the main protagonists of world history at the time.

That alignment of forces was not readily evident at all even to the most knowledgeable working-class politicians. Imperialism appeared to be the master of the world. As to the movement of colonial nations, not even the best of the Second International leaders saw them as anything but the objects of exploitation whom the socialist proletariat was to aid one day out of humanitarian considerations. Lenin saw that alignment of forces while it was still in the making. It must have taken a vast power of theoretical vision and a wealth of knowledge to come to that conclusion.

In 1914, shortly before the outbreak of the war, Lenin wrote one of his most outstanding works on the national question—"The Right of Nations to Self-Determination". In it, while summing up many of his earlier ideas, Lenin took a step forward towards bringing off his analysis of "modern capitalism" and its basic features, giving more attention to the national question. In the article "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination", Lenin confirmed the correctness and profound scientific validity of Marx's conclusion about the national state as the most advantageous form for an unobstructed development of capitalist relations and the class struggle of the proletariat. It is the drive to establish a national state, which in the final analysis is economically motivated, that forms the social base of national movements. In this case, too, Lenin referred, above all, to the struggle for the formation of national states in the East where it could be nothing but an anti-imperialist struggle. But since it is an economically justified bid to set up a national state that constitutes the sum and substance of the national liberation movements, the right of nations to self-determination should be understood as a right to establish a separate state, that is, as a right to national secession.

Once more turning to Europe and to the history of the development of capitalism in this continent, Lenin comes to the conclusion that its history has two fundamentally different periods as far as the national movement is concerned. On the one hand, there is the period of national

states being established, great national movements arising, and peasantry drawn in. On the other hand, there is the period of fully formed capitalist states, with a highly developed antagonism between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, with the national bourgeois-democratic movements in colonies and semi-colonies far from completion. Lenin's latter conclusion has to be related to his thesis that capitalism has already entered the historical period which will eventually see it collapse. In Lenin's analysis, the investigation of the national question borders directly on that of fundamental features of the epoch. The analysis of the national problem appears henceforth as part and parcel of an emergent theory of imperialism and a science of socialist revolution.

The article "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination" also deals with the interrelationship between the proletariat of the dominant nations and the bourgeois classes of the oppressed nations. This subject is closely bound up with the problem of self-determination of nations. The opponents of the slogan of self-determination considered that it would be the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations that would take advantage of it, first and foremost. Lenin thoroughly examined that problem. Had the proletariat declared itself for an unconditional support of the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations, then the slogan of self-determination could really have been used by that very bourgeoisie in its own, self-seeking interests; in that case the proletarians of capitalist countries would have found themselves extending their hands, first of all, to the bourgeois classes of the East, rather than to their comrades from Asian countries. Lenin, however, gave no single and unconditional reply to the question about the interrelationship between the proletariat of a dominant nation and the bourgeoisie of an oppressed nation. Lenin drew the following conclusion from an analysis he had made over the years: as long as the bourgeoisie of an oppressed nation fought the oppressor nation, the proletariat would back it up; as long as the bourgeoisie of an oppressed nation defended its own, bourgeois, nationalism and opposed the working people of its own nation, the proletariat would oppose it. That was one of Lenin's most important ideas on the national and the national-colonial questions. He could not have arrived at it

without having assessed the entire complex of economic problems connected with the appearance and the establishment of monopoly rule, the emergence of finance capital, the export of capital into oppressed countries, nor without identifying the social and economic base of the national liberation movements in colonies and semi-colonies, detecting the distinction between the periods and conditions of the development of capitalism in Europe and in the East and, finally, without having studied all that in the closest possible association with the practical objective of finding the most numerous and powerful ally of the international proletariat—the oppressed peoples of colonial and dependent countries. This dialectical idea already contained the nucleus of Lenin's theory on the national and national-colonial questions, comprehensively elaborated by him after the Great October Revolution and submitted to the Second Congress of the Comintern.<sup>1</sup>

Lenin also highly appreciated the national movements in Europe (in Ireland, for example) at the time; he believed them to be particularly important as they were taking place in direct proximity of imperialism's vital centres.

What place did the national question and the problem of national liberation movements occupy in Lenin's theoretical and tactical-strategic studies in wartime?

In those years the problems of war and a revolutionary way out of it, as well as those of international relations, were as tied up in one tangle in Lenin's analysis as they were in actual reality, and became various facets of one problem, that of the prospect for a proletarian revolution in Europe. From the very start of the war, Lenin exposed its predatory and imperialist character and showed that the object of that war—for the imperialist groups who had organised it—was the "seizure of territory and subjugation of other nations, the ruining of competing nations and the plunder of their wealth, distracting the attention of the working masses from the internal political crises in Russia, Germany, Britain and other countries, disuniting and nationalist stultification of the workers, and the extermination of their vanguard so as to weaken the revolutionary

<sup>1</sup> See: V. I. Lenin, "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination", *Collected Works*, Vol. 20, pp. 393-454.

movement of the proletariat".<sup>1</sup> Lenin demonstrated the distinction of principle between the national wars of the past and the imperialist war that began in August 1914. As to the oppressed peoples of the colonies and semi-colonies, had they waged offensive wars in a struggle for the establishment of national states, the international proletariat, Lenin pointed out, should have backed them up.

Lenin thoroughly exposed the fallacy of the arguments of A. Potresov, a Menshevik, who, referring to Marx and Engels, argued: the proletariat should support that of the present belligerents, whose success is more desirable. Lenin showed that Potresov had failed to see the essential distinction between two epochs—the epoch of bourgeois-democratic revolutions in Europe and the epoch which set in upon their conclusion. In some countries of Europe the bourgeoisie, in the former epoch, was more or less interested in democratic reforms; now in all the imperialist countries of Europe its progressive potential (as the vehicle of a democratic and anti-feudal trend) had been used up; so, the proletariat could support none of the ruling classes of European countries in that war. But wars by oppressed peoples for the establishment of national states were an altogether different matter. Such wars could and must get the support of the international proletariat.<sup>2</sup> In one of his last articles, Lenin would write about "the revolutionary and nationalist East" opposing imperialism. That would be a direct inference from the ideas worked out in wartime.<sup>3</sup>

On one occasion after another, Lenin spoke about the progressive nature of national liberation wars deserving support from the proletariat.<sup>4</sup> Lenin invariably and consistently upheld that idea. While in earlier days Lenin had put forward the slogan of the right of nations to self-determination and national secession, now he was pointing up the methods of action to win it. These methods comprised an offensive war, in other words, insurrection. The slogan of

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, "The War and Russian Social-Democracy", *Collected Works*, Vol. 21, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> See: V. I. Lenin, "Under a False Flag", *Collected Works*, Vol. 21, pp. 137-57.

<sup>3</sup> See: V. I. Lenin, "Better Fewer, But Better", *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 500.

<sup>4</sup> See: V. I. Lenin, "Socialism and War", *Collected Works*, Vol. 21, pp. 299-301.

self-determination of nations thus acquired a specific substance appropriate to the prevailing situation and consonant with the slogan of the unity of the proletariat of oppressor nations with the oppressed peoples whom revolutionary social-democracy called upon to fight imperialism.

In his work *Socialism and War* (July-August 1915), Lenin brought off the idea which was to thread many of his writings and speeches and to become one of the starting points of his global strategy: the world was divided into a handful of imperialist powers and the people of the colonies they had subjugated. And just as the demand of national self-determination was affirmed by Lenin always together with a call for rallying the ranks of the international working class, so the idea of the world's division into two unequal groups of nations, with unequal rights, went together with an emphasis on the unity of the interests of the international proletariat and the oppressed peoples fighting imperialism.<sup>1</sup>

The root of this analysis and its meaning are in the quest for the most effective way to a socialist remaking of the world which will mean discharging the historic mission of the proletariat; Lenin could conceive any analysis of the interrelationship of peoples and nations only on the basis of proletarian internationalism. In his article "Several Theses" (October 1915) Lenin, replying to the question what the party of the proletariat would do if the revolution brought it to power in the course of the war, wrote: "We would propose peace to *all* the belligerents on the condition that freedom is given to the colonies and *all* peoples that are dependent, oppressed and deprived of rights".<sup>2</sup> As we see, Lenin regarded the oppressed peoples as allies in the proletarian revolution, in the most direct and true sense of the term, and worked out the general principles of the policy of the party of the victorious proletariat with respect to the colonial and semi-colonial nations. Lenin believed that the imperialist powers would not have accepted that condition, but then the victorious proletarians would "work systematically to bring about an

<sup>1</sup> See: V. I. Lenin, "Socialism and War", *Collected Works*, Vol. 21, pp. 316-17.

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Several Theses", *Collected Works*, Vol. 21, pp. 403-04.

uprising among all peoples now oppressed by the Great Russians, all colonies and dependent countries in Asia (India, China, Persia, etc.), and also, and first and foremost, we would raise up the socialist proletariat of Europe for an insurrection against their governments and despite the social-chauvinists. There is no doubt that a victory of the proletariat in Russia would create extraordinarily favourable conditions for the development of the revolution in both Asia and Europe.”<sup>1</sup> At that point Lenin put forward the idea of unity of the main revolutionary forces after the victory of the proletarian revolution in one country, Russia.

In his theses “The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination” (January-February 1916), Lenin pointed out three groups of nations “with respect to the self-determination of nations”. The first group comprised Western Europe and the United States, and the second group, Eastern Europe. The tasks of the proletariat in this part of the world, Lenin wrote, could not be carried out without championing the right of nations to self-determination. In the third group Lenin listed semi-colonics and colonics (“which have a combined population of 1,000 million”). Socialists had to demand the immediate and unconditional liberation of colonies, i.e., the recognition of their right to self-determination up to and including national secession. In this context, socialists ought to support the more revolutionary elements in the bourgeois-democratic movements for national liberation in those countries and help them in an uprising and revolutionary war against the imperialist powers oppressing them.<sup>2</sup>

A few years later Lenin would advance his thesis at the Second Congress of the Comintern that the bourgeois-democratic forces in oppressed countries still retained their revolutionary potentialities and could still act in a revolutionary way.<sup>3</sup> That would, in point of fact, amount

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 404.

<sup>2</sup> See: V. I. Lenin, “The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination”, *Collected Works*, Vol. 22, pp. 150-52.

<sup>3</sup> See: V. I. Lenin, “The Second Congress of the Communist International, July 19-August 7, 1920”, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, pp. 240-43.

to upholding and carrying forward the ideas which had been propounded much earlier. It is significant, besides, that in the theses "The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination" Lenin considered the third group of countries as a single entity only in respect of imperialism, an entity oppressed by imperialism and differing in that sense from other groups. It is along these lines that Lenin would speak about the colonial and semi-colonial world at the Second Congress of the Comintern.<sup>1</sup>

In his 1916 theses Lenin suggested that the resolutions of the London Congress of the Second International (1896) about the self-determination of nations had to be supplemented by a number of propositions, notably, by a reference to the class content of the demand of the right of nations to self-determination.<sup>2</sup>

Lenin never considered the national question in isolation from the class objectives of the proletariat. His line of reasoning, in the article "The Junius Pamphlet"<sup>3</sup> (July 1916), was this: national wars against the imperialist powers are inevitable; they are progressive for they meet the interests of the national socialist revolution against imperialism; for them to be successful, there must be a combined effort by a huge number of people of oppressed nations or a particularly favourable international environment, "or the *simultaneous* [with national wars against imperialism—*Auth.*] uprising of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie in one of the big powers (this latter eventuality holds first place as the most desirable and favourable for the victory of the proletariat)".<sup>4</sup>

In those days, too, that is, in July 1916, Lenin proved the Bolsheviks to be right in their controversy with Dutch and Polish revolutionary Social-Democrats who demanded the immediate secession of colonies while objecting to the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 240-45; and V. I. Lenin, "Preliminary Draft Theses on the National and the Colonial Questions", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, pp. 148-51.

<sup>2</sup> See: V. I. Lenin, "The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination", *Collected Works*, Vol. 22, pp. 155-56.

<sup>3</sup> See: V. I. Lenin, "The Junius Pamphlet", *Collected Works*, Vol. 22, pp. 305-13.

<sup>4</sup> V. I. Lenin, "The Junius Pamphlet", *Collected Works*, Vol. 22, p. 312.

slogan of self-determination of nations.<sup>1</sup> He drew attention to the mistakes of Polish Social-Democrats who considered that an insurrection against foreign oppression in annexed regions was deplorable if only because these regions had their own bourgeoisie oppressing other nations.<sup>2</sup> A few years later Lenin would have to criticise the views of those Eastern Communists who believed the support of the national liberation movements by the proletariat to be a useless and even harmful affair just because the leadership of those movements was in the hands of the bourgeoisie. Such support was indispensable precisely from the standpoint of the class struggle of the proletariat and from the standpoint of its socialist goal responding to the objective interests of all working and oppressed people.

As early as mid-1916 Lenin formulated the strategy and tactics of revolutionary social-democracy on a world-wide scale in the following way: "The main thing *today* is to stand against the united, aligned front of the imperialist powers, the imperialist bourgeoisie and the social-imperialists, and *for* the utilisation of *all* national movements against imperialism for the purposes of the socialist revolution."<sup>3</sup> This was the fullest yet expression of the objective of the policy of revolutionary social-democracy towards the oppressed peoples.

In the autumn of 1916 Lenin explicitly stated that the new International would consist of representatives of oppressed as well as oppressor nations.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, Lenin specified and crystallised his conclusions regarding the relations with the bourgeoisie of an oppressed nation. He pointed out that the international proletariat was acting in two directions: the nationally oppressed proletariat and peasantry joined with the nationally oppressed bourgeoisie in action against such oppression, while the proletariat or its politically conscious section in the oppressor nation were acting against the bourgeoisie and

<sup>1</sup> See: V. I. Lenin, "The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up", *Collected Works*, Vol. 22, pp. 320-60.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 330-31.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 343.

<sup>4</sup> See: V. I. Lenin, "A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism", *Collected Works*, Vol. 23, p. 56.

its allies in the home countries.<sup>1</sup> So, Lenin drew attention over and over again to the tasks before the proletariat of the oppressed nations—colonies and semi-colonies. He put into a concrete form his conclusions made soon after the 1905 revolution in Russia.

There was a proletarian take-over in Petrograd on October 25 (November 7), 1917. Under Lenin's leadership, the Bolshevik Party had brought together into a powerful revolutionary stream the struggle of the working class for socialism, action by large sections of the population for peace, the peasant movement for land, and the national liberation aspirations of the peoples of Russia, oppressed by the bourgeoisie and big landowners, and turned them all against capitalism. The victory of the Great October Revolution was the result of the practical application of Lenin's theory of socialist revolution, the theory that had taken full account of the changes which had occurred in the world due to capitalism's transition into the final stage of its development, imperialism. It confirmed the validity of Lenin's inference about the possibility of socialism being victorious first in one country.

In the Decree on Peace, written by Lenin, the Soviet government, emphatically denouncing the imperialist policy of annexations, proclaimed the right of nations to decide on their particular form of statehood independently without the least compulsion. In that extremely important government act of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the workers' and peasants' government of Russia spoke up in defence of the rights of any oppressed nation regardless of whether "this nation is in Europe or in distant, overseas countries".<sup>2</sup>

The impact of the socialist revolution in Russia, which ushered in a new era in world history, on the oppressed nations of the East was immense. There are two important points to note in this context. First, the October Revolution directly influenced the peoples of the East, above all, as a liberating revolution which resolved, in particular, the national question, proclaimed and ensured ethnic equality.

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Op. cit.*, pp. 61-62.

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, October 25-26 (November 7-8), 1917", *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 250.

It is this aspect of the socialist revolution in Russia that in those days attracted the greatest attention of revolutionary nationalists in the Eastern countries who led or proposed to lead the popular movement for liberation. Many Communists in the East arrived at Marxism-Leninism after having first come under the influence of the Russian Revolution. Second, the course of events in Russia, in Europe and in the rest of the world after the victory of the Great October Revolution abundantly proved Lenin to have been perfectly right in his assessment of the world's alignment of social and political forces and realistic in his forecast of possible changes in that alignment upon the victory of the proletariat.

Much of their victory in the Civil War over the forces of counterrevolution and intervention, the Bolsheviks and the peoples of Russia owed to the scientific and realistic course with regard to the national question which had been mapped by Lenin and was the one which the Bolshevik Party had followed in making the Great October Revolution. The slogan of self-determination of nations and their right to national secession played an outstanding part, notably, in rallying the Soviet peoples together. It was the consistent implementation of that slogan that, as Lenin foresaw, united the working people.<sup>1</sup>

As to the world's alignment of forces, it changed radically after the victory of the October Revolution, and change

<sup>1</sup> Lenin's slogan of self-determination of nations and their right to national secession came under fire at the Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) in March 1919. Those who opposed the recognition of the right of nations to self-determination (as Bukharin) argued that a nation consisted not only of the proletariat but of the bourgeois classes as well, and the Communists had nothing to do with the bourgeois classes, those individuals reasoned, for the Communists could have nothing in common with them. Lenin explained that the "differentiation", political alienation of working masses from the bourgeoisie was not taking place as fast as the Communists would have liked it to: "no decree has yet been issued stating that all countries must live according to the Bolshevik revolutionary calendar; and even if it were issued, it would not be observed" (V. I. Lenin, "Eighth Congress of the R.C.P.(B.), March 18-23, 1919", *Collected Works*, Vol. 29, pp. 174-75). Therefore, Lenin held, one could not as yet speak of the self-determination of the working masses for that slogan could be understood as implying a refusal to recognise the right of nations to self-determination and as the preaching of violence against them.

it did in the direction predicted by Lenin. It was the first state of the victorious proletariat that became the bulwark and centre of attraction of the world's revolutionary forces. The revolutionary movements of the proletariat of capitalist countries and Eastern peoples, who rose to fight for their liberation, rallied around it.

"Preliminary Draft Theses on the National and the Colonial Questions", written early in June 1920,<sup>1</sup> was a concentrated and generalised expression of Lenin's ideas regarding the liberation movements of the oppressed peoples. It is necessary to retrace the general logic of that document of Lenin's.

Whenever Communists speak of ethnic equality, they link it with the class struggle, rather than a "natural right". The actual meaning of the demand of equality is that it calls for the abolition of classes. Lenin clearly indicated that genuine equality of nations can be achieved only under socialism. This class-proletarian and internationalist thesis is the starting point of further analysis. In considering the national question, Communists proceed, above all, not from any formal principles, but from a precise evaluation of the historically specific situation, spotlighting the interests of the oppressed classes in the general context of the people's interests and, finally, taking into account the world's division into two groups of nations.

The Communist International acted on that basis in directing its policy on the national and colonial questions towards bringing together the proletarians and the working people of all nations. Further on, the "Preliminary Draft Theses" indicate the principal, major route for this convergence: the rallying of the movements of advanced workers of all nations and the national movements of colonies and semi-colonies around Soviet Russia. Such a consolidation progresses as the workers of all nations and the working people of colonies and semi-colonies find from their own experience that there is no way to salvation for them except through the abolition of world imperialism. Hence a policy of alliance of all national liberation movements with Soviet Russia. The forms of this alliance are deter-

<sup>1</sup> See: V. I. Lenin, "Preliminary Draft Theses on the National and the Colonial Questions", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, pp. 144-51.

mined, however, by the objective degree of development of the communist movement and the liberation movement of a bourgeois-democratic character in any particular oppressed country.

Lenin then turned to "more backward" nations—colonies and semi-colonies, the first to be approached with the slogan of self-determination of nations.

The whole of the eleventh thesis of the "Preliminary Draft" treats the problem of alliance with the liberation movement in the colonies. It says that the Communist parties must help the bourgeois-democratic liberation movement in the oppressed countries; this is, above all, the duty of workers and Communists of the country the backward nation is colonially or financially dependent on; that there must be no indiscriminate support for all the movements in the East—reactionary elements have to be fought against; that special support should be given to the peasant movement against the feudal survivals; that one must not tolerate bourgeois-democratic liberation movements painting themselves in the colours of communism; that it is necessary to group communist elements in the East united in the realisation of their particular objectives as opposed to those of bourgeois democracy; that the Communist International must enter into a temporary alliance with the bourgeois democracy of colonial and backward countries, without merging with it, and unfailingly uphold the independence of the communist movement even if it is in its most embryonic form, explain to the masses the intention of imperialists, disguised by slogans of political independence, to create states totally dependent on them economically, financially and militarily; and that there must be an extra-cautious attitude to the subsisting traditional feelings, habits and creeds.

Lenin's assessment of the world-wide alignment of forces following the Great October Revolution had, naturally, gone through a certain phase of evolution. What had been a prediction came true. As a result of the victory of the proletarian revolution in Russia, world imperialism now had confronting it not only the revolutionary proletarian movement and the liberation movements in the colonies, but also a centre these movements could group

around. Now, the Third, Communist International had to do an immense amount of work to bring together the three major revolutionary forces of today whose community of interests was first predicted and then indicated by Lenin. It is not by chance that the assessment of the alignment of class forces in the world keyed more than one of Lenin's statements at the Second Congress of the Comintern.

In the "Report of the Commission on the National and the Colonial Questions, July 26", Lenin spoke about the most important ideas underlying the theses submitted by the Commission to the Plenum of the Congress. The first idea was that the world was divided into oppressed nations forming the majority of the earth's population, and the oppressor nations; the second one was that in the situation having arisen after the imperialist war "reciprocal relations between the peoples and the world political system as a whole are determined by the struggle waged by a small group of imperialist nations against the Soviet movement and the Soviet States headed by Soviet Russia"; the third idea was that the Communists should support not any bourgeois-democratic movement in the colonies, but only those of them which were revolutionary; in that way Lenin drew attention to the fact that the bourgeois classes of oppressed countries could, in principle, still act in a revolutionary way. Finally, one of Lenin's fundamental conclusions was that capitalist development can be bypassed or interrupted and that the capitalist stage of development is not inevitable for all economically backward nations. The latter inference was couched in specific terms: Lenin believed that "backward nations" could pass into communism through certain stages of development, skipping the capitalist stage under two major conditions—given most active assistance from the states with the working class in power and the awakening of the masses to independent political thinking and independent political activity. Such was the thrust of the theses submitted to the Congress and indicating the way to an alliance of the proletariat with the oppressed, above all peasant, masses of the colonies and semi-colonies.

So, both in theory and in practice, Lenin's guidelines on the national and colonial question, drawn up in the

course of scientific investigation and generalisation of experience of mass struggles over the years, were based on the class-proletarian principles, the principles of proletarian internationalism. This is the immutable foundation behind the entire Leninist policy towards the oppressed East, adopted by the international communist movement and providing for alliances with non-proletarian liberation forces. Consequently, the oft-repeated postulate of non-Marxist historiography to the effect that Lenin and the Comintern with their appeal to the bourgeois democracy of the East as a possible ally were "pragmatics" repudiating the basic ideas of Marxism is false and utterly at variance with actual realities, and has no scientific sense and pursues nothing but an anti-communist objective.

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Bourgeois, reformist and "left"-wing revisionist historians, at least those we referred to earlier on, claim, as a rule, that the Second Congress of the Comintern adopted two groups of theses—Lenin's and Roy's—which cancelled each other out or were in sharp conflict. The former were "moderate" and the latter, "revolutionary". Strictly speaking, this contention is a particular inference from the large and just as false premise, already disproved, that Lenin and the Comintern could either come out in support of the social liberation of oppressed nations, or back up the bourgeois-democratic movements in colonies and semi-colonies, without anything else for them to do. According to this point of view, Roy represented the former side of the dilemma and Lenin, the latter one at the Second Congress.

According to research studies made by Soviet historians, Lenin's theses combined a revolutionary approach and a sense of realism while Roy's were thoroughly revised by Lenin to make the original ultra-revolutionary document acceptable to the Congress. Let us note that non-Marxist and anti-Marxist literature challenges this conclusion, and it can often be found to claim that, by having officially approved Roy's "Supplementary Theses", the Congress adopted a document urging the Communist parties to support none but the communist movement and to launch

it fast, to avoid teaming up with bourgeois democracy and to get down straight to making a socialist revolution.

An analysis of Roy's contentions which Lenin and the Commission he chaired deleted from the "Supplementary Theses" shows them to have constituted a definite system of views, if put together.

They boiled down essentially to this: the national liberation movement does not express the aspirations of the masses: it does not enjoy the support of workers and peasants, and its leaders have lost the confidence of the working people; this movement is confronting the social liberation movement; there is no way for these movements to develop in common; the "national spirit" of the oppressed peoples (in other words, anti-imperialist nationalism) is not a revolutionary force; since the national democratic movement is losing the support of the masses, it cannot be successful; in consequence, it is inexpedient for Communists to back up the "colonial bourgeois-democratic movement".<sup>1</sup>

Since, Roy reasoned, national bourgeois leaders are increasingly isolating themselves from the masses alleged to take no interest in a prospect for national liberation, the way to the leadership of the mass movement is open to the Communists of the oppressed nations, and it will be a short one; conditions already exist in most of these countries for the hegemony of Communist parties as fighters for socialism; because of the absence or weakness of the proletariat, Communist parties can be formed of elements of the oppressed peasantry; only under the leadership of local Communist parties, the ground for which is already laid, and the creation of which is, therefore, a matter of the highest priority, and only in battle against "bourgeois nationalist-democrats", will the people achieve liberation from imperialist oppression and simultaneously prevent the development of local capitalism; the bourgeois-democratic stage is not indispensable for the colonial peoples. One particular point to stress is that the reference in this case was made not to bourgeois-democratic change (Roy admitted the need for it in the initial stage of the

<sup>1</sup> On Lenin's correction to Roy's "Supplementary Theses" see also: G. Adhikari, "Lenin on Roy's Supplementary Colonial Theses", *Marxist Miscellany*, Delhi, No. 1, 1970, pp. 1-30.

revolution in the colonies), but to political *leadership* of bourgeois-democratic, national-revolutionary forces. Objectively, this meant that a direct struggle for power must be the concern of the colonial Communist parties in all cases. Finally, as Roy contended, a social revolution in colonial countries must be an indispensable condition for the overthrow of the capitalist system in the metropolitan countries.

This concept ran counter to Lenin's views on the national and colonial question. It was practically deleted from the final text of the "Supplementary Theses" adopted by the Congress. Some Soviet researchers have written that the final text of the "Supplementary Theses" still bore some traces of "leftism" (this has to be admitted), and that the theses were a "compromise document", a quite deliberate, indispensable and justified concession to those early Communists of the East who were still on their way to Marxism.<sup>1</sup> But once amended by Lenin and the Commission of the Congress, the "Supplementary Theses" no longer discounted the bourgeois democracy of the East; they dropped the reckless plea for the immediate "replacement" of the actually existing national liberation movement by a communist movement which was still in the making; did not oppose the united front idea, and incorporated that of non-capitalist development. It is in that form that Roy's "Theses" were adopted by the Congress. Non-Marxist and anti-Marxist historiography, however, followed Borkenau in claiming the opposite and, notably (save a few rare exceptions), that in the text of the "Supplementary Theses" adopted by the Congress the idea of creating Communist parties and campaigning for a socialist revolution was put forward as an alternative to that of a united front. This contention was altogether contrary to fact and was meant to prove that the Comintern had adopted two systems of views at a time—that of Lenin and an ultra-revolutionary one, thereby showing that it had "no principles".

What was the basic distinction between Lenin's and Roy's views of the objectives of Communist parties of the colonial and dependent countries in the opening stages of

<sup>1</sup> See: M. A. Persits, *India's Revolutionaries in Soviet Russia. The Mainsprings of the Indian Communist Movement*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1973 (in Russian).

the development of the communist movement in the East?

These objectives were set out by Lenin in his "Address to the Second All-Russia Congress of Communist Organisations of the Peoples of the East, November 22, 1919". He said: "Relying upon the general theory and practice of communism, you must adapt yourselves to specific conditions such as do not exist in the European countries; you must be able to apply that theory and practice to conditions in which the bulk of the population are peasants, and in which the task is to wage a struggle against medieval survivals and not against capitalism. That is a difficult and specific task, but a very thankful one, because masses that have taken no part in the struggle up to now are being drawn into it, and also because the organisation of communist cells in the East gives you an opportunity to maintain the closest contact with the Third International. You must find specific forms for this alliance of the foremost proletarians of the world with the labouring and exploited masses of the East whose conditions are in many cases medieval."<sup>1</sup> That is to say that Lenin regarded the establishment of a close relationship between the revolutionary movement in the East and the foremost proletarians of the whole world as one of the major tasks before the Communists.

Roy and other "left"-wingers contended that organised Socialist or Communist parties existed already in most of the countries of the East and that their task in all cases was the actual struggle for a socialist revolution. They were flatly opposed to assisting the national liberation movement, denied the very existence of the anti-imperialist aspect of nationalism and worked, in point of fact, for the separation of the communist movement from the large mass of the working people of the backward countries whose national awakening was their first step towards their active involvement in political life. Roy, claiming that the masses had turned away from the nationalists, insisted that the Comintern should confine itself to aiding the launching and development of the communist movement which, in his view, had to stand aloof from the national liberation struggle.

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, p. 161.

Lenin attached paramount importance to the formation and the organisational and political consolidation of the proletarian vanguard in the oppressed countries, believing that right tactics would open up wide prospects before the emergent Communist parties of the East in their efforts to win over the masses and lead the liberation movements. Yet at the same time Lenin did not consider the creation of mass Communist parties to be an immediate objective even for the relatively advanced nations of the East in the early 1920s, and warned against artificially speeding up this process.<sup>1</sup>

There was, however, a mistaken view that the Comintern abided by a different standpoint in 1920 because the final text of the seventh supplementary thesis, which was published, said that "the foremost and necessary task is the formation of Communist parties which will organise the peasants and workers and lead them to the revolution and to the establishment of Soviet republics". This thesis, as it was published in 1934<sup>2</sup> (and, incidentally, as it had appeared in a number of preceding publications), might suggest that a resolution declaring the formation of Communist parties to be the foremost and necessary task in the East back in that year of 1920 had been approved with Lenin's participation; and, moreover, it dealt not with any particular group of more developed countries but with the East as a whole ("dependent countries", "backward countries", "colonies", the countries with possibilities for advancing to communism, "skipping the capitalist stage of development"). The implication was that the formation of Communist parties in the East in 1920 was as much of a priority for those nations as it was for the capitalist countries of the West.

Yet Lenin is known to have repeatedly underlined the specific features of the East. It is feudal or patriarchal and patriarchal-peasant relations that predominate in the backward countries, he stressed, meaning the East as a whole. Wherever pre-capitalist relations predominated, there was practically no industrial proletariat as yet. That

<sup>1</sup> See: Rostislav Ulyanovsky, *National Liberation. Essays on Theory and Practice*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1978, pp. 94,106.

<sup>2</sup> See: *Theses and Statutes of the III Communist International. Adopted by the II Congress, July 17th-August 7th, 1920*, p. 72.

being the situation, Lenin, referring to the urgent, primary objectives of the Communists in the East, insisted that the "elements of future proletarian parties, which will be communist not only in name, are brought together and trained to understand their special tasks, i. e., those of the struggle against the bourgeois-democratic movements within their own nations", that the independence of the proletarian movement should be preserved, if in the most embryonic form, and that the bourgeois-democratic liberation trends should not be allowed to paint themselves in the colours of communism. This is precisely what Lenin wrote about in the "Preliminary Draft Theses" where he referred to the communist movement in colonial and semi-colonial countries. As the Second Congress was in session, he spoke of the need to "*adjust* both Soviet institutions and the Communist Party (its membership, special tasks) to the level of the *peasant* countries of the colonial East. This is the crux of the matter. This needs thinking about and *seeking* concrete answers."<sup>1</sup> So, there was some thinking to be done regarding the specific tasks before the future Communist parties of the East, and Lenin considered that to be one of the top priorities of the communist movement in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. Lenin pointed out further on that it was necessary to create "independent contingents of fighters and party organisations" in all colonies and backward countries<sup>2</sup> (that was directly related to his insistence on the independence of the proletarian movement even in its most embryonic form).

So, Lenin considered that there had to be certain objective and subjective preconditions for Communist parties to emerge and operate effectively in the East. Having in view the complexity of creating them, he explained in the Report of the Commission on the National and the Colonial Questions, which referred, notably, to the policy of proletarian parties of backward countries in respect of the peasantry: "if indeed they [proletarian parties—

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Material for the Second Congress of the Communist International", *Collected Works*, Vol. 42, p. 202.

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, "The Second Congress of the Communist International, July 19-August 7, 1920", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 244.

*Auth.*] can emerge in them.”<sup>1</sup>

He had in mind, of course, the specific circumstances of the day. Lenin had no doubts whatsoever as to the possibility and necessity of Communist parties being formed and developed in the East; at the same time, he urged the revolutionaries of the East, who were going over to the positions of Marxism-Leninism, that Communist parties were formed wherever and whenever there were the economic and social conditions for it. Otherwise, the enforced formation of Communist parties would mean nothing but “a mere change of signboards”, which Lenin had emphatically and repeatedly warned against. The very reason why Lenin pointed out the complexity and specific circumstances of the formation of the communist movement in the colonial and semi-colonial countries was because he wanted this process to develop.

Opposing the enforced creation of Communist parties, Lenin drew attention to the true ways of forming them and called for pioneer proletarian fighting contingents to be used as their core, and for the independence of the communist movement to be upheld right from the start. Even in those early days, he marked out an extremely important line of action for the Communist parties of the East, that of working with the peasantry and with the organisations of the working people and the exploited masses. The more advanced part of the proletariat aroused these masses to independent political thinking and action resulting in the establishment of such organisations.

When representatives of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party asked Lenin in November 1921 for advice as to whether their party should be transformed into a Communist party, Lenin said he would not recommend such a thing, because one party could not be “transformed” into another. It was the proletarian mass, which was yet to shape up in the context of non-capitalist development, that would help the People's Revolutionary Party to be “transformed” into a Communist party. “A mere change of signboards is harmful and dangerous,”<sup>2</sup> he added.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241.

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, “Talk with a Delegation of the Mongolian People's Republic”, *Collected Works*, Vol. 42, p. 361.

The Comintern, it may be recalled, did follow Lenin's advice and consistently worked towards the formation of the communist movement in the East taking into account the objective and subjective preconditions Lenin had referred to. It is, above all, due to the realistic policy of the Comintern which, guided by Lenin's recommendations, linked Marxism-Leninism with the working-class movement of oppressed nations, trained contingents of communist militants, cooperated with them in working out the main trends of communist strategy and tactics in the East, and urged them to work with the working people's mass organisations, that Marxist-Leninist parties emerged in the East, built up their membership and influence, and turned into a potent force as their proletarian nucleus shaped up.

Considering all that, it is impossible to imagine Lenin having advanced or approved in 1920 the idea that the formation of Communist parties was the foremost task in the oppressed Orient as a whole (Asia and Africa), regardless of the particular conditions of various countries. Of course, Lenin did not suggest anything of the kind, nor could he have suggested it, to judge by the whole line of his political thinking.

But that is not all. The above-quoted phrase from the seventh supplementary thesis is followed by this conclusion: "In this way the masses in backward countries can achieve communism under the leadership of the class-conscious proletariat of advanced nations rather than through capitalist development."<sup>1</sup> What strikes the eye is that the words "in this way" are meaningless in this context. If, as it had just been claimed, the *foremost task* of the Communists of the East was to form Communist parties in order to "organise the peasants and workers" and lead them to the establishment of the Soviet form of government, is it logical to infer *from that* that the masses in backward countries will arrive at communism under the leadership of the proletariat of advanced capitalist nations?<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *V. I. Lenin and the Communist International*, p. 204.

<sup>2</sup> It should also be borne in mind that the Soviet system, established under the Communist Party's guidance, is nothing short of a dictatorship of the proletariat. Nobody but an anti-communist (like

In addition to all that it should be noted that it is, in fact, the following, eighth, thesis, that dealt with the proletarian parties in the colonies. Its original text said: "Organised socialist or communist parties closely connected with the mass movement already exist in most of the colonies", whereas the text adopted by the Congress referred to the "organised revolutionary parties which *strive* [emphasis added— *Auth.*] for a close association with the working masses".<sup>1</sup> The thesis stated that aid from Western Communist parties to the revolutionary movement in the colonies had to be provided through proletarian parties.

So glaring a contrast could not but compel an urge to trace its origin, all the more so since many of Lenin's well-known pronouncements indicate that he considered work with large, mass organisations of the working people to be the foremost and necessary task before the Communists.

In his report to the plenum of the Congress on July 26, 1920, Lenin, explaining the possibility of backward countries passing over to socialism by skipping the capital-

F. Borkenau or A. Rosmer), whether rightist or leftist, can intentionally assert that the Comintern called for the establishment of the Soviet form of government *under Communist Party leadership*, that is, the dictatorship of the proletariat at that particular stage of the revolutionary process in the East which unfolded in 1920. However, such a claim can well be made by an ignoramus seizing upon a misreproduced 1934 text and not knowing that it was not the Leninists who had attempted to set such a task, but the Trotskyites whom Lenin and the Comintern had always fought relentlessly. At a later stage such a fight—notably, over the afore-mentioned point of principle—was waged by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) and the Comintern against Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Radek who had tried during the period of the CPC-Kuomintang united front to impose on the Chinese Communists the slogan of Communist-led Soviets of workers', peasants' and soldiers' deputies, i. e., the idea of the immediate establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. To make that position look valid, Zinoviev argued that Lenin had called for the setting up of Soviets in the East when he addressed the Second Congress of the Comintern. He deliberately distorted Lenin's views, leaving out the unquestionable fact that Lenin had more than once emphasised: what he meant were the Soviets of the exploited, the Soviets of the working people, and the peasants' Soviets (not any under control of the working class and its parties at all).

<sup>1</sup> *V. I. Lenin and the Communist International*, p. 204.

ist stage of development, pointed out as one of the major conditions for such a transition—along with the help of the victorious proletariat—the need for the masses to strive for independent political activity and organisation. He stressed in that context that “it is the absolute duty of Communist parties and of elements prepared to form Communist parties, everywhere to conduct propaganda in favour of peasants’ Soviets or of working people’s Soviets, this to include backward and colonial countries. Wherever conditions permit, they should at once make attempts to set up Soviets of the working people.” In the same report Lenin re-emphasised that the Communists must start working in this sense at once throughout the world. Therefore, the issue of a non-capitalist way of development, referred to in the seventh supplementary thesis, was, in Lenin’s opinion, most closely associated with the establishment of mass political organisations of the working people, for instance, in the shape of “Soviets of the exploited”. It was natural to presume that there was a mistake in that part of the seventh supplementary thesis which referred to the immediate formation of Communist parties when that document was published in 1934. Moreover, one felt that the thesis adopted by the Congress ought to have referred to the political organisations of the working people of the East through which the Communists would have spread their influence over the masses.

A study of the Congress proceedings, notably the filed English text of the resolutions on the national and colonial questions, has borne out the assumption that there was an error in the text of the seventh thesis as it was published. It said, indeed, that “the foremost and necessary task is the formation of a *non-party* [emphasis added—*Auth.*] organisation of peasants and workers”.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This text was officially published by the Institute of Marxism-Leninism under the CPSU Central Committee (see: *V. I. Lenin and the Communist International*, p. 204). Since the authenticity of the text is confirmed by a document from the archives, by its full agreement with Lenin’s fundamental instructions and by just as total disagreement of the alternative text with them, there is no reason to call this authenticity in question by a reference to earlier “misreadings” (see: N. Y. Korolyov, “Elaboration of the Comintern’s Leninist Policy on the National and Colonial Questions”. In: *The Second Congress of the Comintern*, Politizdat, Moscow, 1972, in Russian).

Suffice it to compare the seventh thesis, as it actually stood, with the points made by Lenin in the Report of July 26 to find them fully coincide. Lenin and the Comintern considered the creation of revolutionary mass organisations of the working people, "non-party organisations", which would be a way of applying the "idea of Soviet organisation" in pre-capitalist conditions, to be the foremost and necessary task before the Communists in their work with the masses of the oppressed nations. Lenin saw that task as the "indispensable duty" of Communist parties and of the elements which were ready to form them, and insisted on Communists *immediately* addressing themselves to it.

Speaking out in the Commission against Roy's contention that there must be no alliance with the bourgeois-democratic forces of the colonies and that the "fate of world communism" depended entirely on the "triumph of communism in the East", Lenin pointed out that Roy's views were largely unfounded if only because the Indian Communists had failed to form a Communist party by then, although India had 5 million proletarians and 37 million landless peasants. That did not, of course, mean that Lenin favoured the immediate organisation of a mass Communist party in India (it was precisely Roy who advocated that). Lenin, having underlined the paramount importance of forming a Communist party and setting it in motion, made it quite clear, nevertheless, that the numerical growth of the proletariat and landless peasantry in a colony did not by itself signify the existence of all the necessary preconditions for the organisation of a mass Communist party.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See: *Chronicle of the Second Congress of the Communist International*, July 27, 1920, p. 2 (in Russian). Somebody may ask whether the argument that "the foremost and necessary task is the creation of a non-party organisation of peasants and workers in order to lead them to a revolution and to the establishment of a Soviet republic" is not equivalent to the contention that proletarian power and communism can be achieved under the leadership of a "non-party organisation". Not in the least. First, when speaking about the Soviets in the East, Lenin meant the Soviets of the working people (predominantly peasant Soviets) and, therefore, the "Soviet republic" this thesis referred to, and one to which non-party organisations can lead the peasants and workers, was not yet to be the power

Lenin never saw the creation and operation of "non-communist organisations" of a revolutionary character as an alternative to the creation and operation of Communist parties. Lenin and the Comintern regarded such organisations as allies of the Communist parties in their struggle against imperialism and for the abolition of capitalism. This is still the principle of the international communist movement.

Trotskyites attempted to knock the Comintern off that position. Trotsky invariably opposed the Comintern's strategy of alliance with non-communist revolutionary organisations and, in particular, the principle of creating workers' and peasants' parties (his opposition stemmed from his "permanent revolution" concept which implied rejecting the policy of united front). He sought to prove the Comintern to have been in the wrong in working for the formation of workers' and peasants' parties in the East, and he did so by a sheer misrepresentation: the Comintern, he alleged, was substituting these organisations for the Communist parties and was all but considering them as an alternative to the Communist parties. In actual fact, however, the Comintern favoured the making and backing of revolutionary workers' and peasants' parties, for it saw them as allies of Communist parties and strove in that way to reinforce them, strengthen their independence and extend their mass influence. It was the traditional Trotskyite ambition to subvert the Communist parties' united front strategy that lay behind the outcry against the making and backing of workers' and peasants' parties and the protestations of concern for the Communist parties which the Comintern was alleged to consider sacrificing to non-communist organisations.

The claims of some Communists at declaring the national liberation movement in the colonial and dependent countries to be condemned to disintegration and early extinction along with their ambition to paint it in the colours of communism worried Lenin. He saw it as a

of the working class. Second, the transition to communism is mentioned further on, and the assumption is that such a transition can take place under the leadership of the proletariat of advanced nations (the reference being to backward countries whose proletariat was not numerous or did not exist at all).

danger of dissolving the communist elements in the main-stream of the democratic movement for liberation. Lenin emphatically insisted that the Comintern "should under all circumstances uphold the independence of the proletarian movement even if it is in its most embryonic form" and that it should not merge with the bourgeois democracy of the colonies. It was not by mere chance, therefore, that he should have corrected the passage in the original text of Roy's Theses which said that "it does not necessarily follow" from the bourgeois-democratic character of the tasks of the opening phase of the revolutions in the colonies "that the leadership of the revolutions in the colonies should be left to bourgeois democrats". The words "it does not necessarily follow" were replaced by "it does not follow at all". So Lenin, while advocating a united front, considered the Communists' refusal to strive for the leadership of the revolution, which would have reduced them to an appendage of bourgeois democracy, to be unacceptable under any circumstances. Those who presumed that Communists could come to lead the revolution without day-to-day persistent battle for the minds of the masses and that all the popular movements in the colonial and dependent countries were, in effect, communist, and who paid lip-service to the hegemony of the proletariat, in actual fact were subverting the independence of the proletarian movement. Sectarians infected it with the very ideology of petty-bourgeois nationalism they claimed did not exist.

Lenin's uncompromising, intransigent resistance to all sectarian misconstructions in the national and the colonial questions was a true effort towards the formation of Communist parties in Eastern countries—communist in more than name—and in behalf of their independent class character and their correct tactics conforming to their particular setting and ensuring their close bond with the masses.

To sum up, the claims, so often occurring in non-Marxist historiography, to the effect that Lenin and the Comintern had made a party decision out of Roy's conclusions which amounted to forswearing the united front policy, were nothing short of falsification. The study of Lenin's work on Roy's Theses and the publication of their

authentic final text certainly contributed towards exposing that falsehood.

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As stated earlier on, non-Marxist historians of the Comintern deal, whenever they turn to any specific problems of its Eastern policy, predominantly with questions related to the Chinese Revolution of 1925-1927. The arguments they insist most on, as we have seen, are: the Executive Committee of the Communist International was so convinced of Chiang Kai-shek's loyalty as to have admitted the Kuomintang as a sympathising party; the Chinese Revolution failed and the CPC was smashed supposedly because of the "Comintern's erroneous policy" which it is claimed to have pursued in spite of the protests from the Trotskyite-Zinovievite opposition.

In actual fact, however, even before the revolution (it began in May 1925), there had emerged a system of relations that was to be typical of the subsequent period, between the Comintern and the CPC, on the one hand, and the Kuomintang, on the other. It was in its capacity of a national revolutionary party, not a workers' and peasants' party, that the Kuomintang received support from the Comintern and the Communists. Yet the Kuomintang leadership found it necessary to assure the Comintern and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) that it was precisely a workers' and peasants' party, and even a proletarian party. A Kuomintang representative, Hu Hanmin, arrived in Moscow late in 1925. He met some ECCI officials and had several discussions with them. Hu Hanmin informed the ECCI that he represented the Kuomintang's left wing; the right, bourgeois wing, in his and Chiang Kai-shek's view, would turn counter-revolutionary before long. Hu Hanmin asked the ECCI to help the "revolutionary wing of the Kuomintang" draw up a programme and work out a theory based on the "principles of world revolution". As a spokesman for the Kuomintang, Hu Hanmin was certainly under instructions to present that party as being far closer to the Communists than was actually the case.

The instructions were easy to understand. The men of the Kuomintang knew that the Comintern had a powerful base

of support—the USSR with a Communist party in power. By turning to the Comintern, the Kuomintang, which was still opposed to imperialism and reactionary-militarist factions, counted on further assistance from the Soviet Union. It was natural to expect that the USSR (as well as the international communist movement) would support the revolutionary forces of China. On its part, the ECCI had some reason to regard the fact of the national revolutionary Kuomintang turning to it for help and advice as a result of its own policy of promoting the formation of a united front of anti-imperialist forces. There was a mounting large-scale anti-imperialist movement in China at the time under the leadership of the Kuomintang which had considerable armed strength. The ECCI believed that the victory of the national revolution in China, with the CPC expected to play the vanguard part in it, could substantially change the world-wide balance of forces between imperialism and socialism. Along with that, the ECCI expected the victory of the national revolution in China to do no more than round off the first phase of the revolution. And the more consistent and decisive that victory would be, the more opportunities would open up for passing on to its second phase which would be crowned with the establishment of a people's, revolutionary-democratic state. At the same time, there was growing awareness within the Executive Committee that the Kuomintang, a revolutionary force though it was, was by no means a workers' and peasants' party, but a political conglomerate with bourgeois and landowning elements as leadership, that there were strong right-wing and intermediate forces in it and that the ultimate political position of that organisation, revolutionary as it still was, by and large, would crystallise in the course of the struggle between its constituent elements.

In his discussions in the ECCI, Hu Hanmin set out these views: the Kuomintang considered the bourgeoisie to be a counterrevolutionary force; for that reason it did not want to act in alliance with it; the aims of the CPC and the Kuomintang did not differ in point of principle and, therefore, the Kuomintang might eventually join the CPC; but as long as there was a national liberation movement under way in China, the Kuomintang was necessary—to continue through that period of transition; since, on the other hand,

it was not only the workers, but the peasants, too, that were the proletarians of China, the Kuomintang was a “proletarian party” just as well; it was eager to join the Comintern. Hu Hanmin’s game was plain. He went out of his way to paint the Kuomintang in the colours of communism, trying to prove that the existence and functioning of the CPC were, in fact, unnecessary. Leftist phraseology was to disguise that act of subversion against the independence and the very existence of the CPC.

The ECCI saw that plan through. Hu Hanmin was told that his utterances suggested that one of the two parties, the Kuomintang or the CPC, was redundant. Yet the Comintern adhered to Lenin’s tactics in favouring a revolutionary alliance of the CPC with the Kuomintang, but found it necessary for them to dissociate from one another and clear up each party’s aims and objectives. The Kuomintang stood for the establishment of an independent China under revolutionary-democratic rule, which would commit itself to supplying the basic wants of hundreds of millions of peasants and workers. The CPC, on the other hand, was a party of the proletariat. Its final goal was to win power for the working class. Its immediate political objective was to bring about the victory of the national revolutionary movement in China. In that sense, the tasks of the CPC and the Kuomintang converged, thereby providing a basis for them to form a bloc. The CPC, however, remained an independent class party. In other words, the ECCI applied Lenin’s twofold formula calling for an alliance with Eastern democracy on the indispensable understanding that the communist and working-class movements were to retain their political independence.

In talking to Hu Hanmin, representatives of the ECCI and its Eastern Department discussed, among other things, the question of the state to be set up after the victory of the national revolution. The view in the ECCI was that it would not, of course, be a dictatorship of the proletariat. Yet, on the other hand, a bourgeois-parliamentary democracy would not meet the aspirations of the masses who had risen to make a revolution. The appropriate term was never used at the time, but the representatives of the ECCI certainly meant a *transitional type of national revolutionary government*, that is, the rule by a bloc of revo-

lutionary anti-imperialist forces.

So the Kuomintang's attempt at getting the Communist Party of China dissolved through negotiation in a national revolutionary organisation ended in failure.

In 1925-1926 the Kuomintang leadership several times raised the question of their party joining the Comintern. The Kuomintang's first official appeal to that effect was issued in February 1926. It was made by Hu Hanmin who was still in Moscow. He motivated the offer by saying that the Kuomintang accepted the idea of an alliance of the world proletariat with the oppressed nations. In March the Kuomintang representative received the official reply. It said that the time for the Kuomintang to join the Comintern had not yet come, but the ECCI Presidium was ready to consider the issue at its Sixth Plenum. In other words, the Kuomintang got a polite refusal. (At a later stage, the ECCI Chairman Zinoviev would join with Trotsky in slanderously accusing the Comintern and the CPSU (B) of having wanted the Kuomintang to enter the Communist International.)

One more Kuomintang representative, Shao Lizi, arrived in Moscow in September 1926. He informed the Comintern of Chiang Kai-shek's offer that in exchange for his recognition of the Comintern as the leader of the world revolution, the Comintern should recognise the Kuomintang (meaning, of course, the military-political top leadership he headed) as the leader of the revolution in China. On such terms, the Kuomintang was willing to treat the Comintern as the leading body. Of course, Chiang Kai-shek understood the Comintern's leadership as nothing but the ECCI's and the Soviet Union's aid to the revolution which was to unfold under the Kuomintang's control. His representative sought to get across the idea that there was practically "no need" for a Communist party in China. Chiang Kai-shek was very anxious for the Kuomintang to be admitted to the Comintern. At that time the National Revolutionary Army (NRA) was already on its Northern March against the reactionary militarist groups and in those days Chiang Kai-shek needed Soviet support more than ever. At the same time, he wanted to paralyse his rival, the CPC.

The ECCI saw Chiang Kai-shek's plan through once again. None but the ward politicians in the opposition could

claim that the ECCI had negotiated with Chiang Kai-shek under any illusion about his intentions. Even at that time, Chiang Kai-shek was no well-wisher either of the CPC or of the international communist movement in general; moreover, he was their potential adversary, and the ECCI knew perfectly well who it was dealing with. While soliciting the Kuomintang's admission to the Comintern, Shao Lizi, like Hu Hanmin before him, insisted on the Communist Party being dissolved in the Kuomintang on the grounds that what was taking place in China was a national, not proletarian, revolution. Shao Lizi wrote to the ECCI suggesting that the Comintern and the Kuomintang should exchange representatives. In January 1927 the ECCI Presidium discussed the issue of the Kuomintang's representation in the Comintern. It was decided to refer the matter to the "Minor Commission". A few days later that body decided to write to M. M. Borodin and ECCI representative in China G. N. Voitinsky, asking them about their opinion as well as the position of the CPC leadership. The idea was to have the problem re-examined on receiving the answer. That answer never came from China, while Chiang Kai-shek's betrayal in April 1927 naturally put an end to all negotiations with the Kuomintang on the subject.

The ECCI's position on the question of the Kuomintang entering the Comintern generally boiled down to preventing the admission of the Kuomintang to the Comintern whichever way, not even as a "sympathising party", without, however, giving Chiang Kai-shek a point-blank negative reply which he could have turned against the CPC.

That is the actual background to one of the most favourite arguments of the historiography hostile to the Comintern, to the effect that it had "admitted the Kuomintang to its ranks".

Let us now have a look at the major ECCI decisions regarding the Communists' policy towards the Chinese Revolution.

The resolutions of the Seventh Enlarged Plenum of the ECCI (November-December 1926) were a very important stage in devising the Comintern's strategy and tactics in the Chinese Revolution. The Plenum qualified the revolution in China as an anti-imperialist and bourgeois-democratic revolution eventually designed to free the Chinese people

from foreign oppression, reunite the nation, establish a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the working class and the peasantry, resolve the issues of nationalising the land and confiscating the property belonging to foreign capital. The ECCI considered that the Chinese Revolution was still passing through a national stage, that the bourgeois-democratic revolution in China was still in its opening stages when its motive forces were the proletariat, the peasantry, petty bourgeoisie and middle classes, as well as a segment of the big bourgeoisie, forming a broad anti-imperialist bloc.<sup>1</sup> The Plenum formulated the agrarian demands for the current period: maximum rent cuts, abolition of excessive taxation, and expropriation of the landed estates of counterrevolutionaries. At that point the resolution of the Plenum of the ECCI reaffirmed the slogans put forward by the Plenum of the CPC Central Committee in July of that year. Along with that, it called for the nationalisation of the land as a longer-term prospect.

In devising the tactical line to follow in regard of the Chinese Revolution, the Comintern found the right approach to a number of important theoretical and practical problems which had arisen in their full magnitude before the communist movement. As stated earlier on, in those days the Comintern did not consider the Kuomintang as a political party of the usual type, but saw it as a political bloc and ramified organisation with the forces representative of different classes and political groups fighting inside. The Comintern made a sizable contribution towards the development of Marxist thought by underscoring the national dimension of the Chinese Revolution of 1925-1927 in its opening stages.

In appraising the overall prospects of the Chinese Revolution, the ECCI Plenum pointed out that the result of that revolution "must not necessarily be the creation of such social and political conditions as would lead to the country's capitalist development". The state to be created through the victory of the revolution will not be purely bourgeois-democratic. It "will represent a democratic

<sup>1</sup> For the resolutions of the Seventh Enlarged ECCI Plenum on the Chinese situation see: *The Communist International 1919-1943. Documents*, Vol. 2, Selected and Edited by Jane Degras, Oxford University Press, London, New York, Toronto, 1960, pp. 336-48.

dictatorship of the proletariat, the peasantry and other exploited classes". The Plenum, meeting at a time when the NRA gained ground in fighting the militarist forces—the bulwark of imperialist influence in China, stated that the imperialist intervention in China was mounting, that conditions in China were of a particular character and, for that reason, the national revolution in China "essentially differs from the classic bourgeois revolutions of West European countries of last century as well as from the 1905 Revolution in Russia". The Plenum pointed to the rapid process of redeployment of the social forces involved in the national revolutionary movement in China; and to the inevitable eventual siding of most of the big bourgeoisie with the forces of counterrevolution; qualified the agrarian issue as the "central problem of the present situation"; outlined a programme of demands designed to "draw the mass of the working class into the movement and reinforce its position in the national revolution" and win the peasantry over to the revolution; pointed out the most important general democratic objectives of the Chinese Revolution; emphasised the particular significance of the systematic and resolute struggle of the Communists against the Kuomintang right-wingers seeking to convert the Kuomintang into a bourgeois-landlord party, and that of cooperation with the Kuomintang's left wing.

After the events of March 20, 1926, which revealed the anti-communist image of the NRA Supreme Commander, the ECCI surmised that Chiang Kai-shek might strike at China's revolutionary forces sooner or later. The Seventh Plenum stated: as the revolution developed and gained ground, the big bourgeoisie would find that the anti-imperialist struggle threatened its interests, and it would dissociate itself from the revolution and then would try and crush it. The task before the Communists was to gain the time required for the continued unfolding of the revolution, consolidation of the Communist Party and preparations for resisting an impending offensive of counter-revolution.

The Plenum's decision was, undoubtedly, a complicated document. To be exact, it recommended a complicated course of action for the party to follow. On the one hand, there was an emphasis on the united front and on the need

to keep teaming up with the national bourgeoisie and the army which had a large proportion of officers from the landlords, while, on the other, there was a statement of the need to step up the peasant movement for land with a view to preparing for a head-on collision with the forces of the bourgeoisie and the landowners. To combine those two aspects by taking realistic decisions at each particular moment and surmounting the actual difficulties as they arose, by a flexible policy that could put off the inevitable clash with the Kuomintang until the power balance became more favourable for the Communist Party, that was what the Comintern urged the CPC leadership to do. Together with their comrades from the Comintern who were in China, they were acting in the hardest imaginable conditions : from late 1926 onwards, Chiang Kai-shek, while carrying on effective combat operations against reactionary militarists, was preparing to strike at the Communist Party. That intention of his became increasingly obvious.

The Comintern had chosen the only possible, if elaborate, course of action. Should the Comintern, as bourgeois and reformist historians have subsequently "advised", have oriented the Communist Party of China to an abandonment of the struggle for hegemony in an unfolding revolution, that would have virtually meant causing it to dissolve itself within the Kuomintang and cease to exist as a party in its own right; had the Comintern chosen to break up the united front and confront Chiang Kai-shek, thus taking the course the Trotskyites wanted it to take, it would have created a situation in which Chiang Kai-shek would have crushed the Communist Party in no time. Therefore, the Comintern, in a most delicate position, for a long time effectively coped with a twofold task which meant building up the CPC's strength and authority within the united front along with reinforcing the position of the Kuomintang's Wuhan Group (the latter strove for mass support in the face of the growing threat of Chiang Kai-shek's military dictatorship and espoused a programme of democratic reforms at the time), while never falling for provocation and keeping the bloc with Chiang Kai-shek. The way to accomplish that task was not through abstract calculations; the issue of who will be the winner—the hegemony of the proletariat and its party or the dictatorship of Chiang Kai-shek—was to be

decided by the balance of the actual forces in the field. That was the Comintern's general approach to the Chinese Revolution.

In April 1927 the Communist Party of China was hit hard. Chiang Kai-shek's success in staging a military coup in Shanghai was basically due to an objective factor—a power balance that was unfavourable for the CPC. It must be added that an undialectic, one-sided policy of either keeping up an alliance with Chiang Kai-shek or heading for only an agrarian revolution under CPC leadership would have led to the Communist Party losing its significance as a real force much earlier than it actually happened. That would have meant the failure of the revolution even before it had gathered strength.

The Trotskyite-Zinovievite opposition in the ECCI is known to have made great play of the document sent to the CPC on October 26, 1926, pointing out that to sharpen the struggle against the Chinese bourgeoisie and rural higher-ups at that stage was premature and extremely dangerous. The document said that such a sharpening would push the bourgeoisie, merchants and higher-ups of the countryside into the arms of imperialists and militarists and that as long as the danger posed by imperialists and militarists subsisted and the prospect of having to fight them remained inevitable, the Kuomintang must retain all of its possible allies and fellow-travellers. The Comintern also considered that action to resolve the agrarian problem must be made the order of the day and that no victory could be won without peasant support. At the same time, it noted that an immediate civil war in the countryside—at the height of the war against imperialism and its agents in China—could diminish the Kuomintang's combat efficiency.

That document should under no circumstances be seen in isolation from the entire set of the Comintern's policies in China and from the situation as it had shaped up there. To begin with, in October 1926 the Comintern had every reason to believe that the Kuomintang bourgeois-landlord leadership was not yet deserting the revolution and that the united front was not yet breaking up. Furthermore, the Directive of October 26 was given at a time when the NRA was in a tight corner. In October it was suffering immense losses in the main sector (Jiangxi province), with at least

half its commanding officers wiped out, not to speak of other casualties. Under those circumstances, the Comintern received a suggestion from its representative in Shanghai that the CPC should be oriented to launching an all-out offensive against the landed aristocracy in the NRA-held territory. But many of the NRA commanders had come from landowning families of the provinces where the struggle went on. A call for a civil war in the countryside—above all, one coming at a time of a serious military reverse—could have led to the NRA breaking up. The document of October 26, 1926 was a well-justified rejection of the above-mentioned proposal.

Following the Seventh Plenum of the ECCI, whose decisions took into account the incipient trend in Chiang Kai-shek's policies for breaking up the united front, the Comintern changed accents in its recommendations. The March 1927 directive, for instance, spoke of the need to arm workers and peasants (which meant both legal and illegal arming of workers' and peasants' detachments).

After the April coup, when the CPC leadership, fearing that the Kuomintang's Wuhan Group would follow in Chiang Kai-shek's footsteps and come out against the Communist Party, took up a position of restraint in regard of the peasant movement, the ECCI sent the CPC a number of recommendations urging the utmost encouragement of peasant revolutionary activity with reliance on the military units formed of "revolutionary peasants and workers". It was in the early half of May that the Comintern started sending such directives to the CPC. Considering the April experience, when an expected blow unexpectedly turned out to be a crushing one, the ECCI urged the CPC to put up a battle against the adversary attacking the Party in Wuhan—such an attack looked inevitable because of the identity of the class and military-caste interests of Chiang Kai-shek and the governing quarters of the Wuhan Group. To that end, the ECCI found it necessary to "give a boost" to the mass movement, organise and arm those involved in it (along with a plan to act in contact with individual leading members of the Wuhan Group so as to retain the standard of the "revolutionary Kuomintang", which was so important for the masses).

The Comintern's directives of May and June said that

it was necessary to launch an agrarian revolution systematically under the slogan "All power to the peasant unions and committees in the countryside"; that there must be a drive to confiscate landed estates in the provinces where an intense agrarian movement was on and where reactionary militarists went all out to crush it (notably, in Hunan and Guangdong); that an important thing now was an actual confiscation of land by the peasants with the Communist Party doing its best to help them; that the Comintern stood pat on the actual take-over of the land "from below"; that without an agrarian revolution the Kuomintang would become a plaything of the generals. The recommendations pointed out that some leaders of the left (Wuhan) Kuomintang showed the white feather, wavered and resorted to conciliatory tactics, and suggested drawing as many workers' and peasants' leaders in the executive machinery of the Wuhan Kuomintang. The ECCI documents stressed that it was necessary to end the Wuhan Kuomintang's dependence on the militarists, mobilise Communists and revolutionary workers from Hunan and Hubei, form them into several new corps and organise a revolutionary army before it was too late. All holding up of the agrarian revolution was criminal.

The foregoing should have made it quite clear that the opposition's claim, readily echoed by non-Marxist historiography, that the Comintern had come out against the agrarian revolution in China, was nonsense from start to finish. Just on the contrary, the ECCI was in favour of a peasant revolution without, however, jumping the unfinished stages of the movement or precipitating an ill-timed confrontation with Chiang Kai-shek in what were disadvantageous conditions for the mass of the people.

But, perhaps, it was too late for the ECCI to actively orient the CPC to an agrarian revolution in May 1927? Not at all. The point is that the orientation to a full-scale agrarian revolution, should it have been adopted before Chiang Kai-shek broke up the united front, would have invited an immediate strike at the Communist Party which would have differed from the April blow by two important aspects: it would have been dealt earlier on by the combined forces of the Kuomintang. Some would have said then that the Communist Party had acted much too soon. The reason for Chiang Kai-shek's success in Shanghai was not that the

Comintern had been too late in calling for an agrarian revolution, but that the CPC was weaker than the Kuomintang and its armed forces. It was for that particular reason that the CPC suffered a reverse in Wuhan, too. The call for a civil war in the countryside came when a mass movement against the rural exploiters—*tuhao* and *lieshen*—began to spread in the territory under the Wuhan Group's control, when a confrontation with the local militarists ready to gang up with Chiang Kai-shek became inevitable, when it became clear that the militarists were poised to strike a crushing, rather than "restraining", blow, when—following Chiang Kai-shek's coup—the united front lost its real political base and began to break up irretrievably, in other words, the call came at the right time. It did not break the united front as it would have done had it been issued before the April coup, for there was practically no united front any longer in China after the army had risen against the CPC, the Wuhan Group's bloc with the CPC was nothing but a local rudiment of the former united front, and the establishment of a military dictatorship had made the Wuhan Group an ephemeral body. Yet not even the best-timed and thoroughly correct orientation could have led to a success in the face of the Kuomintang's immense superiority of forces.

The finding that the revolution, after the Shanghai defeat, passed on to a new, higher level and that there was a class-inspired antagonism between Chiang Kai-shek's group and the Wuhan Government was groundless, of course. However, it is not formulas that matter. In actual fact, it was as early as the first half of May 1927 that the ECCI called on the CPC to rouse the masses to action against the Wuhan Kuomintang's leaders inclined to collaborate with reactionary militarists. The choice was either giving up all further struggle after Chiang Kai-shek's strike at the CPC in April or, on the contrary, rallying the remaining forces for yet another unavoidable confrontation, taking advantage of the situation in the territory under the control of the Wuhan Government of the left Kuomintang, as it still left the CPC some freedom of action. The Comintern opted for the latter course. Without nurturing any illusions about the Wuhan Group, it oriented the CPC to action that would have actually prepared it for a confrontation with that group. This means that in reality the ECCI viewed the April

coup not just as an act of Chiang Kai-shek the militarist, but as an irreversible break-up of the united front of the Kuomintang and the CPC. The only thing that could be done was to try and use the opportunities arising from Chiang Kai-shek's differences with the Wuhan Government.

As it examined the changed situation in China, following Chiang Kai-shek's counterrevolutionary coup in Shanghai, the Eighth Plenum of the ECCI, meeting in May 1927, stated that the left Kuomintang government in Wuhan could play a revolutionary role if it went all out to win over the masses. The ECCI could not rule out the possibility of the Communist Party, represented on the left Kuomintang government in Wuhan, organising a sweeping mass movement and pushing that government into a revolutionary course of action. Nor did the ECCI overrate that possibility. It presumed that the pressure of the revolutionary masses on the Kuomintang government might bring about another confrontation.<sup>1</sup>

The ECCI's line of approach to the Chinese question, which was essentially one of urging the consolidation of all of China's anti-imperialist forces with the Communist Party in the lead, had been the object of recurrent and fierce attacks from the Trotskyite-Zinovievite opposition. The opposition used the problem of the Chinese Revolution as a pretext to assail the general line of the Comintern and the CPSU(B). At a later stage, the opposition attempted to exploit the defeat of the Chinese Revolution to the same end.

The opposition's view on the Chinese question can be summed up as follows. The Comintern's conclusion about the need to back up the national movements of a revolutionary character was misinterpreted as a call for breaking with the anti-imperialist forces that were not communist. The Chinese Revolution was viewed as one that did not differ, in point of principle, from the 1905 revolution in Russia, judging by the alignment of class forces and their character. The development of the revolution into a socialist one was declared to be an immediate prospect. Revolutionary Sunyatsenism was seen not as a step forward, nor as

<sup>1</sup> Naturally the Comintern never "advertised" the possibility of a confrontation with the Wuhan Kuomintang.

preparation of the large mass of the working people for a higher form of ideology—that was the Comintern's view—but as a basically reactionary ideology. The idea of forming a government representing the interests of a bloc of various classes was declared to be “nonsense” and tantamount to a “renunciation of Marxism”. The Kuomintang was qualified as a standard bourgeois party which had never held revolutionary positions but only disguised itself as a revolutionary organisation. Discounting the transitional stages of the development of the revolution, the opposition demanded the immediate establishment of Soviets in China, and above all the Soviets of workers' deputies, as organs of power. In other words, the opposition, ignoring the actual stage of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, clamoured for immediate action to install a dictatorship of the proletariat in China.<sup>1</sup>

To have attempted to put the opposition's programme into effect would have meant not only condemning the Communist Party of China to a defeat at a still earlier stage of the revolution, but also paring down the scope of that revolution achieved through the Communists' long and leading involvement in a united national front, because the Chinese Revolution would then have never become a revolution of the masses.

To sum up, the conclusion made earlier on that in their interpretation of the role of the Comintern in the Chinese Revolution bourgeois, reformist and left-revisionist historians echo Trotsky in every way, even though, perhaps, the more respectable of them may not know “whose prose they are speaking”, can be supplemented by this one: it is enough to turn to facts and present them in a positive way to disprove this interpretation.

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The foregoing has shown that it is common for all non-Marxist publications on the history of the Comintern to present the principle of proletarian internationalism as if opposed to the pursuit of alliance with non-proletarian

<sup>1</sup> See: *The Communist International. A Short Historical Essay*, p. 270.

national liberation forces, “implant” the revolutionary approach and realism in the resolutions of the Second Congress of the Comintern which proceeded from Lenin’s theory as applied to the national and the national-colonial questions, and falsify the Comintern’s role in the Chinese Revolution of 1925-1927. The string of their misconceptions stems from a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the internationalist fundamentals of Leninism and works its way through the interpretation of the diversified experience of the Second Congress to the subjects of the Comintern’s actual policies with respect to the national liberation movement in any particular country.

## THE ORIGIN OF THE INDIAN COMMUNIST MOVEMENT AND THE COMINTERN'S ORIENTAL POLICY (1918-1921)

M. A. PERSITS

The subject of the Indian revolutionaries in exile and the emergence of the Indian communist movement in the Land of Soviets<sup>1</sup> is treated superficially, if at all, in a host of books on the Comintern's general history, written by bourgeois and social-reformist authors. We shall, therefore, turn our attention to those books by bourgeois writers which, although eschewing special study of the subject of interest to us, still give it a more or less detailed treatment. These are the works about the history of the communist movement in India, the relationship between international communism and Indian nationalism, books about the contacts between the Bolsheviks and Indian Communists, as well as works on Soviet-British relations. The relevant general theoretical and political issues, dealt with in these books, are still an object of a pitched ideological battle.

Considering the activities of the Indian revolutionaries in Soviet Russia, bourgeois historians play down in every way, or altogether deny the international importance of the October Revolution and, in particular, its immense effect on India. They view the Caliphate exodus from India in 1920 as nothing short of a religious movement, trying to prove that the communist movement had no national ground to stand on in India; the Soviet policy and the Comintern's advocacy of all-round support for the national

<sup>1</sup> For details see: M. A. Persits, *Op. cit.*

liberation movement in the colonial and dependent countries are seen as purely self-seeking ambitions pursued in the national interests of Soviet Russia and for the selfish ends of international communism; they claim that the policies of the Bolsheviks and the Comintern towards India and other countries of the East implied exporting revolution.

These presumptions, advanced by modern-day bourgeois historians, figured mostly in the stock-in-trade of anti-Sovietism back in the early 1920s, soon after the founding of the Comintern, and earlier still—right after the October Revolution. This is not difficult to see by reading, at least, the work of American historian Leo Pasvolsky *Russia in the Far East*, published in January 1922,<sup>1</sup> or the memoirs of a British Intelligence agent in Central Asia, P. T. Etherton, who conducted intense anti-Soviet activities over there.<sup>2</sup> The same is evidenced by numerous comments in *The Times* of London which quite often carried primitive anti-Soviet fakes. It would be wrong to claim, however, that the present works by bourgeois historians do no more than rehash the conclusions and assertions of their predecessors. In contradistinction to them, most of present-day bourgeois historians, referring in one way or another to the subject of interest to us, usually write in an objectivist manner, drawing upon copious factual material so that their books and articles appear authentic and impartial at first glance. Some of the authors make a special point of advising the readers about the absolute objectivity of their writings. For example, American historians Gene D. Overstreet and Marshall Windmiller, who wrote a large book about the communist movement in India,<sup>3</sup> although declaring quite openly, through an epigraph, the anti-communist thrust of their work, assure, however, that it is for that very reason that they intended to tell the truth because it alone could force communism to quit the historical scene.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See: Leo Pasvolsky, *Russia in the Far East*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1922.

<sup>2</sup> See: P. T. Etherton, *In the Heart of Asia*, Constable and Company, Ltd., London, 1925.

<sup>3</sup> See: Gene D. Overstreet, Marshall Windmiller, *Communism in India*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1959.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. XI.

Other writers express their commitment to the "truth" by declaring themselves to be the partisans of a pure, un-commented fact in a historical narration. For example, the American historian of an Indian descent, Chattar Singh Samra, declared in his book about Anglo-Soviet relations<sup>1</sup> that he had reduced his commentary to the minimum because "the language of facts is ... much more adequate and eloquent in striking home inexorable realities than their exhaustive commentaries".<sup>2</sup>

In reality, however, so promising a statement proved to be without foundation in fact since the author, as he admitted himself, was using primarily British sources and, among them, most often the publications in *The Times*. Now, the measure of that paper's objectivity was determined by its understandable urge to vindicate by all means the anti-Soviet armed intervention of British imperialism and its generous support for the Whiteguards and *basmach* bands.

But, in addition to a biased selection of sources, C. S. Samra, like so many of his colleagues, juggles with facts as much as he likes and ranges them so as to prompt the reader to draw the conclusions of interest to the ruling classes of the capitalist countries. So, the lip-service to "nothing but the truth" and to "objective" facts does not make the works under review any more objective.

#### *IMPACT OF THE GREAT OCTOBER REVOLUTION ON INDIA*

The impact of the Great October Revolution on the countries of the East and, notably, on India was so strong and manifold that it is still attracting many researchers who, provided they are objective enough, discover more and more aspects of this impact and the reasons it offers to explain various positive developments in social life, both past and present. The Great October Revolution had the effect of radicalising the Indian national liberation

<sup>1</sup> See: Chattar Singh Samra, *India and Anglo-Soviet Relations (1917-1947)*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, Calcutta, New Delhi, Madras, 1959.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. X.

movement which eventually developed into a decisive battle for the country's total political independence. The national leaders of India arrived, above all under the influence of the October Revolution, at a better understanding of the role of the masses in the struggle for liberation and started drawing them in the national movement against the British colonialists. The example of the victory of the Russian workers and peasants made for better organisation of the Indian proletarian and peasant movements. This was to be seen, notably, in the creation of mass trade union federations of workers and militant organisations of the peasantry, as well as in a far more extensive involvement of peasants and workers in the political struggle for the country's independence than ever before.

Finally, the impact of the October Revolution had most directly showed itself in the emergence of the Indian communist movement and in the adoption of the principles of Marxism-Leninism by many national revolutionaries.

Bourgeois writers, faced by the objective state of things, more often than not have to recognise, directly or indirectly, the impact of the October Revolution on India. Of the relatively recent publications, one may note an interesting work by Indian historian Zafar Imam. Highly estimating the effect of the Great October Revolution on India, he still holds unobjective positions on a number of issues. In his book on Soviet policy towards India and Anglo-Soviet relations, as well as in a number of articles,<sup>1</sup> Zafar Imam summed up Indian public comments on the Great October Revolution and cited, in particular, a multitude of utterances by the then Indian newspapers and magazines of different affiliations, ranging from nationalist to governmental, which made it clear that the Russian events of November 1917 had aroused enormous interest in India, notably among Indian patriots. In particular, the *Bombay Chronicle* of January 11, 1918 wrote: "If Lenin is successful, the February revolution will sink into insig-

<sup>1</sup> See: Zafar Imam, *Colonialism in East-West Relations. A Study of Soviet Policy Towards India and Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1917-1947*, Eastman Publications, New Delhi, 1969; *Idem*, "The October Revolution and India", *Narody Azii i Afriki*, No. 4, 1964; *Idem*, "Effects of Russian Revolution on India, 1919-1920", *Mainstream*, November 18, 1967.

nificance before the November revolution, for its success is nothing less than the end of the upper middle class and the final triumph of the common people.”<sup>1</sup> In its issue of September 2, 1919, the Allahabad newspaper *Independent* pointed out that the struggle between the new ideas of Bolshevism and the cruel world of the established order threatens to be long and bloody, but Bolshevism cannot be vanquished. It will hold out, survive, thrive and eventually prevail. Zafar Imam quoted numerous facts showing the rising affection of India’s national revolutionary forces for the Land of Soviets and the great fear which overwhelmed the British ruling circles as they saw knowledge about the October Revolution and Soviet Russia spread through India.

That fear of British colonialists was a fine illustration of the tremendous revolutionising effect of the October Revolution on Indian society. In November 1917 the Indian National Congress was still demanding nothing beyond home rule for India, while the British ruling circles had already understood what that could lead to because of the growing influence of the Russian events. That is why they launched a wide-scale campaign in the press to scare the Indian national bourgeoisie by a possibility of something like Russian dislocation and anarchy which, they claimed, had been due to the power take-over by a people which was not yet ripe for it. The *Pioneer* newspaper wrote in its issue of November 19, 1917: “Russia at present is providing the world with an object lesson of the dangers attending the premature acquisition of representative institutions before a country is fitted for them. Home rule in Russia has virtually been synonymous with no rule.... The moral is obvious and should be taken to heart by all impatient politicians in this country. Self-government... is a plant of slow growth and any attempt to force it prematurely can only result in misrule, turmoil and anarchy.”<sup>2</sup>

Proceeding from his anti-communist stand in interpreting Soviet-British relations, C. S. Samra had to acknowledge, nevertheless, the immense force of the ideological impact of the October Revolution on India. Soviet Russia, he

<sup>1</sup> *Mainstream*, November 18, 1967, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from: *Mainstream*, November 18, 1967, p. 12.

wrote, her "Communist principles and practice ... became primarily an ideological threat which was far more destructive to the *status quo* [of the British Empire—*Auth.*] than Tsarist arms had been".<sup>1</sup>

The pamphlet by the Indian Trotskyite, Saumyendranath Tagore, about the development of the communist movement in India altogether denies the serious influence of the October Revolution on the Indian people and asserts that the Russian Revolution had only aroused the "curiosity" of the Indian people but "made no impact on them".<sup>2</sup> Present-day bourgeois historians, although they draw roughly the same conclusions, produce far more subtle arguments in a bid to justify them. One case in point is a book by Indian historian Jayantanuja Bandyopadhyaya, Reader in International Relations at Jadavpur University, extolling Indian nationalism and declaring communism to be an utterly foreign science unacceptable to India. Bandyopadhyaya claims that "inside India ... the Russian Revolution and the persistent propaganda by the Soviet Government and the Comintern did not produce anything more than a ripple".<sup>3</sup> In what way, however, is this argument motivated?

The first thing the author of this work refers to is the Caliphate exodus from India when thousands of Indians set off for neighbouring Muslim countries to begin, with their help, a guerrilla war against British imperialism. That campaign arose in May 1920 in protest against the imperialist partition of Turkey and against the Entente holding captive the Turkish Sultan-Caliph of all the true believers.<sup>4</sup>

Although the author did trace the course of events during the exodus campaign, pointing out, in particular, that one rather small group of its participants, *muhajirs*,<sup>5</sup> had wanted to go to Anatolia to Kemalists in order to join them

<sup>1</sup> Chattar Singh Samra, *Op. cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from: Jayantanuja Bandyopadhyaya, *Indian Nationalism Versus International Communism. Role of Ideology in International Politics*, Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1966, p. 142.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>4</sup> From 18,000 to 50,000 Indians left for Afghanistan at the time (according to unconfirmed estimates).

<sup>5</sup> *Muhajirs*—Muslim pilgrims who participated in the exodus from India.

in fighting British imperialism, while another group went to Tashkent to join the Bolsheviks, yet he explained the latter group's intention as a casual, rather than motivated, circumstance. Bandyopadhyaya eschewed analysing the motley composition of the *muhajirs* and their different political aspirations, and for that reason all he saw in the exodus campaign was a religious movement of Muslim fanatics in defence of the Caliph. He writes that the first batch of the Indians coming to Russia "consisted entirely of *Hizrati* Muslims who had left British India because they did not want to live under the British who were responsible for violating the legitimate rights of Turkey and other Muslim countries after World War I. Many of them wanted to go to Turkey and fight with the Turks against the British for saving the Khalifat."<sup>1</sup> Yet even the fact that most of the *muhajirs* who had entered Soviet Russia stayed there did not embarrass the author as he alleged it to have happened because of Roy's activities rather than at the will of the people involved in the exodus.

The wrong premise led to the wrong inference that the October Revolution and the communist ideas behind it had principally influenced the most ignorant, backward and fanatical sections of Indian society, that is, the Muslim minority. Bandyopadhyaya writes: "Some sections of Indian Muslims seem to have been profoundly impressed by the nature and objectives of the Revolution soon after it had taken place."<sup>2</sup> As to the Indians, there were few of them, in the author's opinion, who supported the communist ideas. "Apart from the *Hizrati* Muslims," he claims, "the Indians who were most attracted to Communism and the Soviet Union during this period seem to have been some of the Indian revolutionaries and students who had gone abroad." Furthermore, Bandyopadhyaya points out that the important ones among these people "either never come to India, or came only when they were no longer Communists".<sup>3</sup> That was supposed to justify the argument that not only had the October Revolution produced but a slight influence on India, but that the seeds of communism had found no soil there to germinate in.

<sup>1</sup> Jayantanuja Bandyopadhyaya, *Op. cit.*, p. 129.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

Some other bourgeois writers have given about just as narrow-minded an assessment of the exodus movement. For example, American historian John Patrick Haithcox maintains in his book *Communism and Nationalism in India* that the mass exodus from India had been "in protest against the dismemberment of Turkey by Great Britain and her allies following World War I.... The harsh terms of the treaty imposed on Turkey were interpreted by many Moslems as a threat to Islam itself."<sup>1</sup> C. S. Samra had this to say about the popular exodus movement: "The reaction in India to the Sèvres terms was one of hostility and anger toward the British Government. Extremist Muslims were so inflamed at the treaty that they decided on *hijrat* (migration from one country to another for religious reasons)."<sup>2</sup> Another American historian, David N. Druhe, although he did not consider the exodus movement and the composition of Indian exiles in Soviet Russia, still found it right and proper to declare that even those Indians who attended the First Congress of the Peoples of the East in Baku in September 1920 were "imbued ... only with the desire to support the Caliphate".<sup>3</sup> Now, Zafar Imam, who gave a fairly impartial assessment of the impact of the October Revolution on India, described the Indians who had arrived in Tashkent and then in Moscow as follows: "All of them were Muslims and their hostility towards British rule in India was based mainly on religious grounds."<sup>4</sup> The said bourgeois historians in their assessments of the exodus campaign laid emphasis on the religious form of the movement and saw the injured religious sentiment as its mainspring.

It is obvious, nevertheless, that the exodus movement had been, in point of fact, a case of political action mostly of petty-bourgeois Muslim masses against the British colonialists to obtain their country's liberation. Moreover, those involved in that movement were determined to

<sup>1</sup> John Patrick Haithcox, *Communism and Nationalism in India. M. N. Roy and Comintern Policy 1920-1939*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1971, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Chattar Singh Samra, *Op.cit.*, p. 52.

<sup>3</sup> David N. Druhe, *Soviet Russia and Indian Communism. 1917-1947*, Bookman Associates, New York, 1959, p. 28.

<sup>4</sup> Zafar Imam, *Op. cit.*, p. 118.

fight for these aims. The issue of the Caliphate was the excuse rather than the true reason behind the exodus from India. Even British colonialists had to acknowledge the political anti-colonialist character of the exodus movement, although they did so in a trivially anti-Soviet manner. The *Oud* newspaper carried an article "The Intrigues of Bolsheviks in India", which said: "The *Hijrat* movement, which was considered purely religious, turned out to be political in actual fact.... A knowledgeable person must agree with us when we say that the *Hijrat* movement was not based on religious doctrines but had been brought about by the spread of Russian propaganda."

The sum and substance of the entire Caliphate movement of 1919-1922 was expressed clearly enough by its leading ideologue and the leader of the Muslim community in India Mohammad Ali. In September 1920, following an abortive tour of the Entente countries by a Caliphate delegation he led to protest at the Treaty of Sèvres, he declared that to him "the struggle for liberation of India mattered far more than the issue of injustices inflicted on the Caliphate. The injured religious feeling of Indian Muslims will be relieved only when India will be in the hands of the Indians."<sup>1</sup>

That was obviously the line of reasoning not only of Mohammad Ali but of a multitude of Muslims and Indians involved in the liberation struggle. It is the anti-British liberation character of the exodus movement, although that was, above all, an act by Muslim masses, that induced a great number of young Indian non-Muslim patriots to join it. This was communicated by one of the participants in the exodus movement, who was later to become a prominent communist leader of India, Shaukat Usmani. "The mass exodus that started in the month of May 1920 to Afghanistan," he writes in his memoirs, "was not confined to the Muslims alone. Many Hindu youths also utilised this opportunity and taking Muslim names crossed into Afghanistan and then into the Soviet Union."<sup>2</sup> The exodus movement was part of the pan-Indian national liberation struggle and had the aim of stepping it up and turning it into determined armed action. "The idea of the Indians

<sup>1</sup> *Civil and Military Gazette*, October 9, 1920.

<sup>2</sup> Shaukat Usmani, "Russian Revolution and India", *Mainstream*, July 1, 1967, p. 14.

leaving for Afghanistan," Shaukat Usmani goes on to say, "was to obtain military aid and arms from Afghanistan and then ... to start a sort of guerrilla warfare" against British imperialism.

The pan-Indian character of the exodus movement showed itself most in the fact that many of its participants, bearing the religious flag of the *Hijra*, wanted to cross not so much into Afghanistan or Turkey as into the Land of Soviets. They looked to the victorious workers and peasants of Soviet Russia, first and foremost, for practical support in their struggle against colonialists and for some experience of a revolutionary solution of the urgent problems before their own country. Shaukat Usmani writes: "It will not be an exaggeration to say that a considerable majority of the people who had crossed into Afghanistan had linked their hopes with Soviet Russia much earlier than they left their homes."<sup>1</sup>

However, the Afghan Government, yielding to pressure from Britain, banned the emigrants from free movement northward. Only two batches of bare 80 each, and a small number of other Indians,<sup>2</sup> not to count isolated individuals who acted on their own, were allowed to cross into Soviet territory in 1920. Those who wanted to do so proved to be far more numerous, however, and that is why a further, third batch was formed soon afterwards. But when it tried to move northward, it was confronted with armed resistance by the Afghan authorities.<sup>3</sup> According to reports of April 27, 1921, coming from Chardzhou, the Afghans arrested 500 Indian immigrants in Mazar-i-Sharif who were on their way to Russia and kept them in Khanabad. Besides, 150 Indian immigrants who also wanted to get into Russia were arrested in Herat. The Soviet consul pressed for their release, but failed to obtain it.<sup>4</sup> Considering the situation as it had developed, one may assume that the Afghan authorities intervened even in the very

<sup>1</sup> Shaukat Usmani, *Op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> For example, 28-30 Indians—members of the Indian Revolutionary Association, arrived in Tashkent from Kabul on July 1, 1920, that is, before the *muhajirs* who arrived there as late as October or November of the same year.

<sup>3</sup> *Mainstream*, July 1, 1967, p. 14.

<sup>4</sup> See: M. A. Persits, *Op. cit.*, p. 66.

process of making up groups going to Afghanistan. The Emir's officials did all they could for those groups to be formed predominantly of individuals eventually striving to go to Turkey rather than to the Land of the Bolsheviks.

Nevertheless, the greater part of the *muhajirs* who had left Afghanistan stayed in Soviet Russia. The minority, having asked for and obtained aid from the Soviet authorities, proceeded through the territory of revolutionary Russia to Turkey where, incidentally, they were even not admitted and had to go back.

That means that what emerged within the framework of the Caliphate exodus campaign was a fundamentally new social phenomenon—a deliberate emigrant movement of hundreds of Indian national revolutionaries into the land of the October Revolution, who were then linking their own struggle for their country's liberation with the idea of an alliance with Soviet Russia. Some of the *muhajirs* themselves described the motives behind their hard and dangerous trek into the Land of Soviets. A total of 84 questionnaires, filled in by Indians on their arrival in Tashkent, have come down to us.<sup>1</sup> One of the questions asked was: "Why did you come to Russia?" Significantly enough, none of those questioned explained the reason for his arrival by his Muslim affiliation. Most of them (45) answered like this: "to serve Indian revolution", "to liberate India", "to fight Britain", "to serve India", "to serve my country". Another group, of 17, answered in this way: "to get aid from Russia", "to sue for help for Revolution", "to seek aid from the Soviet authorities", etc. Many of the emigrants demonstrated an understanding of Soviet government as a mighty factor for revolutionising the national liberation movement in India. Seven of them declared: we have come "to join the revolution", "to do revolutionary work", or, as the 20-year-old Shaukat Usmani replied, "to join the revolutionary movement". Five had a still clearer political orientation: they wanted "to enquire about Bolshevism", "to study revolution", or, as the 50-year-old Abdus Subhan said, "to draw a lesson from the Russian revolution", or, as the 42-year-old Subdar Khan wrote, "to study the Russian revolution and find a most useful way for the

<sup>1</sup> See: M. A. Persits, *Op. cit.*, pp. 70, 77.

Indian revolution". Eight Indians clearly established that they had come "to learn military and propaganda work". It follows that almost all Indian emigres had a fairly high level of national awareness; they were inspired with the idea of liberating their country and believed that they would be able to carry out their patriotic plans best of all with assistance from Soviet Russia.

Some of the emigres were people who had already realised that their slogans of national liberation were far too limited and began to reflect on the social objectives of the struggle. It is in that context that they pondered over the Russian Revolution and the social system it had brought about. Three or four of those who answered the above-mentioned 84 questionnaires revealed their communist sympathies. Abdul Majid, a 23-year-old man from Kashmir, wrote down: "I heartily agree with the communist programme." Nisar Mohammad of Peshawar, of the same age, declared: "If the communist principles are honestly carried, the whole world will be free." He settled in the USSR and subsequently became Minister of Education of the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic.

Abdul Qaiuum, a 22-year-old student of Punjab University, was an interesting personality. He announced that he accepted the Russian communist programme. It must be that while he was still studying at the University he began to learn the ideas of socialism under the influence of the Great October Revolution. Anxious to fight for his country's liberation, he had wanted to emigrate from India to the United States back in 1919 in order to join the Ghader Party. But he failed in this design, and joined a Caliphate organisation later that year. In March 1920 he was briefly detained for his anti-British activities. Soon after his release, on May 13, 1920, he, "on instructions from the Caliphate Revolutionary Council", left India, having joined the exodus campaign. The Caliphate Council's instructions met his secret and fondest desire to get into the Land of Soviets. He arrived in Kabul together with other *muhajirs* and from there he went to Soviet Turkestan with the very first batch. While still on their way to Tashkent, Abdul Qaiuum led a "communist trend" group in heated debates among his fellow travellers. In Tashkent he started independent studies of Marxism and early in

1921 ventured into writing a seven-chapter pamphlet "Indian Workers and Peasants" which he described as a "desk book". Setting out the sum and substance of the communist doctrine, he wrote that it called for "the overthrow of the power of imperialism and capitalism", because "labour produces everything while capital does nothing but robs labour". In conclusion he urged India's workers and peasants to follow the example of the Russian workers. He writes: "If you do not want to stay under the barbaric yoke ... of the capitalists, then rise and aid yourselves. You are 300 million, while only one-tenth of the Indians, if organised into an army, can conquer the world."<sup>1</sup> Abdul Qaiuum's pamphlet is an interesting sample of reflections of a young man who has just discovered the wisdom of Marxism and, carried away by it, wants to tell others how to achieve liberation from all forms of oppression.

From his party membership card, as a member of the Tashkent Indian communist group, we find that Abdul Qaiuum joined the communist group on April 11, 1921, that is, when he had just finished working on his pamphlet. That is why, answering the question in the party card, "What has made you join the Communist Party?", Abdul Qaiuum wrote: "A study of Marx and Engels." Subsequently, Abdul Qaiuum became a citizen of the USSR and played an active part in the process of socialist construction.

Shaukat Usmani also passed from nationalism to communism. His was also a typical case for Indian revolutionary youth who decided to commit themselves to the struggle to rid India from colonialism. "My hatred towards the British Raj," he wrote about himself in 1922, "was born with me. From the very time of my infancy I had cherished revolutionary ideas, and at the age of 12, had sworn to take vengeance. At the age of 19, I joined Mainpuri Conspiracy, a bare attempt to overthrow Britanism, in India. Traitor existed in the organisation. Some twenty of the members he knew, got them caught together with the ammunition store. Some were hanged, the others transported to Andamans for their whole life. It was early in 1919. Wild ideas still haunted my mind."

<sup>1</sup> See: M. A. Persits, *Op. cit.*, pp. 77, 78.

The young man looked hard for a way of liberating his country. When he learned about the October Revolution and the Soviets which had proclaimed their readiness to support the liberation struggle of oppressed peoples, he decided that it was in revolutionary Russia that he had to look for answers to the questions that agitated his mind. It was at that time that the exodus movement began and he, naturally, joined it. "I arranged with my colleagues to leave India for Afghanistan," Usmani writes, "and see if there was any prospect of conducting work from that place." Once in Afghanistan, however, the *muhajirs* soon understood that Kabul had dropped the idea of a stout battle against British imperialism. "Thence," Usmani communicated, "we started ... propaganda to come northwards, and I was one of the chief instigators." Usmani became a Communist in 1921 when he was attending the Communist University of the Toilers of the East in Moscow.

There was another noteworthy *muhajir*—a 20-year-old poet Habib Ahmed Wafa. On arriving in Tashkent, he enrolled at the Indian Military Courses where he directed amateur theatricals. He wrote a play under a significant title of "The Moon Russia" in which he spoke about the attractive light of the land of the October Revolution which had indicated the way for Indians to their liberation.<sup>1</sup> The play was a great hit. Later on, Wafa adopted Soviet citizenship and became a writer and scholar. His plays were put on in many Soviet theatres, and his poems were published. He headed the Indian Languages Chair at the Institute of Oriental Studies. So, quite obviously, the reason behind the arrival of *muhajirs* in Soviet Russia had been the social essence of Soviet government and its anti-colonial policies rather than their own Muslim affiliation.

Virtually disproving his own assertion that nobody but Muslims had been influenced by the October Revolution, Bandyopadhyaya tells an instructive story of an Indian by the name of Sibnath Banerjee. That man went to Kabul as a teacher in order to proceed from there to Germany for training as engineer. In Kabul he came across communist literature and succeeded in somewhat satisfying his interest

<sup>1</sup> The Central State Archive of the Soviet Army (CSASA), section 25025, register 1, file 11, p. 8; file 6, p. 3.

in socialism which had been aroused back in 1917 by newspaper reports about the October Revolution. After that Banerjee, together with another group of Indians, went to Soviet Russia (that was already in 1922) where he completed his studies at the Communist University of the Toilers of the East and became a Marxist, although he did not join the Communist Party of India.<sup>1</sup> Bandyopadhyaya claims that the only reason why that new batch of Indian Muslims left for Russia was because of the hostile attitude of the Afghan Government who refused them an asylum. But, evidently, the true reason was different. For one thing, the whole group, that is to say Banerjee too, could have returned to India and then the Indians would hardly have had any danger to face. Yet they did go to Soviet Russia which, from the standpoint of the British authorities, made them criminals right away. For another, Banerjee wanted to go to Germany but, instead, stayed in Russia for almost two years, having given up his long-cherished hope of obtaining a German engineer's diploma. In 1925 he returned to India to become one of the prominent leaders of the trade union movement.

An interesting lot was that of Ghulam Ahmed, an Indian, who must have been a *muhajir*. His case was reported by a British Intelligence informer, one Iovanovich. On April 22, 1922, Iovanovich talked to that Indian at the British Consulate Hospital in Meshhed where Ghulam Ahmed had been admitted because he fell ill on his way back to India from Russia. "I was greatly surprised," Iovanovich wrote, "when he said 'there is a very good Red Army in Russia, the best in the world: Russia is a free country'. He told me that he had been through the Indian propaganda courses at Tashkent and Moscow and was allowed absolute freedom while there.... He was chiefly enraptured with the freedom he received in Russia." Then the informer put a provocative question to him: "You of course do not want India to have such 'freedom' as is in Russia?" The cautious reply was: "We would be happy without the English." And after a moment's reflection, Ghulam Ahmed added: "Afterwards I will go back to Russia as Russia is a good place to be in." The informer asked why Ahmed did not attach the word

<sup>1</sup> See: Jayantanuja Bandyopadhyaya, *Op. cit.*, pp. 131-33.

“Khan” to his name. He replied: “I live in the Soviet fashion and recognise no prince—no Khan.”<sup>1</sup>

The story of Banerjee and, more particularly, that of the *muhajirs* themselves, and of those we came to know more or less about, makes it quite clear how great was the impact of the October Revolution on the outlook of ordinary Indians and on their choice of pursuit in life.

There were over 200 Indians in Soviet cities (as Moscow, Tashkent, Bukhara, Baku or Samarkand) late in 1920 and early in 1921. Many of them became Communists there and studied at the Communist University of the Toilers of the East and other educational and propaganda institutions. Back home, they became active in the communist, working-class and national liberation movements. Others, although they had not joined the Communist Party, drastically changed their views. They now had a different appreciation of the role of the working masses in the liberation struggle and strongly advocated action to win the basic social and economic demands of the working people of the town and countryside. Quite a few Indian revolutionaries stayed on in the Land of Soviets for the rest of their lives and played their full part in the process of socialist construction.

Representatives of oppressed peoples from all over the globe were coming to Soviet Russia: they wanted to see with their own eyes the land of the October Revolution which was translating into practice the great idea of the right of nations to self-determination and helping the oppressed peoples of the East in their struggle for independence and freedom. Thousands of citizens from Eastern countries, including those who had nothing to do with Islam, like Chinese or Koreans, fought, arms in hand, for Soviet Russia.

Ignoring all these circumstances and ascribing to the *muhajirs* the initiative in founding the Communist Party of India in Tashkent, Bandyopadhyaya set himself the aim of finding out the reason behind the Muslims' predilection for the ideas of communism. He writes: “This conversion of large numbers of Indian Muslims to Communism is

<sup>1</sup> National Archives of India. Foreign and Political Department, file 359-M 1923, No. 11, p. 22.

not a little surprising and certainly needs some investigation." Referring to authorities on Islam, Bandyopadhyaya mentions the following three factors which influenced the Muslims in the communist sense: the Soviet Government's particularly friendly attitude to the Muslims both within its own borders and outside and the help the Bolsheviks gave to the Muslim countries; the proclamation by the Soviet government of the right of nations to self-determination and the enforcement of that principle in actual practice; the ideological community between Bolshevism and Islam.<sup>1</sup>

We go along with the first two points, barring a reservation. The Soviet Government's attitude to the oppressed peoples of the Muslim countries was just as friendly as its attitude to the peoples of non-Muslim countries. The general and major principles of the Soviet Government's foreign policy programme were enunciated in the Decree on Peace which proclaimed the equality of all nations, both large and small, and their right to self-determination. The struggle of the peoples to exercise this right was found to be logical and necessary.

And Bandyopadhyaya had enough reason to quote one of the leaders of the Caliphate movement, Hosain Kidwai: "The fact remains that at the start Bolshevism was welcomed by the masses everywhere because they expected an amelioration of their grievances."<sup>2</sup> So, the facts Bandyopadhyaya cited disprove his own assertion that the October Revolution had but an insignificant effect on India.

Now, for the third point, that is what the author describes as the community between Islam and Bolshevism. Bandyopadhyaya mentions the following features of this community: the object of Bolshevism as well as of Islam is a world revolution; neither recognises any particular privileges in human society; both reject racial restrictions; both oppose capitalism, encourage labour, oppose big landowners, favour the brotherhood and equality of people, support the idea of internationalism, encourage knowledge and education, uphold the independence of women and, finally, stand for the abolition of private property. But one can just as well try to prove the ideological community

<sup>1</sup> See: Jayantanuja Bandyopadhyaya, *Op. cit.*, pp. 133-34.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

of Bolshevism not only with Islam but with any other religion. For each creed, including Buddhism and, particularly, Christianity, since they emerged as the movements of oppressed masses,<sup>1</sup> contained egalitarian elements in their early stages. However, that "egalitarianism" of theirs has nothing in common with Marx's scientific socialism.

Consequently, it is utterly impossible to speak of Islam being in any way exclusive in this sense, while the "evidence" cited to support this argument is so obviously unprovable as to spare us the trouble of a critical scrutiny. Our concern in this context is to find out why the author needed to speak about the ideological community of Islam and Bolshevism and what is the origin and meaning of this assertion.

The so-called ideological community of Islam and Bolshevism seems to be the author's principal argument in his theorising to justify his argument about the Muslims' predilection for or gravitation towards socialism and Soviet government. Only by invoking such a far-fetched community can one try to prove that the October Revolution had but an insignificant revolutionising effect on the Indian people. Bandyopadhyaya seems to tell his reader, essentially: "The October Revolution influenced only some sects of the Muslim population of India and even that because the Bolsheviks had proclaimed such principles of socialism which were already present in the Koran, and were the aspiration of all Muslims. But for that, the revolution could never have attracted the attention not only of the Indians but of all Orthodox Muslims either."

The claim about the ideological community of Islam and Bolshevism, based on the reference to the presence of socialist principles in the Koran, began to be most actively spread in the Muslim countries after the October Revolution. However, there was more than one reason behind the propagation of that kind of notion.

Some radical representatives of the petty-bourgeois Muslim intelligentsia, looking through the Koran for elements of egalitarianism and presenting them as genuinely socialist principles, wanted to inure the religious Muslim

<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Engels, "Zur Geschichte des Urchristentums". In: *Werke, Marx Engels*, Vol. 22, Dietz Verlag, Berlin, 1963, p. 449.

masses in that way to the idea of an alliance with the Land of Soviets in the name of a joint struggle against colonial oppression. They intended to oppose, in that way, too, the argument of reactionary propaganda that atheism and hostility towards the believers were the principal features of communism. That was the way the Koran was interpreted by many, notably, by Mohammad Barakatullah and Abdur Rabb, prominent leaders of Indian revolutionaries in exile in Soviet Russia. Barakatullah, for example, wrote in his article "Bolshevism and the Islamic Nations" that the socialist ideals of equality and brotherhood, proclaimed by Islam and other religions and expressed in the formula "desire for your neighbour what you desire for yourself" had become a reality in Russia. There, he wrote, "the administration of the extensive territories of Russia and Turkestan has been placed in the hands of labourers, cultivators and soldiers. Distinction of race, religion and nationality has disappeared. Equal rights to life and freedom are ensured to all classes of the nation. But the enemy of the Russian republic is British imperialism which holds Asiatic nations in a state of eternal thralldom." Barakatullah followed up that statement by an appeal to the oppressed peoples: "Time has come for the Mohammedans of the world and Asiatic nations to understand the noble principles of Russian socialism and to embrace it seriously and enthusiastically.... They should join Bolshevik troops in repelling attacks of usurpers and despots, the British."<sup>1</sup>

The original programme of the Indian Revolutionary Association, led by Abdur Rabb, had two points, almost one next to the other: 1) the Association shall defend the principles of communism and 2) the Association shall make nationalistic and religious propaganda among Indian border troops. Such ideas were circulated not only in India. Here are, for example, some excerpts from a characteristic document written by a member of the Arab Unity Committee, Abdul Qadir, on December 19, 1920 and passed on to the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the RSFSR G. V. Chicherin through the Soviet representative in Ankara S. Z. Eliava. The author of that message invoked

<sup>1</sup> *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India*, Vol. I, Ed. by G. Adhikari, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1971, pp. 124, 126.

the ideological community of Bolshevism and Islam in trying to justify the expediency and possibility of Soviet Russia's alliance with the Arabs. The Soviet Government, the author asserted, applied the same principles as those proclaimed by the Koran.

In the section entitled "Islamic Religion and the Bolshevik Programme" Abdul Qadir wrote: "Islam is a straight way to freedom, equality and brotherhood, because a) the Islamic religion makes everybody equal; b) eradicates enmity, violence and despotism; c) establishes the rights of all humankind." And the author concludes: "*It is upon this doctrine that Bolshevism has arisen* [emphasis added— *Auth.*], for Bolshevism wreaks all its anger and all its wrath upon those who, under the guise of patronage, subjugate peoples.... Therefore agreement and alliance between Islam and Bolshevism are logical and natural. An alliance between the Bolsheviks and the Arabs will be a powerful and hard blow to the oppressors—the British, French and Italians...." Not content with this set of arguments, the author goes on to say: "The creeds and customs of Arabs have so much in common with Bolshevism that the struggle of the Arabs in close alliance and full contact with the Bolsheviks is quite possible and natural."

Let us note that this kind of reasoning could be seen in the early years following the October Revolution not only with regard to Islam but to Buddhism as well in the columns of Soviet newspapers published in the Muslim areas of the Soviet East. For example, the *Kommunist* of Baku carried a small article by Kubad Kasimov seeking to prove the necessity of Soviet aid to the peoples of the East and dismissing the misgivings that those peoples would not be able to instal a socialist order in their countries because of their backwardness. "Those who say so," he wrote, "forget that the customs, morals, habits and convictions ... of the peoples of the East are identical to the ideas of communism. One may take the dogmas of one of the world's ... religions—Buddhism, by way of example, which declare: the Buddhists must treat all humans without distinction with equal tolerance, condescension and fraternal love." He followed that up by proclaiming that the oppressed peoples of the East waited for their liberators, ready to rise to "carry into effect the ideas of commun-

ism ... which they have long been preaching".<sup>1</sup>

This socialist interpretation of Islam revealed the intention of some revolutionaries to find a way to the hearts of religious-minded masses and offer them the arguments they could accept in favour of cooperation with godless Soviet Russia, and in that sense it played a certain positive role. It is quite possible also that for some Muslim national revolutionaries such an interpretation of certain tenets of Islam served as a stimulant for getting acquainted with the true principles of scientific socialism and for a subsequent departure from religion.

Conversely, socialist interpretation of Islam reinforced the position both of Muslim religion itself and the exploiter classes which used it to oppose the pressure of the ideas of scientific socialism spreading far and wide under the influence of the October Revolution. The line of reasoning was roughly this: the priority in working out the ideas of socialism belongs to Islam; all that the Bolsheviks are doing is to repeat the postulates long since enunciated by the Koran; but instead of being grateful to the religious source which has given them the inspiration, they reject religion altogether. That was just what was required in order to prevent the mass of the faithful from coming into close contact with Bolshevism. In that way the socialist interpretation of Islam was to maintain the working people's religious community with their exploiters and kept the proletariat, which was still in the making, from passing on to a class-governed community and, thereby, from perceiving the ideas of scientific socialism.

It is the socialist interpretation of Islam that guided the majority of Indian revolutionary emigres who were in Soviet Turkestan. And, in all probability, the religious commitment of those people, their allegiance to Muslim faith obstructed, rather than facilitated, the conversion of emigres to Marxism and their accession to the first Indian communist group which was formed in Tashkent at the time.

An important contention in the series of arguments used by Bandyopadhyaya was that the Communist Party of India had been proclaimed in Tashkent following the demand

<sup>1</sup> *Kommunist*, Baku, June 2, 1920.

of the *muhajirs*—the participants in the Caliphate exodus movement—and consisted of them. Bandyopadhyaya writes: “These fanatically religious Muslims who went to Tashkent were met by M. N. Roy, joined the ‘India House’, and the military school, and founded the Communist Party of India.”<sup>1</sup> This contention has been shared by many bourgeois historians. Haithcox, for example, writes: “In late 1920 an emigre Communist Party of India was organised in Tashkent. The party was formed from among Indian *muhajirs*, who had participated in a *Hijarat*, or exodus, from India in protest against the dismemberment of Turkey.”<sup>2</sup>

The actual state of things, however, totally disproves this and similar contentions. The first Indian communist group, which declared itself to be the Communist Party of India on October 17, 1920, at the beginning did not comprise even a single *muhajir*. Only two of the seven members of that group had earlier been Muslim—Mohammad Ali and Mohammed Shafiq Siddiqi, but even they had arrived in Tashkent as representatives of the so-called Provisional Government of India based in Kabul, and had not participated in the exodus campaign as a Muslim movement. M. N. Roy, the leader of the group, was a Hindu, and one coming from a Brahman’s family at that. Other Hindus were Abani Mukherjee and M.P.T. Acharya. The group included two women—Rosa Fitingov (Mukherjee’s wife), a Soviet citizen, and Evelyn Trent-Roy (the wife of M. N. Roy), an American; neither had anything to do with Islam. Had the proclamation of the Communist Party been initiated by *muhajirs* then at least one of them would have been among the founding members of that communist group. Had the *muhajirs*, as Roy writes in his memoirs, insisted on organising the Communist Party as soon as possible, the first communist group would probably had been far bigger than one of seven, because there were over a hundred Indian emigres in Tashkent alone at the time. Besides, Roy’s communist group had admitted as few as three new members by December 15, that is during two months of intense agitation work to draw emigres into

<sup>1</sup>Jayantnuja Bandyopadhyaya, *Op. cit.*, p. 130.

<sup>2</sup>John Patrick Haithcox, *Op. cit.*, p. 20.

the Communist Party. It is clear that there could have been less propaganda effort with not so modest results to show for it, had the *muhajirs*' feeling been what Bandyopadhyaya makes it out to be.

M. N. Roy, a Hindu, was the actual organiser of the communist group and the man who initiated the proclamation of the Communist Party of India in Tashkent, although in his memoirs he holds the *muhajirs* responsible for that rash decision. Bandyopadhyaya was perfectly satisfied with that version and he, referring to a British agent's dispatch discovered in archives, hastened to declare a Muslim, Abdur Rabb, and M. P. T. Acharya, the leaders of the so-called Indian Revolutionary Association, to have been the founders of the Communist Party of India. "These two individuals," he writes, "rather than M. N. Roy, were the real founders of the Communist Party of India at Tashkent."<sup>1</sup>

David N. Druhe, for whom it was important to prove by all means how "unsuitable" were the elements that presided over the birth of the Indian communist movement, is even more categorical. And he writes: "They [i. e., Acharya and Abdur Rabb—*Auth.*] and a minority of *muhajirs* who had been converted to Communism in the Tashkent propaganda school advocated the immediate formation of the Communist Party of India. Hence Acharya and his follower ... Abdur Rabb, rather than Roy, may be deemed the founders of the Communist Party of India."<sup>2</sup>

These claims betray their authors' rather poor competence. In actual fact, M. P. T. Acharya opposed the hasty and unprepared proclamation of the CPI, not to speak of Abdur Rabb who had never declared himself a Communist. It was the left sectarian-minded M. N. Roy and Abani Mukherjee, supporting him at the time, who rushed the formation of the Communist Party contrary to the opinion of Lenin who had urged patience and thorough preparation for such a serious matter. An official report to the Comintern on the work done in the three months of October 1920-January 1921 by the Provisional All-India Central Revolutionary Committee said, with reference to that

<sup>1</sup> Jayantanuja Bandyopadhyaya, *Op. cit.*, p. 139.

<sup>2</sup> David N. Druhe, *Op. cit.*, p. 39.

action: "The Communist elements present in Tashkent numbering seven in all, in pursuance of their principles and the plan previously formed in conjunction with European Communists,<sup>1</sup> constituted themselves into a duly organised Communist Party of India on October 17th, 1920."<sup>2</sup> As you see, there is no mention of the "persistent demands of the *muhajirs*" or of their intention to create a Communist party, nor could there be any.

In the above-mentioned report, just as in other important documents of the time, Roy constantly repeats his idea about the political inconsistency of the *muhajirs* even from the standpoint of the exigencies of the national revolution and, of course, their total inability to grasp the ideas of communism. They all considered themselves Muslims and defenders of Islam, first, and Indians and defenders of India, afterwards. Therefore, the report goes on, the Provisional All-India Central Revolutionary Committee found it hopeless to try to make internationalists out of those individuals. The fact that the Indian Revolutionary Committee was formed of Communists only made those exclusively Muslim elements unwilling to work with the men whom their religion had branded as "Kaffirs". Roy's assessments of the *muhajirs* cannot be accepted completely because they were derived from his left-sectarian orientation towards an immediate socialist revolution in India and the formation of a Communist party without any delay. The *muhajirs* were, naturally, not prepared, nor could they be, for either option. Yet it is in this narrowly limited sense that the passages we have quoted from the report conclusively disprove Bandyopadhyaya's concept of the so-called special allegiance of Muslims to socialism based on the "community of Bolshevism and Islam".

The emergence of the communist movement in Asian countries was the most obvious aftereffect of the Great October Revolution for the peoples of the East. It must be for this reason that bourgeois historians have been

<sup>1</sup> This must be an allusion to a plan concerted with representatives of the British Communists during the Second Congress of the Comintern, when an Indian Delegation (Roy, Mukherjee, Shafiq and E. Trent-Roy) met them.

<sup>2</sup> October Revolution Central State Archive (ORCSA), s. 5402, r. 1, f. 488, p. 2.

rather unanimous in the view that it was due to the notorious "hand of Moscow", rather than to the power of the influence of the October Revolution. Writers on India claim, in particular, that the Indian communist movement "was nurtured abroad and transplanted into the Indian soil" and that it was a result of the "activities of all these agents of Moscow", for in India proper there was no ground for the emergence of militant revolutionary organisations of the working class.<sup>1</sup>

Druhe claims that the communist movement in India emerged owing to the activities of "Red agents". Now, the agents themselves had turned red by pure accident. He writes that they were "'creatures of circumstance' whose conversion to Communism had been a purely fortuitous event".<sup>2</sup>

Haithcox also tries to explain the origin of the Indian communist movement by saying that it was the work of the Comintern's agents and that money came from Moscow. He goes even further in trying to assure his readers that the only reason why the Communists had called for the national independence of India was to make it easier for themselves to brainwash, recruit and convert national revolutionaries.<sup>3</sup> Elaborating on the same idea, Indian historian Zafar Imam actually holds that it was not the Indians themselves, but the Soviet leaders who decided on creating a Communist party in India. When they considered necessary to have a firm footing right inside India, they began working towards the establishment of communist groups in the country.<sup>4</sup>

American historians Overstreet and Windmiller, although their research is of a serious nature, challenge the idea of the national source of the Indian communist movement. They presume that this movement owes its origin to money and political support from the Comintern and Moscow which pursued their own particular objectives. "And it is

<sup>1</sup> See, for example: Henry Pelling, *The British Communist Party. A Historical Profile*, Adam and Charles Black, London, 1958, pp. 41-42; *Indian Communist Party Documents 1930-1956*, The Democratic Research Service, Bombay; The Institute of Pacific Relations, New York, 1957, pp. VI-VIII.

<sup>2</sup> David N. Druhe, *Op. cit.*, p. 53.

<sup>3</sup> See: John Patrick Haithcox, *Op. cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>4</sup> See: Zafar Imam, *Op. cit.*, p. 153.

probable," they write, "that, like many other Indians at that time, he [M. N. Roy—*Auth.*] was drawn to the Communist International not because of ideological convictions but rather because it provided political and financial support for his struggle against imperialism in India."<sup>1</sup>

The fact that the first organised Indian group of Communists sprang up in the Land of Soviets seems to confirm the opinion of bourgeois historians who call in question the authentically national origin of the Communist Party of India. But that is not so. Hard facts indicate that imperialists themselves, by their colonialist policies, contributed towards the accelerated germination of the seeds of communism in the soil of the Eastern countries. By their persecution and reprisals, the colonialists hastened the passage of national revolutionaries over to the Bolsheviks. The Iranian newspaper *Setare-ye-Iran* wrote about it back in December 1921. That comment had been prompted by a British note to the Government of the Russian Federation charging the Soviet envoy in Iran, F. A. Rothstein, with having spent much money on organising the propaganda of Bolshevism in that country. "British leaders," the paper wrote, "as enlightened people have no reason to complain to the Russian Government since they must know what exactly, whose policies in the East have called forth Russian propaganda. Had Turkey been happy, would it have been possible for socialist propaganda and agitation to be conducted there? Had everything been well in India, could the Russian consuls have had any influence on Indian society? It is not the Russian consuls but Britain's aggressive policy that has created resentment in the East against the British Government.... We are sure that had it not been for all that, neither Turkey, nor Afghanistan, to which socialist conditions are totally unacceptable, would have had to face the issue even a hundred years hence. If they have drawn close to Bolshevism that was because of the imperialist policy of the British in the East."<sup>2</sup>

The facts indicate also that the organisers of the first Indian communist group M. N. Roy, Abani Mukherjee, M. P. T. Acharya—former national revolutionaries—had come

<sup>1</sup> Gene D. Overstreet, *Marshall Windmiller, Op. cit.*, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> See: *Bulletin of the ECCI*, No. 1, January 1, 1922; ORCSA, s. 5402, r. 1, f. 522, pp. 151-52.

to Soviet Russia already considering themselves Communists and it was they who had taken the initiative in proclaiming the formation of the Communist Party of India, not the Bolsheviki, nor Lenin who, on the contrary, had urged restraint and patience with regard to that matter. Roy himself wrote in September 1925 about this restraining position of Lenin's although he had acted against it in 1920 and understood and appreciated it at a much later date. In his "Communication on Party Work in India" he related: "We advisedly had not got down to creating the Communist Party right until the end of 1923, for it was too early to do that.... The ground had not yet been laid, there was a shortage of leading intellectuals, the proletariat remained too backward, and there was no point in creating an illusion of a Communist party of a handful of members who understood nothing at all about Communism. We guided ourselves by Lenin's warning about the danger of various liberation currents in the Eastern countries<sup>1</sup> painting themselves in the colours of communism."<sup>2</sup>

Scores of Indian national revolutionaries, representing the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois intellectuals, arrived in Soviet Russia. They were by no means drawn in there by force to make Communists out of them. They came at their own free will.

So, where was the ground in which the irresistible impulse of Indian revolutionaries to come to the Land of Soviets and to strive for communism had arisen? That was nothing but the national soil of India—her anti-imperialist revolutionary struggle for independence. It is significant that a considerable proportion of the early Communists of India had come from the ranks of national revolutionaries.

The best representatives of the national revolutionary petty-bourgeois democracy of India, after long years of fruitless work in clandestine terrorist and other conspira-

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from: M. A. Persits, *Op. cit.*, p. 156. It is indicative that in this document Roy passes over the fact of the Communist Party of India having been proclaimed in Tashkent, as if there had been none at all. Evidently, it was quite obvious even at that stage that what had been formed was not a party but no more than a party group abroad which was to work towards creating the real party in India proper.

<sup>2</sup> See: V. I. Lenin, "Preliminary Draft Theses on the National and the Colonial Questions", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, pp. 149-50.

torial organisations, began to understand the limitations of nationalism and its inadequacy for a radical solution of the problem of national liberation. The October Revolution showed the great force of Marxist-Leninist theory for them to see. It was only too natural for them to feel attracted by it and to make it a point of travelling all the way to Soviet Russia because they had achieved nothing during their long-drawn exile in Western Europe and in the United States. In Soviet Russia they could count on real support: they saw that they were united with Soviet government by the community of anti-imperialist interests and that only in Soviet Russia could they best of all study the experience of the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat, which they obviously needed more than anything else.

However, the process of learning Marxist theory was long and complicated, for the Indian national revolutionaries in particular, because of the petty-bourgeois notions they still had. It was precisely the immature knowledge of Marxism that led to the abortive attempts of the early Indian Communists to create a Communist Party abroad immediately, as far back as 1920 or 1921. India still lacked the necessary socio-economic and political conditions for it. Nor could such conditions have been artificially created among revolutionaries in exile in a foreign land.

A little later, in 1921-1922, Indian communist groups began to be created in India, in spite of the most ruthless persecution by the British authorities. Far apart from one another, the former national revolutionaries, for the most part, ventured upon the task of building an all-India Communist Party in four cities—Calcutta, Bombay, Lahore and Madras.<sup>1</sup> It was only in December 1925 that the Communist Party of India was proclaimed in Kanpur, following the merger of intra-Indian and emigrant communist elements. But even after that it took years to bring off the difficult process of its formation. That happened at a later stage, when the necessary conditions had arisen and Marxist socialism began to fuse with the Indian working-class movement. So, what is it that can be seen as artificial in that long-drawn process of formation of the Com-

<sup>1</sup> See: Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and the Communist Party of India 1920-1929*, National Book Agency (Private), Ltd., Calcutta, 1970, p. 78.

munist Party of India out of individual communist groups, one of which sprang up in Soviet Russia? Where is the "hand of Moscow" to be seen there? There was nothing but the objective impact of the October Revolution on the colonial world, supplemented by the natural desire of the Russian Communists to share their revolutionary experience with all those who wanted it.

Striving to play down the tremendous revolutionising importance of the October Revolution for India, Bandyopadhyaya turns to considering the reactions of the Indian national press towards the Russian socialist revolution. In spite of a biased selection of quotations, that author still had to admit that "the initial impact of the Russian Revolution on the nationalist press in India was on the whole favourable". But it is, evidently, not this conclusion that the author strove for by his laborious study of Indian newspapers fifty years old. And, indeed, he adds the following notable remark: "There is no evidence to indicate that the press approved of the Communist ideology, the methods or the ultimate objectives of the Revolution."<sup>1</sup> But why, indeed, properly speaking, had the press, reflecting the interests of the Indian national bourgeoisie, to approve of the communist ideology and the course followed by the Bolsheviks in abolishing the exploiter classes? As we have already pointed out, the October Revolution had influenced the Indian bourgeoisie (and not only that bourgeoisie) primarily by carrying out its nationalities programme and granting the right of self-determination to the peoples of the former Russian Empire. Now, on that issue the nationalist Indian press was lavish in most approving comments. More, it carried them in spite of the censorship and the strictest bans of the British authorities. Besides, many nationalist newspapers appreciated the social and anti-capitalist essence of the October Revolution as well. Articles and comments of this kind were produced by progressive nationalist leaders who began, precisely under the influence of the Great October Revolution, to understand the need for social change in favour of peasants and workers because there could have been no success in the national liberation struggle without their participation.

<sup>1</sup> Jayantanuja Bandyopadhyaya, *Op. cit.*, p. 127.

The British intelligence chief in Delhi Cecil Kaye was not too long in detecting the brewing revolutionary-democratic tendency, brought about by the October Revolution, in the liberation movement in India and, deliberately overplaying the danger, explained it in his own way by claiming that "the nationalist movement was closely associated with the idea of deliverance of the labouring classes, in attitude from which it was only a short step to pure Communism".<sup>1</sup> Although Bandyopadhyaya, the historian, unlike the British intelligence officer, did not discover such a tendency in the columns of the Indian nationalist press, one can, indeed, draw relevant conclusions from numerous books and articles written on the subject.<sup>2</sup>

Bandyopadhyaya writes that the sympathetic reaction of the Indian nationalist press to the October Revolution "was in fact prompted by the stagnation and backwardness of India under British rule, and the suppression of the Indian freedom movement".<sup>3</sup> In other words, the author seems to contend that the whole matter was due to the oppressed condition of the Indian people rather than to the October Revolution. Yet the very greatness of the October Revolution consisted in the fact that it had fetched a favourable response from the oppressed and suppressed masses around the world and gave them fresh inspiration to raise the level of their struggle for social and national liberation. That is to say Bandyopadhyaya's statement underlines the immense importance of the October Revolution for Indian society, rather than belittles it.

What Bandyopadhyaya, the historian, does not want to understand nowadays was well understood back in 1918 by his compatriots fighting for their country's liberation. A memorandum which was handed to Yakov Sverdlov, Chairman of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, in November, by two Indian envoys—Jabbar and Sattar Khairy—clearly defined the meaning and importance of the Great October Revolution for the national liberation struggle in India. "The Russian revolution," the document

<sup>1</sup> Cecil Kaye, *Communism in India (1919-1924)*, Calcutta, 1971, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> See: *Lenin. His Image in India*, Ed. by Devendra Kaushik and Leonid Mitrokhin, Vikas Publications, Delhi, 1970.

<sup>3</sup> Jayantanuja Bandyopadhyaya, *Op. cit.*, pp. 127-28.

said, "has made a great impression on the mentality of the Indian people. For all the opposition from Britain, the slogan of self-determination of nations reached India." Consequently, it was not the elements of egalitarianism in the Koran, but the "proclamation [by Soviet government—*Auth.*] of new ideals that worked a change in our mentality", the Memorandum stressed, and "made Indians involved in the political struggle and world development".<sup>1</sup>

Speaking of the influence of the October Revolution on Indian nationalist leaders, the author touches on an interesting and intricate subject but, of course, not rewarding one at all, considering the author's intention, for, while studying it, he inevitably arrives at what are uncomfortable conclusions for him. It is not by chance that the author should have chosen a primitive and unconvincing solution to the problem he had before him. Of the great number of outstanding leaders of the Indian national liberation movement who had reacted enthusiastically and favourably to the October Revolution, he turned to three best-known—Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Rajendra Prasad. He perused the writings of each of them for some negative comments on the October Revolution and Soviet government and, finding none, he looked for other pronouncements of theirs, having nothing to do with the subject, to fit in with his own argument. Speaking of Rajendra Prasad, the President of India in 1950-1962, Bandyopadhyaya claims that although he "was familiar with the writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin, but could not recall the extent of his knowledge at this time about Communism or the Russian Revolution".<sup>2</sup> Speaking about Gandhi, the author quotes him as having said: "India does not want Bolshevism."<sup>3</sup> And he adds that Gandhi "had no ideological sympathies whatsoever for the Communist view-point". Then he accuses Nehru of a "rather one-sided view of the Russian Revolution".<sup>4</sup> It was one-sided, in his judgement, for instance, because of the following state-

<sup>1</sup> *Izvestia*, November 26, 1918; see also: *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India*, Vol. 1, Ed. by G. Adhikari, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1971, pp. 96-100.

<sup>2</sup> Jayantanuja Bandyopadhyaya, *Op. cit.*, p. 142.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

ment: as a result of the October Revolution “for the first time in history the representatives of the poorest classes, and especially of the industrial workers, were at the head of a country”.<sup>1</sup> But whereas Bandyopadhyaya did mention that quotation in his book, he left out many other, even more striking quotations, probably because he had found them much too “one-sided”, as this one, for example: “I had no doubt that the Soviet revolution had advanced human society by a great leap and had lit a bright flame which could not be smothered, and that it had laid the foundations for that ‘new civilisation’ towards which the world would advance,”<sup>2</sup> Nehru wrote. During his visit to the Soviet Union in 1955, he said: “Even though we pursued a different path in our struggle under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, we admired Lenin and were influenced by his example.”<sup>3</sup>

Bandyopadhyaya still had to draw what was an undesirable conclusion for him. He wrote: even Mahatma Gandhi “seems to have thought at this time that the Soviet Union was, directly or indirectly, promoting the cause of freedom in the world”, and, in particular, that “the Russian Revolution had helped the Indian people in their struggle for freedom”. Moreover, Bandyopadhyaya could not but acknowledge that “even relatively conservative leaders in India took a somewhat favourable view of the Russian Revolution in the early years”.<sup>4</sup>

So, how does Bandyopadhyaya reconcile these more or less objective conclusions with the anti-Soviet thrust of his book? He simply declares those views of nationalist leaders on the October Revolution to be no longer valid because, he argues, the Indian leaders did not know about the aggressive intentions of the Soviet Government, Lenin and the Comintern against India. That is just what he said: “These views indicate that the Indian leaders at this time were unaware of the ideological, strategic and tactical

<sup>1</sup> Tayantanuja Bandyopadhyaya, *Op. cit.*, p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, The John Day Company, New York, 1946, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches, March 1953-August 1957*, Vol. 3, The Publications Division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting of India, Delhi, 1958, p. 302.

<sup>4</sup> Jayantanuja Bandyopadhyaya, *Op. cit.*, pp. 143-44.

considerations regarding India, which were engaging the serious attention of Lenin, the Bolshevik Government and the Comintern, and the nature of Soviet activities in Tashkent and other parts of Central Asia.”<sup>1</sup>

#### REAL AND IMAGINARY AGGRESSION

Allegations about Soviet Russia's aggressive intentions regarding India were widely circulated by British propaganda right after the victory of the October Revolution, more particularly during the Third Anglo-Afghan War of 1919 and after it. Indian nationalist leaders were not just told about Soviet Russia's projected invasion of India with the aid of Afghanistan, but the idea was being forced down their throats by British newspapers. Consequently, such men as Gandhi and Nehru knew that British version. How, then, did they react to it? Very negatively. Even Gandhi, who disapproved of violent methods of dealing with the enemies of the revolution in Russia, declared: "I have never believed in a Bolshevik menace." He said more. He exposed the repressive policies of British imperialism in India and underscored Soviet Russia's noble role in countering them: "Fraternalisation of the Soviet Union with Asiatic countries and the anti-British policy of King Amanullah in Afghanistan served as a check on the naked repressive character of British imperialism."<sup>2</sup> Bandyopadhyaya quotes these utterances in order to convince the reader of his objectivity and make him believe, besides, that in the early 1920s Indian nationalist leaders denied Soviet Russia's aggressiveness towards India only because they were uninformed. However, Bandyopadhyaya has produced no evidence of Soviet Russia's aggressive intentions, nor could he have produced any, of course.

The governments of imperialist powers in those years accused the Soviet government of "insatiable aggressiveness" and of attempts to grab almost the whole world. Lenin ridiculed and exposed the class-inspired nature of those false accusations against the Land of Soviets. At the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from: Jayantanuja Bandyopadhyaya, *Op. cit.*, pp. 144, 143.

Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) he said that some people were claiming that "we want to conquer Germany. That is, of course, ridiculous, nonsensical. But the bourgeoisie have their own interests and their own press, which is shouting this to the whole world in hundreds of millions of copies; Wilson, too, is supporting this in his own interests. The Bolsheviks, they declare, have a large army, and they want, by means of conquest, to implant their Bolshevism in Germany."<sup>1</sup>

There are some Western politicians and scholars who quite often make such claims nowadays, too. The most zealous exponent of this sort of ideas is David N. Druhc whose book is full of outright hatred for the Soviet Union and communism. Besides, it clearly betrays the author's contemptuous attitude to Indian revolutionaries, their aspirations and temporary delusions. Apart from that, the work abounds in factual errors and information borrowed from unreliable sources. It is indicative that it is this book that Bandyopadhyaya, entirely sharing Druhc's position, usually refers to in a bid to prove his points.

Opening his narrative with a cursory essay about the history of Russian-Indian relations, Druhc, naturally, relates principally the intentions of Paul and Alexander I, together with Napoleon, to crush Britain with a blow at India as well as about the abortive attempts at organising war marches into the South Asian subcontinent undertaken by other Russian Czars in the 19th century. Nevertheless, the author concludes that, in spite of this, Czarist "Russia had no design of invading India either to liberate the Indians or to substitute Russian for British rule in the Peninsula". Druhc, passing on to a description of Soviet intentions with regard to India, holds that they, naturally, were "an entirely different matter". Druhc writes that, "as applied to India, the plan of the world revolution meant neither more nor less than the substitution of the British Raj by a disguised Russian Raj, ruled as a radical Indian organisation, the Communist Party of India".<sup>2</sup> It is not uninteresting to note that back in 1922 Leo Pasvolsky formulated about the same idea. He wrote: "This [Soviet—*Auth.*] Russia is bound to

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Eighth Congress of the R.C.P.(B), March 18-23, 1919", *Collected Works*, Vol. 29, p. 173.

<sup>2</sup> David N. Druhc, *Op. cit.*, pp. 12-13.

be, by its very nature, insatiably aggressive and, though in a different sense from its Imperial predecessor, violently imperialistic" since the Soviet government "dreams of a world social revolution" and of extending it to Asia and plans, notably, "an armed expedition into India, calculated to arouse ... revolutionary fires".<sup>1</sup>

Unlike Druhc and Pasvolsky, Chattar Singh Samra refrains from unequivocal statements about Soviet Russia's aggressive designs against India. He chooses a different line of reasoning, taking up the contention that the presence of Austrian, German and Turkish POWs in Soviet Russia's Central Asian regions created a stark danger of an invasion of India by Turkish and German armies via Afghanistan. Quoting a British Government yearbook, the author writes of some undisclosed "German machinations" which Soviet Russia is alleged to have encouraged, thereby creating a real threat to India.<sup>2</sup> This author seeks, in fact, to justify the British intervention inside Soviet Russia, holding it to have been a measure of self-defence against Bolshevik actions which are claimed not only to have contributed to the German-Turkish crusade, but also to have intended by their "efforts—warlike in the beginning but passive afterwards—to spread Communism in India".<sup>3</sup> To bear out the allegations about the Soviet Government's connivance at German and Turkish intentions, the author refers to the recollections of British interventionists in Turkestan: the British consul in Kashgar P. T. Etherton, Lieutenant-Colonel F. M. Bailey, the chief of the so-called military-diplomatic mission of Great Britain in Tashkent, and Major-General Wilfried Malleson who commanded the British troops which invaded the Transcaspian region in August 1918.<sup>4</sup> However, the biased evidence of these authors can hardly serve as convincing proof of the argument which was put forward. With their help, Samra, naturally, failed to produce any real facts, neither did he produce any credible "evidence". All the author does is simply to communicate to us the opinion of the said leaders that "a Turko-German army might

<sup>1</sup> Leo Pasvolsky, *Op. cit.*, pp. 71, 101.

<sup>2</sup> See: Chattar Singh Samra, *Op. cit.*, pp. 23-25.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 26, 158.

<sup>4</sup> See: P. T. Etherton, *Op. cit.*; F. M. Bailey, *Mission to Tashkent*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1946.

materialise for a campaign against India through Afghanistan".<sup>1</sup> One can, of course, understand the anxiety of the British Government, one of the principal organisers of the anti-Soviet intervention, in connection with a massive participation of former POWs in battles for Soviet government against the Whiteguards and interventionists, but that is outside the scope of evidence already.

Samra opens his book by saying that he intends to "throw some light on the Indian aspect of the polemical question as to whether or not the policies of Soviet Russia constitute, in substance, a continuation and execution of the imperialist aspirations of Tsarist predecessors under new forms and new techniques". True to his own principle of having the facts speak for themselves, the author does not give a straight answer to the question at issue. But Samra extensively quotes anti-Soviet fabrications of *The Times*, even such of them which he himself finds to be fakes, and draws on clearly slanted memoirs of invaders, British generals and intelligence officers, declaring all that to be facts.

Druhe's arguments are no more convincing. They are based on outright fabrications and uncritical references to the obviously unobjective sources and unjustified conclusions drawn from them. The author considers his own contention that Roy's plan for military operations along the border and in India "was approved in the early autumn of 1920 by the Politburo of the Russian Communist Party and the Council of People's Commissars" as well as by Lenin, who is alleged to have considered Roy's scheme to be "in the interest of the world revolution",<sup>2</sup> to be the most important evidence of the aggressive intentions of Soviet Russia.

The plan for military operations along the border and in India is a very characteristic document for the left-revolutionary outlook of Roy and his group. It has graphically reflected many indications of leftism which afflicted the early Communists not only of India but of many other countries of the East and some Soviet government officials in those days. Lenin was the first to detect the Eastern

<sup>1</sup> Chattar Singh Samra, *Op. cit.*, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> See: David N. Druhe, *Op. cit.*, p. 31.

Communists' disease of "leftism" and went all out to combat it long before the Second Congress of the Comintern as well as at the Congress itself and after it.

During a preliminary discussion of Lenin's original draft theses on the national and colonial questions before the Second Congress of the Comintern, a group of party members from Soviet Turkestan—among them T. Ryskulov and N. Khodjayev—unequivocally broached the question of a liberating march of the Red Army into India through Afghanistan. In their letter of June 12, 1920 to Lenin, they objected to the most important point of the theses that the main responsibility for providing most active assistance for the bourgeois-democratic movement in the colonies "rests primarily with the workers of the country the backward nation is colonially or financially dependent on".<sup>1</sup> In their opinion, that could do no more than hold up the liberation of India and other countries of Asia since it was determined, or so it seemed to them, by the necessity of the initial victory of the socialist revolution in the metropolitan country. They manifestly underrated the moral, political, organisational and propaganda aid which the conscious proletariat of a capitalist country could lend to the peoples of the East. The authors of the letter considered that Lenin's thesis was meant to confine the Russian workers' liberating mission to Turkestan alone for it banned them from "crossing into India through Afghanistan". The letter said: "India must be freed by the Muslim proletariat" of Soviet Russia and "certainly before the Revolution in London".<sup>2</sup>

The same idea of imposing happiness not only on India alone but on all the colonial and dependent countries adjacent to Russia was expressed by Y. A. Preobrazhensky, a Trotskyite. Opposing the same thesis of Lenin's, he said: "If it proves impossible to reach economic agreement with the leading national groups, the latter will inevitably be suppressed by force and economically important regions will be compelled to join a union of European Republics."<sup>3</sup> Lenin flatly objected to attempts at "bringing about" a

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Preliminary Draft Theses on the National and the Colonial Questions", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 149.

<sup>2</sup> See: *Narody Azii i Afriki*, No. 5, 1974, p. 45.

<sup>3</sup> See: V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 555.

socialist revolution in the East by force of arms. He commented on Preobrazhensky's remarks in the strongest possible and purely negative terms: "It goes too far. It cannot be proved, and it is wrong to say that *suppression* by force is 'inevitable'. That is radically wrong."<sup>1</sup> Back at the Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) Lenin stressed: "Communism cannot be imposed by force."<sup>2</sup> In those distant times, leftist-minded Communists of Asia more than once proposed organising a Red Army's liberating march so as to bring about a revolution not only in India but in China, Turkey and Iran as well. However, Lenin emphatically rejected every single one of those proposals.<sup>3</sup> They were also rejected by Lenin during his numerous discussions with Roy before the Second Congress of the Comintern.

Lenin's formula about indispensable aid by the Communists to the national liberation struggle of the peoples of the East remained unchanged and was endorsed by decision of the Second Congress of the Comintern. In line with that course, the Plenum of the Central Committee of the RCP(B), with Lenin participating, passed a special resolution soon afterwards on providing "arms and gold" as aid to the Indian revolutionaries,<sup>4</sup> because they represented at the time the most active and militant trend of the Indian people's anti-imperialist struggle.

At the same time, neither the Political Bureau of the RCP(B) Central Committee, nor the Council of People's Commissars, nor V. I. Lenin could ever approve of a left-sectarian plan of military operations along the border and in India. So, what was it that Druhc based his claim on? His only source was Roy's memoirs. But, first, in his memoirs, too, Roy pointed out Lenin's disagreement with a plan for a military version of the Indian revolution.<sup>5</sup> And, second, that source can in no way be considered reli-

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 555.

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Eighth Congress of the R.C.P.(B), March 18-23, 1919", *Collected Works*, Vol. 29, p. 175.

<sup>3</sup> For details see: M. A. Persits, "Ideological Struggle over the Problems of Relationship Between the Communists and Liberation Movement During the Second Congress of the Comintern", *Narody Azii i Afriki*, No. 5, 1974, pp. 45-47.

<sup>4</sup> See: Rostislav Ulyanovsky, *Op. cit.*, pp. 78-80.

<sup>5</sup> See: M. N. Roy's *Memoirs*, p. 417.

able. Wittingly or unwittingly, it contained a lot of untruths and its material requires thorough verification.<sup>1</sup>

Such a verification is necessary in the given case as well. Let us turn to a document, also written by Roy, but at the very time when those events were taking place, not 35 years after. The official report to the Comintern about the work done by the Provisional All-India Central Revolutionary Committee for three months, from October 1920 to January 1921, does not mention at all the subject of interest to us, which would have been simply impossible had the Council of People's Commissars sanctioned Roy's military plan. For, indeed, the report gives a very detailed account not only of all the practical action by Indian revolutionaries but of the background to that action.

By having ascribed to the Bolsheviks Roy's leftist declarations about the paramount role of the military factor in preparing and carrying out the socialist revolution in India, Druhc has done his best to bear out his own argument. To this end, he reviews the Soviet policy of aid to the national liberation movements of the peoples of Iran, Xinjiang and particularly Afghanistan as acts of implementation of a supposedly devised plan of invading India.

One of the essential arguments in Druhc's system of "evidence" was an account of the arrival of two trains, each of 27 cars, in Tashkent on October 1, 1920, loaded with arms, ammunition, uniform, dismantled aircraft, gold ingots, pounds sterling and rifles. There was a group of military instructors travelling in one of the cars. Roy in person was in a special car as an alleged head of an expedition bound for Afghanistan.<sup>2</sup>

That account has been given not only by Druhc, interpreting it as evidence of a projected Soviet invasion of India. It has been quoted also by such writers as Overstreet and Windmiller<sup>3</sup> who, it is true, leave the reader to wonder what such "weighty" evidence as two trainloads of arms can testify to. All they do is to remind the readers that for the Bolsheviks "apart from offering a weapon against

<sup>1</sup> For details see: M. A. Persits, *India's Revolutionaries in Soviet Russia. The Mainsprings of the Indian Communist Movement*, pp. 147-56.

<sup>2</sup> See: David N. Druhc, *Op. cit.*, p. 32.

<sup>3</sup> See: Gene D. Overstreet, Marshall Windmiller, *Op. cit.*, p. 35.

Britain, India in itself presented an attractive object for the export of revolution".<sup>1</sup> They write, besides, that shortly after his arrival in Tashkent, Roy had already "formed what he described as the first international brigade of the Red Army"<sup>2</sup> to invade India. In reality, however, the arms and ammunition which had arrived in Tashkent accompanied by a small group of military instructors were meant principally for Afghanistan which the government of Amanullah Khan had asked the Soviet Government for and was promised.

A year before that, on November 27, 1919, Lenin, in reply to Amanullah Khan's letter brought to Moscow by an Afghan mission under Mohammad Wali Khan, sent a message of friendship to Kabul. He communicated that the Soviet representatives in Kabul had been instructed to enter into negotiations in order to conclude trade and other friendly treaties whose object "is not only the consolidation of good-neighbourly relations for the greatest benefit of both nations, but a common struggle with Afghanistan against the world's most rapacious imperialist government, that of Great Britain, whose intrigues, as you rightfully point out in your letter, have so far impeded the peaceful and free development of the Afghan people and estranged it from its nearest neighbours". Lenin also wrote that from his conversations with Mohammad Wali Khan he learned about Afghanistan's desire to obtain military aid from the Russian people for action against British imperialism and that the Soviet Government was "inclined to provide this aid to the Afghan people in the largest possible amounts".<sup>3</sup> Incidentally, the mission of military instructors that was going to Kabul at the Emir's request was not led by Roy at all, nor was it under his control. Roy just happened to travel in its train to Tashkent and was going to proceed further on, into Afghanistan, where he proposed to organise an Indian revolutionary centre. However, Kabul's political waverings compelled the Indians to give up their intention.

<sup>1</sup> Gene D. Overstreet, Marshall Windmiller, *Op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Gene D. Overstreet, Marshall Windmiller, *Op. cit.*, p. 35.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted from: A. N. Kheifets, *Soviet Russia and Adjacent Countries of the East During the Civil War (1918-1920)*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1964, pp. 286-87 (in Russian).

Invariably following its original foreign policy line of lending all-round support to the national liberation struggle of oppressed peoples, the Soviet Government was not only the first among the governments of the world to recognise Afghanistan's independence won at the cost of a hard-fought war against Britain, but provided as much material support for it as it could.

That was a point of common interest to Afghanistan and Soviet Russia since both nations were upholding their right to exist in the struggle against British imperialism. Britain was waging an undeclared predatory war against Soviet Russia, backing up, besides, her internal enemies—the Whiteguards and the *basmach* bands. Now, should Afghanistan and Soviet Russia have been able to rise together against the British armed forces, that would have been a perfectly justified act having nothing to do with a conquest of India or a crusade against her.

Under Britain's pressure, Kabul refused to admit the Soviet mission and it stayed in Tashkent, with some of its instructors invited to teach at the Indian military courses. The orders of the day issued for the courses frequently had this formula: "So-and-so, having arrived from the staff of the Russian mission in Afghanistan, shall be appointed to such-and-such post."<sup>1</sup> The military equipment which had been brought in was likewise used by the courses for training purposes. So, it is in the very organisation of military training courses and in providing them with a teaching staff, finances and military and technical facilities that the aid to the Indian revolutionaries with "arms and gold", under the resolution of the RCP(B) Central Committee Plenum, found its expression.

The "evidence" which Druhe and other writers have produced in an attempt to prove that Soviet Russia intended to capture India can hardly be taken as carrying any conviction.

The signing in February 1921 of the Soviet-Afghan treaty establishing friendly relations was, in Druhe's opinion, meant to prepare the conditions for a march by Roy's army on India, while the institution of Soviet consular offices in a number of Afghan cities meant creating "propaganda

<sup>1</sup> CSASA, s. 25025, r. 2, f. 2, pp. 2, 3, 4, etc.

centres aimed against British India".<sup>1</sup> But, first, there was no "Roy's army" or "Roy's brigade" in existence either in 1920 or, still less so, in 1921. The hundred or two hundred Indians divided, besides, into contending groups and scattered in various Soviet cities could not have formed a military brigade in purely physical terms. Second, where, when and in what documents did Druhe discover so much as a hint at any Soviet propaganda against India proper? There was, of course, a lot of propaganda against British imperialism which oppressed India. But India and Britain were not the same thing at all.

Druhe declared all the work by Indian revolutionaries in Tashkent and other cities of Turkestan to have been in preparation for a Soviet invasion of India. All Indian emigres were declared to be a weapon of the Soviet government which was alleged to be bent on having enough Indians trained as "zealous Communists and good soldiers, so that the invasion would look like a true 'liberation' of India, and not a conquest by Russia".<sup>2</sup> That was the thinking behind his evaluation even of the arrival of the *muhajirs* in Tashkent and the training of fifteen of them at a propaganda school as well as the proclamation of the so-called Communist party and, more particularly, of course, the institution of officer training courses with 20 to 40 trainees under instruction for three or four months, and the service in the Red Army of a small number of Indians having escaped from the British forces occupying North Iran.

In reality, all the facts just listed were no more than a manifestation of the upsurge of the national liberation movement in India, notably, the rise of the number of revolutionary-minded Indians who were looking for more effective ways of decisive action against British rule in India.

The aid, in terms of propaganda, military instruction and material assistance, which the Soviet people lent to the Indian revolutionaries, was entirely in agreement with Soviet government's determination to enter into an alliance with the oppressed peoples of the East in the name of a

<sup>1</sup> David N. Druhe, *Op. cit.*, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> David N. Druhe, *Op. cit.*, p. 33.

joint struggle against a common enemy—international imperialism. And that aid, contrary to the claims made by Druhe, Bandyopadhyaya, Samra and some other writers, did not mean at all any preparations for a march of conquest on India.

Both Druhe and Samra consider that the struggle of the Bolsheviks to liberate Central Asia from the *basmach* bands and invaders was a major element of preparations for the conquest of India. These writers cite, for example, the order of the day by the then Commander of the Turkestan Front, M. Sokolnikov, which he signed on October 10, 1920, upon the dispatch of a military unit into the Pamirs, and interpret the words of that document as confirming the argument about Soviet Russia's aggressive designs against India. Here is an extract from the order of the day, as quoted by Samra: "Comrades of the Pamir Division, you have been given a responsible task. The Soviet Republic sends you to garrison the posts on the Pamir on the frontiers of the friendly countries of Afghanistan and India. The Pamir tableland divides revolutionary Russia from India.... On this tableland you, the signallers of the revolution, must hoist the Red flag of the army of liberation. May the peoples of India, who fight against their English oppressors, soon know that friendly help is not far off."<sup>1</sup> There was a slight difference between that document and the text which had been published by Soviet newspapers. One thing must be pointed out: Samra speaks of a "division" while the order of the day referred to a "Red Army detachment".<sup>2</sup>

The movement of a Soviet army unit to the Soviet Pamirs was a natural and logical thing because the national frontiers had to be guarded, and there were some at the time to guard them against. It was just as natural that the Red Army's approach to India's northern frontiers lying close to the places inhabited by bellicose tribes that had rebelled against British rule more than once, was a factor which revolutionised Indians and, of course, disturbed Britain very much. However, that was an objective factor produced by the very nature of Soviet government. It is this

<sup>1</sup> See: Chattar Singh Samra, *Op. cit.*, pp. 52-53. See also: David N. Druhe, *Op. cit.*, p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> See: *Kommunist*, Baku, December 8, 1920.

that Sokolnikov referred to. As to his statement of Soviet Russia's readiness to help the Indian people, that depended entirely on the desire of the Indians themselves and did not show an intention to organise an expansionist march on the subcontinent.

An essential element of Druhe's construct about preparations for the Red Army's march on India was his contention that Lenin himself had proclaimed the slogan: "The road to London and Paris lay through Peking and Calcutta."<sup>1</sup> Yet the author does not point out any chapter and verse where one could read that phrase of Lenin's, nor could he have named it because that was a statement by Trotsky, not by Lenin. In August 1919 Trotsky approached the RCP(B) Central Committee with a proposal to organise an armed crusade into India, so as to bring nearer the revolution in Europe. Motivating his project, he wrote: "The road to Paris and London lies via the towns of Afghanistan, the Punjab and Bengal."<sup>2</sup> The CC RCP(B), naturally, rejected that reckless appeal.

As to the political schooling of Indian emigres in Soviet Russia and their subsequent repatriation to India, that was something nobody has ever thought of denying. However, work of that kind attested not to the Red Army's preparations for the conquest of India, but to the desire of the early Indian Communists to tell their own people about Soviet Russia, thereby working towards their revolutionising, accelerating the development of the communist movement and radicalising the national liberation struggle at home for, in fact, it is for that reason that they had come to the Land of Soviets.

Soviet government met the aspirations of Indian emigres. By doing so, it was not only helping the peoples find the right way to national liberation as soon as possible, but was defending Soviet soil against the invading armed forces of imperialism which were using neighbouring Asian countries as bridgeheads to strike at Soviet Russia from.

A number of Indian historians reject the allegations like those of Druhe. For example, Zafar Imam emphatically objects to Druhe's concepts. He reports that, contrary

<sup>1</sup> David N. Druhe, *Op. cit.*, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> See: *The Trotsky Papers 1917-1919*, Vol. I, Mouton and Co., London, The Hague, Paris, 1964, p. 625.

to official declarations by the British authorities about an alleged impending threat of a Russo-Afghan attack on India, prominent Congress members characterised the talk about that threat as a "clear lie concocted by our enemies to divert the attention of the nation from the goal on which it has fixed its gaze". Zafar Imam writes in no uncertain terms: "In fact, in 1920, no responsible Soviet leader, except, perhaps, Trotsky, seriously toyed with the idea of liberating India from British rule by armed action."<sup>1</sup>

#### *ORIENTAL POLICIES OF BOLSHEVIKS AND THE COMINTERN*

It is with particular energy and in concord with each other that bourgeois and revisionist historians attack the line taken by Soviet Communists and the Comintern in providing the utmost support for the national liberation movement of the peoples of the oppressed East.

That unanimity is quite easy to explain for it is that line of action that has been and still is the most popular one in the East. It appealed to the widest sections of the population, contributed towards advancing their anti-imperialist struggle and earned the obvious approval of the national bourgeoisie which led the struggle against foreign rule. What is particularly important is that this line led to the emergence of a combat alliance of the international proletariat, above all, that of Soviet Russia, with the national liberation movement of the East. Naturally, international imperialism sought to discredit at any cost Soviet Russia's and the Comintern's policy of cooperation and alliance with the national revolutionary forces of colonial and dependent countries. Therefore, bourgeois and revisionist writers proclaim that policy to be wholly selfish, for it, they claim, does not proceed from the interests of the oppressed peoples but from the national interests of Soviet Russia alone. For example, Demetrio Boersner, who has written a big book about the policy of the Bolsheviks on the national and colonial questions, refers to "constant attempts on the part of Communism to 'use' the national

<sup>1</sup> Zafar Imam, *Op. cit.*, pp. 143, 147.

emancipation struggles for its own purpose".<sup>1</sup> To keep the word "use", which he puts in quotation marks, from misleading the readers, the author elaborates: "The interests of Russia came to dictate the Communists' tactics in the colonial countries more than the local conditions in these countries themselves."<sup>2</sup> Druhe goes on to enlarge upon that argument, too: "The Russian line and that of the Communists in India often changed between November 1917 and August 1947 as regards India, but those changes only reflected Russia's interests and not those of India."<sup>3</sup> Samra echoes him by suggesting that Soviet Russia supported the exodus movement from India in order to bring pressure to bear on Britain so as to establish diplomatic relations with her.<sup>4</sup> Zafar Imam sums it up by saying that Soviet Russia, as he presumes, was interested in getting allies to join her to defeat imperialism rather than in the problem of liberating the oppressed peoples of the East.<sup>5</sup>

The contention that the policy of supporting the national liberation movement in the East had nothing to do with any concern for the lot of the oppressed peoples and was prompted by nothing but the national interests of Soviet Russia has no real foundation in fact and cannot be overlooked.

It is perfectly obvious that an alliance of large social groups, classes, or even entire nations cannot be durable and effective unless it reflects the true and deep-rooted interest of each of the parties concluding it. For, otherwise, such an alliance would be no more than fiction, fraud or trap for one or several allies and would collapse like a house of cards at a crucial moment. In this particular case, because of the objective nature of the proletariat and the proletarian state, its class interests are at the same time the fullest possible expression of the aspirations of all the oppressed peoples, comprising the interests of the colonial and dependent peoples of the East. International imperialism is their common enemy, against whom both equally

<sup>1</sup> Demetrio Boersner, *The Bolsheviks and the National and Colonial Question (1917-1928)*, Librairie E. Droz, Geneva; Librairie Minard, Paris, 1957, p. XII.

<sup>2</sup> Demetrio Boersner, *Op. cit.*, p. 97.

<sup>3</sup> David N. Druhe, *Op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> See: Chattar Singh Samra, *Op. cit.*, pp. 50-51, 54.

<sup>5</sup> See: Zafar Imam, *Op. cit.*, p. 16.

want to unite, and it is for that reason that an alliance between them is indispensable and logical.

Lenin pointed out very accurately that the world policy of violence pursued by imperialism "is leading to closer relations, alliance and friendship among all the oppressed nations".<sup>1</sup> Long before the October Revolution, Lenin produced a set of arguments to justify the logical necessity for the national liberation struggle of the Eastern peoples to converge and merge with the revolutionary movement of the international proletariat because their basic interests coincided.

There was an upsurge of the national liberation struggle in the East since the Russian revolution of 1905 and under its direct impact. That was the starting point of an objective process of developing cooperation and an alliance between the Russian revolutionary proletariat and the peoples of the East having started to fight for their national liberation. By 1905 the Bolsheviks had a clear Marxist programme on the national and colonial questions, elaborated by Lenin. The programme called for action to win the right for the oppressed nations to secede and form independent states and called on the Russian proletariat to lend vigorous support to the national liberation movement. That alone was a solid foundation for the subsequent alliance of the two revolutionary forces. But the Bolsheviks could not limit themselves to enunciating the programme. They went ahead to carry it out.

The aid which the Bolsheviks offered to the national revolutions of Asian countries was of particular importance. Their most essential support (in terms of manpower, arms and money) was given to the revolutionaries of Iran during their revolution of 1905-1911, that is, *before the victory* of the Great October Socialist Revolution. But the most important thing the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (Bolsheviks) did for the Asian revolutions and for the proclamation and manifestation of solidarity with them was the manifold and uncompromising struggle of the Bolsheviks against the expansionist and reactionary policies of Czarist Russia and international imperialism in the Eastern

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, "The Eighth All-Russia Congress of Soviets, December 22-29, 1920", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 491.

countries. The articles and leaflets, written by Lenin and other Bolsheviks, exposed the plans and aggressive action of Czarism and European powers in China and Korea, in Persia and Turkey.<sup>1</sup> The Bolsheviks called on the world-wide working-class movement to address itself to a militant objective of foiling the conspiracy of the imperialists of Russia, Britain and Germany against the Asian revolutions.

In their turn, by their national liberation struggle, the Eastern peoples dealt telling blows at international and Russian imperialism, thereby making it easier for the international proletariat to attain *its own* class aims.

That was virtually how the combat alliance of the Russian proletariat with the advanced forces of the national liberation movement of the peoples of the East was taking shape. And that alliance was effective and solid, for it was one of interest to all of the parties to it. "The Russian revolution has a great international ally both in Europe and in Asia," Lenin wrote in 1908.<sup>2</sup> Lenin made no secret of the proletariat's "selfish" interest in strengthening the alliance with the national liberation struggle of the Persians, Indians and Egyptians. "We," he said, "believe it is our duty and *in our interest*" to converge and to merge with them "for otherwise socialism in Europe will *not be secure*."<sup>3</sup> Lenin even laid stress on the words "in our interest" for he saw the interest of the proletariat, as equally the interest of the other side, as a pledge of the dependability and effectiveness of the combat alliance of the revolutionary forces. Early in 1916, in his article "The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination", Lenin, in anticipation of an approaching socialist revolution, once more proclaimed the basic principles of the policy on the national and colonial question for all Socialists to follow "both now, during the revolution, and after its victory". Lenin wrote: "They [the Socialists—*Auth.*] must also render determined support to the more revolutionary elements in the bourgeois-democratic

<sup>1</sup> See: V. I. Lenin, "Events in the Balkans and in Persia", *Collected Works*, Vol. 15, pp. 220-30.

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Inflammable Material in World Politics", *Collected Works*, Vol. 15, pp. 187-88.

<sup>3</sup> V. I. Lenin, "A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economics", *Collected Works*, Vol. 23, p. 67.

movements for national liberation in these countries and assist their uprising—or revolutionary war, in the event of one—against the imperialist powers that oppress them.”<sup>1</sup> And it was quite natural that the group of India’s national revolutionaries that was in Stockholm at the time should have asked the Bolsheviks, even before they came to power, to prevail upon Kerensky’s Provisional Government to instruct its delegate to the Paris Conference of the Entente Powers (which was to meet in November 1917) to speak out in support of the demand for the granting of independence to the peoples of the colonies.<sup>2</sup>

Following the October Revolution, the alliance between the victorious proletariat of Russia and the peoples of the oppressed East became the natural, logical and indispensable sequel to the pre-revolutionary development. In the new conditions, the liberation movements in Asia could get far more support from their allies than from the working class which had not yet come to power. Therefore, the interest of the oppressed peoples in concluding such an alliance was no less, if not greater, than that of the Russian proletariat. And, indeed, there was a real pilgrimage into the Land of Soviets by representatives of the liberation movements of the East after the October Revolution. Chinese, Koreans, Indians, Iranians, Turks and Afghans arrived in Soviet Russia. They came here in order to see with their own eyes the right way of resolving the national question in Russia, to see for themselves the reality of socialist change and to get political and material support for their hard struggle against the colonialists.

The Soviet Government provided the facilities for the coming of representatives from the East, considering contact with them as a practical move towards establishing friendship and cooperation with the national liberation movements of Asia. Here is a typical cable sent by L. M. Karakhan to M. M. Litvinov in Stockholm on November 21, 1918. “Be so kind,” Karakhan asked him, “to establish a close relationship with the Indian Committee, informing it that an Indian propaganda centre has been set up in

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, “The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination”, *Collected Works*, Vol. 22, pp. 143, 151-52.

<sup>2</sup> See: A. V. Raikov, *The Awakening of India*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1968, pp. 128-29 (in Russian).

Moscow. For the time being, it has representatives of the Muslim National League [the reference is to Sattar and Jabbar Khairy—*Auth.*], but it is likewise desirable to organise a Hindu centre ... the arrival of such representatives is desirable.”<sup>1</sup>

In spite of the Civil War, economic dislocation and famine, Soviet Russia was doing everything it could to support the national liberation struggle of the peoples of the East. On December 5, 1919, the Seventh All-Russia Congress of Soviets adopted a special resolution “On Oppressed Nations” in which it declared the “full readiness of the Russian workers and peasants to provide both moral and material support for the peoples fighting for their national liberation”.<sup>2</sup>

Representatives of the peoples of the East have more than once spoken and written with gratitude about the immense aid and support the Land of Soviets has given them. Shaukat Usmani, for example, writing about the Indian military courses instituted by the Soviet authorities of Turkestan at the request of Indians, said: “The military academy for Indian revolutionaries set up in Tashkent was a symbol of fraternal assistance that the new land of Socialism extended to the fighters for Indian freedom against British imperialism.”<sup>3</sup> Shaukat Usmani recalled the turbulent days of 1920: “This was a very happy time in the life of these Indians who loved nothing so much as the use of arms to be practised against an enemy who had subjugated and bled Indians for more than three hundred years.”<sup>4</sup>

S. G. Sardesai, member of the Central Secretariat of the National Council of the Communist Party of India, said that none of the Indians who had arrived in Soviet Russia at the time “was disappointed in the Soviet Union. Lenin gave them all the help they could make use of in the cause of Indian freedom.”<sup>5</sup> These words could equally be held to apply to representatives of other national liberation

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from: A. I. Yunel, *Soviet-Indian Relations*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1973, pp. 58-59 (in Russian).

<sup>2</sup> *Resolution of the Seventh All-Russia Congress of Soviets*, All-Russia Central Executive Committee Publishers, Moscow, 1920, p. 4 (in Russian).

<sup>3</sup> *Mainstream*, July 15, 1967, p. 27.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, July 8, 1967, p. 19.

<sup>5</sup> S. G. Sardesai, *India and the Russian Revolution*, Communist Party Publications, New Delhi, 1967, p. 43. There has been an ut-

movements which appealed to the Soviet Government. We had already referred to the support of the Afghan struggle against British imperialists. And the generous assistance to the national liberation movements in Iran, Turkey, China and other countries is widely known.

Numerous acts by Soviet diplomacy in the area of international affairs to defend the rights and interests of the oppressed peoples of the East were at least of as great importance. Let us recall, for example, that in December 1917, when peace negotiations began with Germany and her allies at Brest-Litovsk, the Committee for Indian Independence in Berlin sent a message to the Soviet delegation, asking it to demand the right of self-determination for the peoples of India. At the very first plenary session of the peace conference, the Soviet delegation stated that the only principles of a universal democratic peace should be those of the Soviet Decree on Peace which declared, in particular, for the right of nations to self-determination. When the talks were suspended on December 16, 1917, the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs appealed to the peoples and governments of the allied nations (Britain, France, Italy and the United States) to cut short military operations and join the peace negotiations. That forceful and impressive document exposed the "most undisguised and most cynical imperialism" of those powers which denied the right of self-determination to the peoples of Ireland, Egypt, India, Madagascar, Indochina and other countries which they oppressed. Soviet Russia called on the governments of those powers "to build peace on the basis of a full and unconditional recognition of the principle of self-determination for all the peoples in all the countries",

terly unfounded assertion by Arun Coomer Bose (see: *Asian Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 3, 1970, pp. 348, 347) that "the efforts of the Indian revolutionaries in Europe to seek Bolshevik help for India's fight for freedom" thus "ended in frustration", since the Bolsheviks "were mainly interested in utilising them in their own interest", while the Indian emigres were but "representatives of nationalist India in exile". The reference is to the Berlin group of Indian revolutionaries who arrived in Moscow in May 1921 to meet other Indian groups and hold a unity conference with them. But those groups of Indians turned out to be so widely divided that they could not even open the conference. Under such circumstances, the Comintern and the Bolsheviks preferred to continue aiding the groups that had arrived earlier, in the hope that the Indian revolutionaries would eventually achieve unity.

including the oppressed peoples of their own states.<sup>1</sup> This example is seldom recalled.

Other, more substantial acts of the Soviet Government are widely known. These are the Decree on Peace, the Address of the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR To All the Toiling Muslims of Russia and the East (November 20, 1917), the Declaration of Rights of the Working and Exploited People approved by the Third All-Russia Congress of Soviets (January 12, 1918), and the message of the Soviet Government to the Chinese people and the governments of South and North China (July 25, 1919), to mention just a few. The documents just listed did not only proclaim the fundamental principles of Soviet foreign policy and, notably, those relating to the national and colonial question. They played an important part as an expression of practical support for the struggle of the peoples of the East to establish their own independent states and to get rid of imperialist oppression.

Naturally, just like in the pre-revolutionary years, the Russian working class which was lending political and material support to the liberation movements of the peoples of Asia found that to be its duty and, of course, "its interest", to quote Lenin's authentic expression.

At the same time, thousands of working people from Eastern countries, who were in Soviet Russia, and, among them, a certain number of Indians, participated in the Civil War on the Soviet side for they felt that in that way they were contributing to the national liberation of their own countries. Many of them, on their return home, brought the truth about the Land of Soviets to their own people and helped generate more sympathy for it in the East and propagate communist ideas among the advanced sections of Eastern societies.

It is safe to say that the national liberation movements of the colonial and dependent countries did much to ensure that the governments of Afghanistan, Iran and Turkey signed treaties establishing friendly relations with Soviet Russia in 1921.

That was how, in the circumstances brought about by

<sup>1</sup> See: *Documents of the Foreign Policy of the USSR*, Vol. I, Politizdat, Moscow, 1957, pp. 67-69 (in Russian).

the Great October Revolution, a still more effective and mutually advantageous alliance was virtually being forged between the Russian working class and the national liberation movements of the Eastern countries to oppose international imperialism. In December 1920 Lenin said: "This circumstance, coupled with consolidation of the Soviets, is steadily strengthening the alliance and the friendly relations between Russia and the oppressed nations of the East, despite the bourgeoisie's resistance and intrigues and the continuing encirclement of Russia by bourgeois countries."<sup>1</sup> So, what selfish policy, what "selfish exploitation" of the East can one talk about if one takes an objective and serious view of the matter?!

All of the authors mentioned earlier on, trying to prove the self-seeking character of Bolshevik policy in the East, join in contending that it was not until the middle of 1920 that the policy of cooperating with the bourgeois-democratic, national revolutionary forces of the colonial and dependent countries was enunciated at the Second Congress of the Comintern, and that it was still later that it began to be carried out.

They are all just as unanimous in seeking to prove that the switch-over to such a course was due to the loss of hope for an early victory of socialist revolutions in Western Europe. For example, Professor Harish Kapur writes that the Bolsheviks turned to Asia as late as mid-1920 when they had discovered that there was no chance of an immediate victory by the proletariat in the West. Now, he declared, the Bolsheviks found that they needed "to draw the revolutionary masses of the Asian nations into alliance with the revolutionary workers and peasants of Soviet Russia" so that they "could revive their flagging spirits" with their help.<sup>2</sup>

The same idea has been expressed by Demetrio Boerner. He presumes that "the new tactics of aiding bourgeois nationalist movements directed against the Western colonial powers" arose at the Second Congress of the

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, "The Eighth All-Russia Congress of Soviets, December 22-29, 1920", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 491.

<sup>2</sup> Harish Kapur, *The Soviet Union and the Emerging Nations. A Case Study of Soviet Policy Towards India*, Michael Joseph, Ltd., Geneva, 1972, pp. 11-12.

Comintern,<sup>1</sup> and began to be applied after the Congress of the Peoples of the East in Baku, which met in September 1920. He followed in the footsteps of other writers in asserting that the "new tactics" emerged only after the loss of hope for an early victory of the Western proletariat and the Red Army's retreat from Warsaw. "Only after the end of the Baku Congress," Boersner writes, "and after the Red Army's retreat from Warsaw did the Comintern begin to turn to the East in a national-revolutionary spirit, proposing collaboration with bourgeois nationalists."<sup>2</sup> Boersner goes on to formulate his idea in clearer terms: "The new Comintern policy, based on the failure of the immediate proletarian revolution in the West, consisted in supporting all Eastern governments and political movements which showed a tendency to fight for the complete independence of their country from Western influence."<sup>3</sup>

None of these presumptions tallies with reality. Of course, the arguments about the "flagging spirits" of the Bolsheviks and the hopes they lost in 1920 for an early victory of the proletariat of Western countries, as reasons behind the alleged turn of Communists from Europe to Asia, are utterly inconsistent.

To begin with, there was no turn at all. Lenin and the Bolsheviks had always given much attention to the East, even during the periods of the most significant revolutionary events and gains of the proletarian struggle in the West. Lenin's address to the Second All-Russia Congress of Communist Organisations of the Peoples of the East on November 22, 1919 was very indicative in this respect. That was a period when, to quote Lenin, the social revolution was maturing in Western Europe "by leaps and bounds".<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, Lenin reaffirmed the correctness of the propositions set out in the Programme of the RCP(B) to the effect that the forthcoming world social revolution would consist in merging the struggle of the proletariat of all advanced countries against their bourgeois-

<sup>1</sup> See: Demetrio Boersner, *Op. cit.*, p. 97.

<sup>2</sup> Demetrio Boersner, *Op. cit.*, pp. 98-99.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>4</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Address to the Second All-Russia Congress of Communist Organisations of the Peoples of the East, November 22, 1919", *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, p. 155.

sic with the "national wars" of the colonial and dependent countries "against international imperialism".<sup>1</sup>

In 1920 the international proletariat started to pass from a frontal attack against capitalism to position warfare against it. Lenin described that new situation in his "Theses on the Fundamental Tasks of the Second Congress of the Communist International": "The Communist Parties' current task consists not in accelerating the revolution, but in intensifying the preparation of the proletariat."<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the Bolsheviks did not totally rule out, even at that time, the possibility of an early victory of the working class in some capitalist countries of Europe (Germany), which Lenin referred to in the Theses. In the meantime, the domestic situation in Soviet Russia was being consolidated. The Civil War was about to be won, and it was precisely in 1920 that Lenin declared that now "we can ... set about a task that is dear to us, an essential task, one that has long been attracting us—that of economic development. We can do so with the assurance that the capitalist tycoons will not find it as easy to frustrate this work as in the past."<sup>3</sup> So, what actually prevailed was not the "flagging spirits" of the Bolsheviks, but an obvious consolidation of Soviet government, not the total loss of hope for a victory of the proletarian revolution in the Western countries, but the surviving hope for a victory by some contingents of West European workers and, finally, it was not a new oriental policy, but a continuation of the former Bolshevik course in Asia.

In June 1920 Lenin restated, in brief, the Bolshevik attitude to the national liberation movement of the Eastern countries, which he first spelled out in early 1916. In an outline of his plan for the theses he was going to write on the national and colonial questions, Lenin again pointed out that a simple recognition of the right of colonies and nations of unequal status to secession was not enough. What was required, he emphasised, was "actual aid to the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Theses on the Fundamental Tasks of the Second Congress of the Communist International", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 189.

<sup>3</sup> V. I. Lenin, "The Eighth All-Russia Congress of Soviets, December 22-29, 1920", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 489.

revolutionary struggle and uprising in the colonies".<sup>1</sup> As we see, Lenin's policy statements in November 1919 and in June 1920 reaffirmed the invariable Bolshevik policy of supporting the awakening anti-imperialist nationalism in Eastern countries.

In a bid to justify his argument about the "new course" of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) and the Comintern, Boersner points out that it took Soviet Russia too long to sign all of her early treaties establishing friendly and diplomatic relations with Eastern countries, which she did as late as 1921: on February 26 with Iran, on February 28 with Afghanistan, and on March 16 with Turkey. In that way the author wants to make the readers believe that the Soviet Government was to blame for dragging its feet in signing those treaties because right until the very end of 1920 it had refused to support "moderately nationalist movements".<sup>2</sup> That kind of argument is just as inconsistent.

Starting from October 1917, the Soviet Government carried on a persistent campaign for the establishment of friendly and diplomatic relations with the peoples and governments of Eastern countries. What it had to overcome in the process was not only the resistance of reactionary forces of Eastern countries, but also the direct opposition of the imperialist powers. We can take Iran as a case in point, because Boersner considers it to have been the first object of Soviet Russia's "new policy" of cooperation with moderately nationalist movements.

As early as January 1918, that is barely two and a half months after the October Revolution, the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs of the RSFSR sent its first official representative, I. O. Kolomiytsev, to Teheran. The Shah's government, fearful of Soviet Russia's revolutionising impact and giving in to pressure from the Entente, not only refused to recognise the Soviet mission, but even connived at the Whiteguards ransacking its premises in November 1918. Considering, however, that the ransacking did not bespeak the will of Iran's nationalist forces, the Soviet Government soon delegated I. O. Kolomiytsev to Teheran once more. But the second attempt at establishing friendly

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Material for the Second Congress of the Communist International", *Complete Works*, Vol. 41, p. 438 (in Russian).

<sup>2</sup> See: Demetrio Boersner, *Op. cit.*, p. 100.

contact with Iran ended even more tragically than the first one. The Soviet envoy was killed in July 1919 by the Whiteguards instigated by British agents. In spite of that foul crime, the Soviet Government did not give up its efforts to establish contact with Iran. It turned to Teheran over and over again, offering to establish a relationship on a totally new basis—equality, friendship and support for the Iranian people's pursuit of national independence.

Nevertheless, the Soviet-Iranian treaty establishing friendly relations between the two countries was signed as late as 1921, and not in 1918 or 1920, and that was the fault of British imperialism and Iran's reactionary circles, not of the Soviet Government. We shall come to a similar conclusion just as well if we consider the history of Soviet-Turkish, Soviet-Afghan or Soviet-Chinese relations.

It is quite opportune to add at this point that the territory of all Eastern countries adjacent to Russia was used by imperialists as springboards for anti-Soviet armed intervention. There is even more to it, for Turkey before Kemal and China before Sun Yat-sen had participated in the intervention against Soviet Russia. Is it not clear that the time for signing Soviet Russia's treaties of friendship with Eastern countries had come amazingly soon under such circumstances, that being, above all, due to the invariable Soviet policy of backing the nationalist forces of oppressed Asia as well as to the sweeping upsurge of the liberation struggle those forces waged.

That is how one should see one of the essential arguments of Boersner in defence of his thesis about the gradual switch-over of the RCP(B) and the Comintern to a "new course", that is, to supporting the nationalist movements. As he sought to justify that argument further on, Boersner undertook a comparative study of the decisions of the First, Second and Third congresses of the Comintern on the Eastern question. That led him to draw the conclusion: "Instead of the Western tendency which showed itself fully at the First Congress and partly at the Second Congress, and which claimed that the proletariat of the West would revolutionise the East, the ECCI now [before the Third Congress of the Comintern—*Auth.*] stated the opposite: the nationalists of the East would revolutionise the

West!"<sup>1</sup> Right there and then Boersner referred to an ECCI letter "To All Member and Prospective Member Parties of the Comintern", published in April 1921, before the Third Congress which, in his opinion, indicated "the new line—that revolution will be impossible in the West unless it breaks out in the East".

But an analysis of the documents of the First, Second and Third congresses on the national and colonial questions shows the immutability of the basic trends in the Comintern's oriental policy in those years. The First Congress of the Comintern, although proceeding, for quite valid reasons, from the assumption of a possible early victory by the West European proletariat, nevertheless recorded in no uncertain terms in its policy platform, adopted on March 4, 1919, that "it will support the exploited peoples of the colonies in their struggle against imperialism".<sup>2</sup> That assumption, totally ignored, incidentally, by Boersner and other bourgeois authors when they reviewed the decisions of the First Congress on the Eastern question, was further developed and theoretically substantiated in the documents of the Second Congress of the Comintern. The Third Congress stuck to the platform worked out by the Second Congress on the Eastern question.

A review of the role and place of the national liberation movement in the world-wide proletarian revolution also disproves the contentions of our opponents. The First Congress of the Comintern did not raise that question, practically speaking. The surging tide of the national liberation struggle in the East had not yet risen high enough for such an issue to be posed and settled. The Manifesto of the Congress only stressed the decisive role of the anticipated victory of the West European proletariat for the liberation of the East from colonial oppression.<sup>3</sup> But as early as November 1919, when the liberation movement in Asia was in full swing and surged on, with communist elements arising within it, Lenin proposed a solution to that problem addressing the Second Congress of Communist Organisations of the Peoples of the East. "It is self-evident," Lenin said, "that final victory can be won only

<sup>1</sup> Demetrio Boersner, *Op. cit.*, p. 107.

<sup>2</sup> *V. I. Lenin and the Communist International*, p. 134.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

by the proletariat of all the advanced countries of the world, and we, the Russians, are beginning the work which the British, French or German proletariat will consolidate. But we see that they will not be victorious without the aid of the working people of all the oppressed colonial nations, first and foremost, of Eastern nations." Lenin considered that the "final victory" over imperialism could come only through the interaction and unity of the revolutionary anti-imperialist struggle of the proletarians of the West and the oppressed peoples of the East since "the transition to communism cannot be accomplished by the vanguard alone".<sup>1</sup> Let us note that Lenin expressed that idea at a time when the Bolsheviks were still waiting for an early victory of the West European proletariat.

The Second Congress of the Comintern included Lenin's thesis in its resolutions. The Supplementary Theses, edited by Lenin, contained this important statement: "In order to ensure the final success of the world revolution, there has to be joint action ... by two forces"—the international proletariat and the anti-imperialist liberation movement of the oppressed nations.<sup>2</sup> In full agreement with that proposition, the ECCI letter "To All the Proletarian Organisations" pointed out: "Without a revolution in Asia there can be no victory of a world proletarian revolution."<sup>3</sup> In other words, there is no whole without its parts: there is no final victory over imperialism without victory in the East. The Third Congress of the Comintern proclaimed the same idea, by and large. The theses on the world situation and the tasks before the Communist International said: "The revolutionary people's movement in India and other colonies has now become as essential to the world revolution as the uprising of the proletariat in the capitalist countries in the Old and New worlds."<sup>4</sup> There was no "new line" supposed to be in pursuit of the priority and primacy of the Asian revolution to be found there, nor any renunciation of support for the national liberation movement in the East.

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Address to the Second All-Russia Congress of Communist Organisations of the Peoples of the East, November 22, 1919", *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, pp. 161-62.

<sup>2</sup> See: *V. I. Lenin and the Communist International*, p. 203.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 265.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 306.

So, the policy of backing the national liberation movements, bourgeois-democratic and anti-imperialist in character, the policy of alliance with them was invariably pursued by the Bolsheviks before, during and after the October Revolution. There was no break in the pursuit of that course, nor any departure from it either by the Bolsheviks or by the Comintern. It is quite clear, therefore, that the policy of supporting the national liberation movements could in no way have "stemmed" from the Second Congress and, for that reason, cannot be called a new tactic in point of principle. Of all the tactical guidelines of the Bolsheviks, it was, perhaps, the oldest one and underwent no change in spite of the succession of the strategic stages of the Russian revolution.

However, it is exactly the immutability of that course that does not suit our opponents because it demolishes their concept of the "selfishness" of the Soviet and Comintern policy towards the liberation movements of the East. Claiming that the Comintern and the Bolsheviks had not been supporting such movements until the middle and even the end of 1920, bourgeois authors, naturally, had to establish what policy, preceding that change-over, was pursued from 1917 to 1920.

The above-mentioned authors differ in their answers to this question. To take the version of Harish Kapur, Zafar Imam or an Indian specialist on the history of the USSR Doctor J. A. Naik, the Bolsheviks had shown practically no interest in the East until 1920, being totally preoccupied with the West. Their Eastern policy was passive. That is also the view of two French historians—Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Quelquejay. In a joint work on the Muslim national movements in Russia, they write: "During that period, which was one of 'War Communism', the faith in the triumph of the revolution in the West was still profound and the leaders of the Bolshevik Party showed but indirect interest in the East".<sup>1</sup> In Harish Kapur's opinion, until mid-1920 the Bolsheviks had taken "only a theoretical interest in Asia" or simply issued "appeals to the Asian

<sup>1</sup> Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Quelquejay, *Les mouvements nationaux chez les musulmans de Russie. Le "Sultangaliisme" au Tatarstan*, Mouton and Co., Paris, 1960, p. 126.

people to revolt against their internal and external oppressors".<sup>1</sup> Dr. Naik even figured out to discover that Lenin had never mentioned India or the national and colonial question for that matter in his eight reports and speeches on the international situation between May and November 1918 (why he took that particular period of time, rather than any other, remains a mystery). In his opinion, neither the invitation that was sent to various workers' organisations abroad to associate themselves with the Communist International, nor its First Congress held in March 1919 dealt with the national and colonial question.<sup>2</sup>

Unlike the above-mentioned authors, Boersner presumes that not even during the period of a revolutionary upsurge in the West were the Comintern and the Russian Communists by any means passive in the East. Just on the contrary. In Asia, too, they pursued a particularly vigorous policy at the time, he finds. That policy, however, consisted not in supporting the national liberation movements but in aiding the "ultra-leftist rebellions" designed to develop quickly into social revolutions. He writes: "Already in the middle of 1920, the old communist policy of supporting ultra-left rebellions in the Eastern countries was slowly yielding to the new tactics of aiding bourgeois nationalist movements directed against the Western colonial powers."<sup>3</sup>

One will hardly quarrel with the idea that the Bolsheviks had been active enough in the East even before the Second Congress of the Comintern. However, they did not follow the course over there which Boersner writes about. They stuck to their policy of supporting the struggle of the oppressed peoples for their national independence. However, ultra-revolutionary tactics did exist, and an attempt was even made to pursue it, but it was made not by Lenin and the Comintern but by certain early Communists of Eastern countries infected with the "infantile disorder of leftism". Bourgeois authors, and Boersner among them, totally ignore that very important circumstance just as they ignore the fact that Lenin strongly opposed the attempts

<sup>1</sup> Harish Kapur, *Op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> J. A. Naik, *Soviet Policy Towards India. From Stalin to Brezhnev*, Vikas Publications, Delhi, Bombay, Bangalore, 1970, p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Demetrio Boersner, *Op. cit.*, p. 97.

to pursue left-sectarian tactics in the East. Without taking all that into account, it is simply impossible to understand many of the developments in the Comintern and in the communist movement of the Asian nations.

Boersner tries to justify his argument by referring to the Gilan revolution of 1920-1921 in North Iran. It is the events connected with it that he believes to have been a manifestation of the Bolshevik policy of supporting the "ultra-left rebellions".<sup>1</sup> But the Gilan revolution was not such a rebellion. It was a national liberation movement by peasants, the urban poor, tradesmen and liberal-minded landowners against British rule and its henchmen in Iran. And that revolution aborted largely because the leftist elements, then prevalent in the Central Committee of the Iranian Communist Party, attempted to set the Gilan movement on course towards socialist reforms contrary to the actual conditions and Lenin's explicit warning against "left" stupidities.<sup>2</sup>

Neither is there any valid reason behind the opposite claims about the passivity and even inaction of Soviet Russia in the East during the years immediately preceding the Second Congress of the Comintern. In reality, the oriental policy of the Soviet Communists was then very active as well, and not only in the sense of diplomatic and political action in support of the national liberation struggle of the Eastern countries and peoples, but also in the sense of spreading communist ideology among a million-odd working people of Eastern countries who were in Soviet Russia at the time. The Central Committee of the RCP(B) and other Party bodies of Soviet Russia were setting up special political agencies to conduct propaganda and agitation work among them and rouse them to communist activity. The leading group of the Central Bureau of Communist Organisations of the Peoples of the East began to work in January 1918. In March 1919 the Second Siberian Conference of the RCP(B) decided to "organise an information and agitation bureau in the Far East", and later on a

<sup>1</sup> Demetrio Boersner, *Op. cit.*, pp. 68-69.

<sup>2</sup> See: ORCSA, s. 5402, r. 1, f. 34, pp. 3, 9. For details see: S. L. Agayev and V. N. Plastun, "From the History of Drafting the Programme and Tactics of the Iranian Communist Party in 1920-1921", *Narody Azii i Afriki*, No. 3, 1976.

Section of the Eastern Peoples was set up under the auspices of the Siberian Bureau of the RCP(B) Central Committee. The Far Eastern Bureau of the RCP(B) Central Committee had an Organisational Bureau of Chinese Communists and a Korean Bureau.

The same kind of work was carried on in Turkestan. In 1919 the Turkestan Commission of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee formed a special agitation and propaganda subdivision which was later transformed into a Council for International Propaganda. Here is how the Council formulated the tasks before it: "To establish links which would connect the revolution in Russia with the movement of the oppressed masses of the East; to make the slogans proclaimed by the proletariat of Russia accessible and comprehensive to the working masses of Persia, India, Bukhara, etc."<sup>1</sup>

A large amount of oral and printed propaganda work was carried on by the Odessa Regional RCP(B) Committee among the working people of Turkish and Iranian extraction.

Soviet Communists did a great deal (notably by organising propaganda courses and schools) in order to help the more politically conscious elements in the Eastern countries get down to establishing their national communist groups. In that way they contributed towards extending the communist movement into the Asian countries adjacent to Soviet Russia. This work cannot be called "passive" or taken to mean "ignoring" the East, but neither could it be seen as instigating "ultra-left rebellions".

Starting from 1918, the communist movement began to spread fairly rapidly among the working people of the Eastern countries in Soviet Russia. Former Turkish POWs set up several communist groups, and even a Central Committee of the Turkish Party of Socialists-Communists was formed. Many Iranian Adalat communist groups appeared in Turkestan in 1919, and there were such groups also in Central Russia as well as in Azerbaijan and Daghestan. There were Chinese, Koreans and a certain number of Indians among the people actively

<sup>1</sup> *The Comintern and the East*, Moscow, 1979, p. 88.

involved in the communist movement which grouped thousands of foreign workers in the Soviet Republic. Communist groups were cropping up in Eastern countries themselves at the same time. These two communist trends—in exile and at home—started to converge and to merge early in 1920. The formation of national Communist parties began in Turkey, Iran, China, Korea and other Asian countries.

So, what emerged in the Eastern countries in 1919-1920 under the impact of the October Revolution was an entirely new factor of their social existence—a communist movement. The emergence and development of that movement in the East took place in the context of a yet unmatched sweeping upsurge of the national liberation struggle of oppressed peoples in the Asian continent. Anti-imperialist action was assuming increasingly massive proportions, with more workers and peasants being drawn in the struggle against colonialism. That was the starting point of the convergence of the communist and the national liberation movements, and that, naturally, generated an unprecedented problem of their relationship and interaction inside the Eastern countries.

It was not a simple problem. The national liberation movement, led by the local bourgeoisie, had originated a long time before and, fitting in perfectly with the anti-colonial aspirations of nearly all the classes of Eastern societies, represented a large and comparatively well-organised force by that time. The communist movement, on the other hand, was in its infancy, handicapped by those hard times: it did not strike root in the working-class movement, was especially fiercely persecuted by the colonial authorities and, besides, was weakened in a number of countries by the left-sectarian outlook of its own leadership.

Back in November 1919, Lenin indicated a course to be followed in developing cooperation of Eastern Communists with the forces of anti-imperialist and bourgeois-democratic nationalism, overcoming left-sectarian ambitions and applying communist ideology and organisation to the specific conditions of the backward East and making an all-out effort to create an anti-imperialist alliance of all the revolutionary liberation movements of Asia with

the international proletariat, above all, with the Soviet Republic.

It became clear by the end of 1919, not any earlier, that the "old" national and colonial question had taken on new and essential aspects because of the rising communist movement in the Eastern countries themselves. Naturally, therefore, it had to be considered at the nearest international forum of Communists, which was the Second Congress of the Comintern.

The issue could not have been debated in every detail at the First Congress (March 1919), because it was not yet ripe enough to be considered. The communist groups in the East were still of little note, the problem of correlation between the communist and national liberation movements in the colonial and dependent countries had not yet arisen. Besides, the First Congress, to recall Lenin's description, was no more than a propaganda effort, for all it did was to put forward the basic ideas for the proletariat to follow and urge it to rise. That was the approach it adopted in dealing with the national and colonial question as well. The main task before the Second Congress was to work out the fundamental theoretical principles to guide the strategy and tactics of the world communist movement in the West and in the East.

There is only one thing that is true in the assertions of the above-mentioned bourgeois writers: it was at the Second Congress that the first all-embracing debate on the Eastern question took place in the Comintern, but that was not because of any loss of hope for an early victory of the European proletariat, nor because of a turn of the Bolsheviks from the "fading" West to the inflamed East. The reasons were different. For one thing, it was necessary for the "old" policy the Bolsheviks had tried out in supporting the national liberation movements in the East to be ratified by the international organisation of Communists, to be carried forward and to become a policy of all Communist parties. For another, it was necessary to discuss the new question of the correlation between the communist and national liberation movements in the Asian countries themselves and to settle it with due regard for the actual social and economic condi-

tions of the colonial East.

So, the anti-communist guidelines have constrained many foreign scholars to construct unprovable theories totally at variance with objective reality. Unfortunately, this applies to a number of works in Indian bourgeois historiography which, generally, is more objective in its assessment of the history of the origin of the communist movement in that country as well as of the oriental policies of Soviet Russia and the Comintern.

# SOME PROBLEMS OF THE STRATEGY AND TACTICS OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL LIBERATION AND COMMUNIST MOVEMENT

O. V. MARTYSHIN

The Comintern's history is bound up in a thousand and one ways with modern times. It was brought into being to meet strategic objectives, some of which still confront the progressive political forces of many nations. Any interpretation of the Comintern's line has to be made with an eye on present-day realities, whether one likes it or not. Even various students of the Comintern's policies in Asia, notably in India, have found it right and proper to acknowledge this. "Our aim has been to make a contribution towards the understanding of recent developments by placing them in an historical perspective," Hélène Carrère d'Encausse and Stuart R. Schram write in their preface to an English edition of their book *Marxism and Asia*.<sup>1</sup> The American student of M. N. Roy's activities, John Patrick Haithcox, remarks that the current controversy about a "proper attitude to 'bourgeois nationalistic' regimes in the 'third world' is a modern manifestation of that delicate problem which has agitated the minds of Communists ever since the Comintern was established".<sup>2</sup>

Naturally, the problems now being resolved by revolutionary forces in the countries of Asia and Africa and the conditions they have to operate in are not identical to the aims and conditions of the struggle in the colonial and

<sup>1</sup> Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, Stuart R. Schram, *Marxism and Asia*, The Penguin Press, London, 1969, p. VII.

<sup>2</sup> John Patrick Haithcox, *Op. cit.*, p. 215.

dependent countries in the Comintern's days. Yet there is an obvious line of continuity between these objectives.

The historic importance of Comintern policy in respect of the national liberation and communist movement in India and the activities of the Indian Communists, starting from the formation of the early communist groups, indisputably goes beyond the bounds of one country, considering the closing stage of the downfall of the colonial system of imperialism.

In India, distinguished as it is by an outstanding diversity of social and economic conditions and the political trends they brought into being, the international and Indian communist movement had to resolve a multitude of basic problems, like those now besetting the developing countries, for the first time. It was necessary to be able to reckon with the moods of the Indian national bourgeoisie which led the country's liberation movement, involving as it did petty-bourgeois urban elements and about to involve millions of peasants who were coming out to press for their own needs. It was necessary to understand the historical background to the positions of these classes, share their common aims and means of the struggle against imperialism along with retaining its own class and political independence and its allegiance to the objectives of the communist movement.

The political scene was dominated by bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces which were historically placed in a more advantageous position than the Communists and which spread their influence to the working class. It is the Indian National Congress (INC)—an experienced political organisation, grouping patriots of different convictions and social origins—that was the unchallenged leader of the anti-imperialist movement. It was invariably under control of the national bourgeoisie but in its anti-imperialist action it relied on support from the working masses. The Congress produced some leaders who, enjoying the love and confidence of the largest sections of the population, were sometimes capable of looking beyond the interests of the Indian bourgeoisie and understanding its class limitations—Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru.

The INC, while grouping representatives of different classes, was at the same time a scene of hard struggle be-

tween the right and left forces. One particular feature the Indian anti-imperialist movement had along with the hegemony of the national bourgeoisie was an abundance and diversity of petty-bourgeois ideological and political trends. These were distinguished by waverings, abrupt change of mood, switch-over from radicalism to reformism, from revolutionary enthusiasm to the illusions of enlightenment, from an awareness of the class interests of the working people to nationalism. There was a time when petty-bourgeois trends took scientific socialism and Marxism-Leninism as their banner. To work out a proper attitude to the Indian National Congress and the petty-bourgeois trends in the national movement was an extremely complex task before the Communist International and the Communists of India. A critical study of their experience gives certain bearings to go by in deciding what is still an extremely relevant question of the relations between the Communist, petty-bourgeois and national bourgeois parties and movements in the developing countries.

The communist movement in India has a hard, yet glorious, history behind it. Its major upshot is the existence of an authoritative and representative Communist party—the vanguard of the Indian working class and a consistent exponent of the interests of the working people and democratic forces. The great part the Communist Party of India is playing in the nation's political life today, its intransigent struggle against home and foreign reaction and its staunchness in defending the everyday needs of the workers and peasants have been generally recognised. The intense search for the right way to follow has involved some errors and miscalculations which the CPI has admitted quite openly, as have representatives of the international communist movement. Those have been the errors of committed revolutionaries and patriots who failed to take proper decisions because of the most tangled internal and external situation and sometimes because of inadequate theoretical grounding and practical experience. The sober approach of the Marxists of India and other countries to the CPI's history and the Comintern's oriental policies can be set off against the biased and methodologically groundless interpretations of bourgeois writers always striving to exploit both the objective and the subjective difficulties in order to

discredit what is one of the oldest contingents of the communist movement in Asia.

*LENIN'S AND ROY'S PLATFORMS ON THE NATIONAL AND COLONIAL QUESTION AND METHODS APPLIED BY THEIR BOURGEOIS CRITICS*

The dispute on the strategy and tactics to apply to the national and colonial question, which M. N. Roy who represented the Indian Communists had with Lenin at the Second Congress of the Comintern, is widely known. M. N. Roy was the first to come forward with a sectarian and dogmatic ultra-revolutionary programme which, variously modified, reappeared subsequently in many countries and in many parts of the world over and over again. The debate with Lenin earned Roy even some sympathy of avowed opponents of the communist movement. At a later stage, the evolution of Comintern policy and Roy's position did not remove the differences of principle between them. When the Comintern followed Lenin's advice on the colonial question, Roy, without in any way advertising his divergence from the majority opinion and, perhaps, even sincerely accepting at least some of Lenin's criticism, nevertheless stuck to his own ideas and sought to impress them on the Indian Communists. At the time of the Sixth Congress, that sectarian line with regard to the national and colonial question seriously affected, if for a time, the appropriate positions of the Comintern. Roy was disappointed in his earlier convictions, revised them and was coming round to the idea of indispensable unity in the struggle for national independence. After having broken with the Comintern and the CPI, Roy attempted at one time to pursue a line of his own as a leader of an independent left-radical movement. But his supporters failed to become a major political force in India. Despairing of politics, Roy passed to preaching a system of "new or radical humanism" which he had himself constructed and took to what was, in point of fact, liberal enlightenment activities. He lost his faith in the communist ideal, moreover, in the communist and all revolutionary movement, and became a liberal critic of communism in India and the world, although that

criticism never became the main pursuit of his life which ended in 1954.

The conflicting nature of Roy's activities, his closeness to the communist movement and his differences with it ending up in his total departure from it, have made Roy a favourite of bourgeois specialists on the communist movement in India. His views have invariably been a centre of attraction in considering the CPI's and the Comintern's line, especially in their opening stages, and are now being widely used in search of evidence to vindicate a number of biased propositions. However, even without any regard to how bourgeois writers have been using Roy's views and activities, these are of certain interest by themselves just as well. That is why it is right and proper to examine some points of principle in the CPI's and the Comintern's policies in association with their bourgeois interpretations parallel with a brief survey of the ideological and political evolution of that distinguished, if extremely controversial, leader of the Indian communist and national liberation movement.

M. N. Roy was born into a Brahman's family in Bengal between 1886 and 1893. From his youthful years he was a militant nationalist, burning with noble intolerance of foreign oppression and vague aspirations for social justice. Roy had no systematic training, but he was a man of keen intelligence anxious for self-perfection and active in search of ways to resolve the problems that agitated his mind. He did his best to make up by his revolutionary mettle for a shortage of theoretical grounding. By nature, Roy was a rebel, a revolutionary of pre-Marxian times, and he wanted to remain as such until his dying day. "When, as a school-boy of fourteen, I began my political life, which may end in nothing, I wanted to be free," M. N. Roy wrote. "The old-fashioned revolutionaries thought in terms of freedom. In those days, we had not read Marx. We did not know about the existence of the proletariat. Still, many spent their lives in jail and went to the gallows. There was no proletariat to propel them. They were not conscious of class struggle. They did not have the dream of Communism. But they had a human urge to revolt against the intolerable conditions of life. They did not know exactly how those conditions could be changed. But they tried to change them, anyhow. I began my political life with that spirit, and

I still draw my inspiration rather from that spirit than from the three volumes of *Capital* or three hundred volumes by the Marxists.”<sup>1</sup>

Following the traditions of Bengal, where the political struggle often took on extreme forms while non-violent methods did not strike root very much even during Gandhi’s lifetime, Roy joined the terrorist liberation organisations, more particularly the underground Yugantar group. When one of the actions of those patriots in bringing a supply of arms to Calcutta was uncovered, Roy, to escape the persecution by the British authorities, fled to Japan in August 1915 and moved on from there to San Francisco, the home of a strong American section of one of the biggest underground associations of Indian national revolutionaries—the Ghadar Party. It was in America that Roy began to learn socialist and Marxist ideas. But there, too, he was persecuted, that time for illegal entry into the US, and had to move on to Mexico where he took part in the creation of a Communist party.

That was the record of revolutionary activities that Roy had by the time he came to Moscow for the Second Congress of the Comintern.

Roy was very active on the Congress Commission on the National and Colonial Questions, where he produced his “Supplementary Theses” basically different from the platform elaborated by Lenin. Lenin held that the Communists of colonial countries had to work in two directions at once. On the one hand, they had to work for the achievement of the class—economic and political—interests of the proletariat, train committed Marxists organisationally and politically, and rally the working people behind them; on the other, they had to do their best to promote the national democratic movement, to be able to back up all the forces which put forward progressive demands (including the national bourgeoisie insofar as it acted from anti-imperialist positions), and strive to build up the revolutionary-democratic potential of the nationalist movement and raise the role of the working masses, above all the working

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from: *M. N. Roy—Philosopher-Revolutionary*. A Symposium Compiled and Edited by Sibnarayan Ray, Renaissance Publishers (Private), Ltd., Calcutta, 1959, p. 7.

class, in it. Lenin saw the anti-colonial movement led by the bourgeoisie as a sphere of activity for the Communists where the communist movement was to gain strength which would enable it eventually to claim leadership on a national scale. Naturally, the involvement in the bourgeois-democratic movement implied not only supporting anti-imperialism and its national bourgeois leadership, but also consistent criticism of its waverings and predilection for compromise. That was how Lenin and the Comintern, which had accepted to follow that political line, visualised the initial stage of the struggle of the Communists of colonial countries for national and social liberation.

Roy had a different view of the Communists' strategic and tactical objectives. While overplaying the degree of maturity of the revolutionary forces in the colonial countries, he believed that the communist vanguard must place itself in control of the movement right from the outset. Roy dismissed the definite community of objectives between the bourgeois-democratic and communist movements during the anti-colonial stage and, consequently, the need for them to form an alliance. He underestimated the influence of nationalist parties on the working masses and did not take into account the fact that during that stage most of the workers and peasants saw the bourgeois leaders and organisations as representatives of a nation, rather than the exponents of the interests of the bourgeoisie, and were, therefore, prepared to follow them in the battle for national independence.

Roy opposed Lenin's idea that the Communists should support the bourgeois-democratic liberation movements. In his opinion, the Comintern had to contribute towards the development of Communist parties alone, while the latter had to address themselves wholly and entirely to the struggle for the class interests of the working people. Roy set his face against the contacts of the Comintern and European Communist parties with the nationalist movements in the colonies and called for moral and material aid to be given to the revolutionary forces of the colonies through none other than their Communist parties.

Lenin placed emphasis on the struggle against imperialism and on the battle for independence, while Roy gave priority to the struggle to achieve leadership of the movement.

Lenin, considering the actual situation, oriented Communists to a hard and, most likely, long struggle within the national anti-imperialist movement to win recognition as the leading force, strengthen their positions step by step, and extend the influence of Communist parties through a sustained, yet patient, effort. Roy thought that it was by leading the movement right from the start that one could make it succeed.

Roy combined his uncritical belief in the revolutionary potentialities of the communist movement in the colonies, which was but in its infancy at the time, with a nihilistic attitude to the working class of advanced capitalist countries. Roy held that the revolutionary centres had shifted from developed capitalist countries into the colonies.

The platform Roy brought before the Second Congress of the Comintern only to see it rejected was typically leftist. Its basic principles had more than once been proclaimed in the democratic, working-class and national liberation movements of many countries of the world. There was nothing specifically "oriental" about that programme beyond, perhaps, Roy's Asiocentric tendencies which showed themselves in his ambition to consider the colonial East as the main centre of the world revolutionary movement. However, since that platform had been put forward by a representative of the East, of Asia, and since at the Second Congress of the Comintern he had taken issue with Lenin, the leader of the international communist movement, Roy's position has been extensively exploited by bourgeois historians in their attempts to prove that Comintern policy was no good for the revolutionary movements in the colonial and dependent countries and that it was logical and inevitable for a special kind of "Eastern" or "Asian" Marxism to emerge as a counterweight to the "Western" or "Russian" Marxism.

That way of putting the question was relatively new for bourgeois literature. It was typical of the postwar period or, to be exact, for the 1960s and 1970s. In earlier times anti-communist propaganda did not seek to underline the distinction between the communist movements in the East and the West. It centred on its argument about the Russian influence. The emergence of communist groups and parties in Asian countries was seen as a product of the Comintern's

scheming. "No other organisation has ever given as much occasion for so much romantic wishful thinking," admitted Dominique Desanti, after she left the French Communist Party (so she can hardly be suspected of particular sympathies for the international communist movement). "The Comintern was for journalists of the period between the two wars what the secret services are for detective stories. The hand and eye of Moscow were discovered—and more often imagined—in any social movement."<sup>1</sup> It would, naturally, be contrary to such an approach to identify the specific national and historical features of the communist movement, notably in India, which could then be considered as a sign of that movement's independence and of its being due to the local situation. In actual fact, all consideration of the specific background to the evolution of the Communist parties in the East and to the independent formulation of their political line was replaced by an argument about the manifest dependence on Moscow and the total divorce of Asian Communists from the particular social and historical conditions, national cultures and traditions. These views of bourgeois journalists and historians on the communist movement are designed to provide an ideological justification for the repressive policies of imperialism. The Prosecutor in the Meerut case against the CPI alleged the Indian Communists to be "anti-country", "anti-God" and "anti-family", that is, to be spiritually alien to India.<sup>2</sup>

Thirty years after the Meerut case V. B. Karnik, one of the associates of Roy after his desertion of the Comintern, writing a belligerently anti-communist preface to an assorted set of CPI documents, published with an obvious intention to undermine the party's influence, also claimed that the communist movement had not arisen in India in a natural way, but had been nurtured abroad and transplanted into Indian soil.<sup>3</sup>

The head-on attack on the communist movement in the East, the attempt to refute it altogether and isolate it as an extraneous body have all failed. The rise of the pres-

<sup>1</sup> Dominique Desanti, *L'Internationale Communiste*, Payot, Paris, 1970, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> *The Labour Monthly*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 1930, p. 26.

<sup>3</sup> See: *Indian Communist Party Documents 1930-1956*, pp. VI-VII.

tige of the Communists in Asian countries, India among them, has provided the indisputable evidence to prove that they draw their strength from the support of the mass of the people, and that in their action they strive to do all they can towards resolving the most acute social problems. The petty-bourgeois and nationalistic tendencies of a number of unstable supporters of Marxism-Leninism became more noticeable and more active against the background of an enlarged front of communist activity. They find fertile ground in the specific social conditions of the East, with an abundance of ethnic, caste, religious and clannish contradictions often shaping the actual form of social conflicts.

At the present time, the opponents of Communists are banking on their division, on a decline of their solidarity with the countries of the socialist community and with the Communists of advanced capitalist countries, as well as on the opposition of "Asian" and "European" Marxism and on stoking up contradictions between them. They see such a policy as the most effective means today to weaken the international communist and working-class movement and the revolutionary forces in the developing countries. That was why the argument about the purely national sources of origin of the communist movement in Eastern countries, which used to be dismissed in earlier days, has now come in handy.

"Asian communism has derived its preferred style of revolution partly from select but crucial aspects of traditional Asian political culture interacting harmoniously with certain politico-ideological tendencies characteristic of communism,"<sup>1</sup> Professor Robert A. Scalapino writes. This prominent American politologist admits that "the first Asian communist leaders in the period immediately after the Bolshevik Revolution were Westernised, reasonably well-educated, urbanised intellectuals".<sup>2</sup> Not all bourgeois writers of the 1960s and 1970s share this judgement as far as M. N. Roy is concerned.

Carrère d'Encausse and Schram write about the "dramatic conflict between European and Asian communism". The very approach to this question betrays a definite standpoint

<sup>1</sup> *Problems of Communism*, Special Issue, January-April 1971, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

held by bourgeois students of the communist movement in Asia. They attribute all differences in the understanding of Marxist theory and tactics of Communists, derived from class and political principles, to specific national conditions only. Everything that contradicts the concerted line of the international communist movement is declared to be a logical consequence of the divergence of national interests and traditions, an indispensable readjustment of the theory of scientific socialism to particular conditions, and a natural protest of "Asian Communists" against the attempts of "European Marxists" who are claimed to be guided by their particular interests and to think themselves supreme authorities in the interpretation of Marxist theory.

"Marxism is an intrinsically European current of thought, which unites several of the most characteristic traits of European civilisation as a whole: the sense of history inherent in the Judeo-Christian tradition, and the Promethean urge to transform nature that has manifested itself since the Renaissance, and especially since the industrial revolution," H. Carrère d'Encausse and S. R. Schram write, and go on to say: "Marxism ... may be regarded as an attempt to Europeanise the world."<sup>1</sup>

These are the methods many bourgeois writers apply in considering the polemic between Lenin and Roy. Genuine coverage of the discussion on the national and colonial questions at the Second Congress of the Comintern is rare occurrence in bourgeois literature. One exception is the book by John Patrick Haithcox, *Communism and Nationalism in India*, in which he admits that in 1920 Roy, with the impatience of youth, "underestimated the task of mobilising social discontent and creating an effective organisational weapon".<sup>2</sup> It is common, however, for bourgeois authors to oppose what they claim to be Lenin's subjective and unjustifiably "Russian" or "European" approach to the positions of Roy who is alleged to have relied on the knowledge of facts and traditions and to have been typical of Asian Communists in general.

H. Carrère D'Encausse and S. R. Schram, while acknowl-

<sup>1</sup> Héliène Carrère d'Encausse, Stuart R. Schram, *Op. cit.*, pp. 4, 28.

<sup>2</sup> John Patrick Haithcox, *Op. cit.*, p. 17.

edging Lenin's sympathetic attitude to the national liberation movements of the non-European peoples, claim, nevertheless, that "he had not achieved, even at the end of his life, any comprehension of the explicitly cultural dimension of the Asian revolution".<sup>1</sup> In other words, they assert that the founder of the Comintern was ill-informed of the specific social and historical conditions of Asian countries. That unfounded contention came under criticism even from the reviewer of the book *Marxism and Asia* in the American journal *Problems of Communism*, A. Doak Barnett: "Lenin clearly saw the important role that non-European bourgeois-democratic nationalist movements could play in the overall effort to weaken imperialism, and he increasingly recognised the similar potential of the peasantry. Yet the authors argue that Lenin, too, was basically 'Eurocentric' in his cultural outlook."<sup>2</sup>

Committed to their starting argument that Marxism is an attempt at Europeanising the world, some bourgeois researchers have been producing totally unjustified ideas to claim that Lenin's strategy with regard to the national and colonial question was a replica of the Bolshevik strategy in the Russian revolution. "Lenin's ideas on strategy and tactics reflected the peculiarities of the Russian scene, and particularly his contempt for the political capacities of the capitalist class there," Gene D. Overstreet and Marshall Windmiller write. "Yet these concepts were incorporated into a general body of theory intended for universal application. Lenin's later proposals for strategy and tactics in the underdeveloped and colonial areas of the world, such as India, were in large part merely an extension of his established system of ideas."<sup>3</sup>

Arguments of this kind make one thing clear—those who produced them have an artless knack of distorting the real state of things. Lenin's platform on the national and colonial question was basically different from the Bolshevik strategy in the Russian revolution, above all, as regards the attitude to the bourgeoisie. Lenin, who did not recognise the Russian bourgeoisie as a revolutionary force, called on

<sup>1</sup> Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, Stuart R. Schram, *Op. cit.*, pp. 43-44.

<sup>2</sup> *Problems of Communism*, Special Issue, January-April 1971, p. 86.

<sup>3</sup> Gene D. Overstreet, Marshall Windmiller, *Op. cit.*, p. 14.

the working class to lead the revolutionary movement in this country. But the line he suggested for the national liberation movement in the colonial countries was different. In that case he proceeded from a comprehension of the serious anti-imperialist potential of the national bourgeoisie and from the need to cooperate with it and back it up in its struggle for independence, criticising its class limitations, and to recognise its leading role in the general national movement in so far as the consistently democratic and revolutionary forces are too weak to lead that movement.

This platform arose from a clear understanding of the dissimilarity of the historical conditions of Russia and India and the immediate objectives of the revolutionary movement and, consequently, the alignment of the class forces in these countries as well as from a careful study of the colonial world. And yet it has been invoked to accuse Lenin and the Comintern of voluntarism. The clash of their conclusions with actual reality does not embarrass the bourgeois pragmatists. As long as the line of opposing "Asian Marxism" to "Russian Marxism" appears to be politically profitable, it should be pursued without fear of conflict with facts and, as we shall yet see, even with their own constructs.

Lenin has been reproached with having abandoned the Marxist vision of the "broader outlines of history" and having devised his strategy and tactics guiding himself exclusively by an "empirical flexibility" of a "practical man", concerned with nothing beyond vindicating his line in terms of Marxist science.<sup>1</sup> H. Carrère d'Encausse and S. R. Schram, trying to prove Lenin to have been voluntaristic, take out of the context his well-known statement (in a debate on trade unions) about politics having priority over economics to make it out as a "basic trait of his whole system of thought". "This trait," they write, "is particularly evident precisely in Lenin's ideas regarding the evolution of the non-European countries. In Russia, the working class, although a minority, was relatively strong and concentrated. One could therefore find a certain justification for attributing the leading role to this class, or to the party which was supposed to represent it. The situation in Asia

<sup>1</sup> Gene D. Overstreet, Marshall Windmiller, *Op. cit.*, p. 10.

was quite different. Economically and numerically, the working class was infinitely weaker there than in Russia. Under such conditions, to postulate a revolution led by a Marxist party signified, even more than in Russia, giving politics priority over economics.”<sup>1</sup> The authors of this inference ignored one particular circumstance they knew quite well: Lenin never urged an immediate revolution under the leadership of Marxist parties in the colonies and dependent countries. It was Roy who did that, while Lenin took issue with him, arguing that a bourgeois-democratic stage was logically unavoidable and never ruling out the possibility of bourgeois-democratic leadership at that stage.

Finally, one more reflection of the idea of opposition between “European” and “Asian” Marxism in the bourgeois interpretation of the history of the communist movement in India is the assertion that both Lenin, while formulating his theory on the national and colonial question, and the Comintern, in its entire policy towards India, guided themselves by Russia’s interests alone rather than the interests of the revolutionary forces of India. That was a traditional theme for anti-communist propaganda back in the period between the two world wars and in the 1940s and the 1950s, with some new shades of meaning added to it now.

The idea of the existence of Asian and European communism is bound to prompt the opposition between the interests of Russia and those of Indian revolutionaries. There is nothing surprising about the fact that the “interests of Moscow” should have been interpreted in an extremely illogical way to suit that far-fetched concept. H. Carrère d’Encausse and S.R. Schram begin by saying that Lenin’s and the Comintern’s concern with regard to all Asian countries was “to develop methods for the conquest of power adapted to the peculiar conditions prevailing in Asian societies”. Conquest of power by whom and why? The authors give no explicit answer to this question, but argue in such a way as to present the Comintern as opposed by Chinese Communists who, they claim, contemplated not only new techniques for seizing power, but aimed at breaking new paths in the revolutionary transformation of society as well.<sup>2</sup> But if the Comin-

<sup>1</sup>Hélène Carrère d’Encausse, Stuart R. Schram, *Op. cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. VIII.

tern was concerned, among other things, with organising communists for the conquest of power, could anyone imagine that power without the kind of revolutionary change like that which had been made in Russia? We are not going to revert at this point to the question of whether or not the conquest of power was the immediate objective formulated by Lenin and the Comintern. Let us confine ourselves to noting this strange denial of the interest of the international communist movement in the development of revolutionary processes in the East. H. Carrère d'Encausse and S. R. Schram go on to try and motivate this reference of theirs with regard to India: "The idea that temporarily the Communists should allow the bourgeoisie to retain the hegemony over the revolutionary movement was implicit in Lenin's theses [let us recall that Lenin had been accused earlier of a voluntaristic approach for having supposedly urged a revolution led by a Marxist party--*Auth.*] Such an attitude was natural in the case of Lenin, whose principal concern, as head of the Soviet Government, was to find allies capable of weakening the rear of the colonial powers which were adopting a hostile and threatening attitude towards his regime in Europe. It could not satisfy an Asian revolutionary, who had no intention of accepting indefinitely the domination of the bourgeoisie of his own country. Here, too, the debate between Lenin and Roy constitutes a prefiguration of the conflict between the diplomatic interests of the Soviet Union and the natural ambitions of the revolutionaries of Asia and Africa which runs through the whole history of Soviet foreign policy, from the Turkey of Kemal to Nasser's Egypt."<sup>1</sup>

So, Lenin and the Comintern are said to have been in the wrong on every occasion. When they were supposedly calling for an immediate revolution under the hegemony of the proletariat and under the leadership of a Marxist party, they were wrong because they failed to take into account the specific conditions of Asia and approached the problem from a voluntaristic standpoint. When, however, they warned against rushing a socialist revolution and declared for entering into alliance with bourgeois anti-imperialists and even accepting their leadership, which does correspond

<sup>1</sup> Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, Stuart R. Schram, *Op. cit.*, p. 28.

to Lenin's policy on the national and colonial question, they were accused of being unrevolutionary and of looking for allies to fight imperialism with, rather than support the revolution in India. (One can presume that the development of the revolution in India and the coming of a revolutionary government to power would supposedly have failed to weaken imperialism in the greatest possible measure and to make India the most reliable and strongest ally of Soviet Russia.) At the same time, Roy, with a voluntaristic approach that was typical of him, and notably, with his idea of Marxist leadership of the liberation struggle from the very outset, has been portrayed as a model of a true Asian revolutionary.

That these are inconsistent constructs is only too obvious. The only logic behind them, if any, is that everything that had its origin in the Comintern was bad and an obstacle to the development of the revolution in India, while, conversely, all the ideas of the opponents of the Comintern's line were expressive of an authentically Asian approach to revolution.

That kind of criticism of the Comintern holds no water. But for want of any better, it has been kept up in bourgeois propaganda for over two decades. H. Carrère d'Encausse's and S. R. Schram's constructs, designed to prove Lenin's line on the national and colonial question as applied to India to have been anti-revolutionary, are not new. These authors almost textually reproduce Overstreet's and Windmiller's arguments dating from 1959: "The Russian leaders, interested above all in undermining British power through destroying its colonial props, naturally proposed the anti-imperialist strategy of working with bourgeois nationalism; Indian revolutionaries, such as Roy, interested above all in converting a free India into a socialist India, favoured the anti-capitalist strategy of working against bourgeois nationalism."<sup>1</sup> In this case, too, anti-imperialism and an alliance with national bourgeois elements to that end have been opposed to socialist revolution at the authors' own discretion. They failed to escape a clash between that artificial construction of theirs and a recognition of the beneficial influence which Lenin's line of alliance with the

<sup>1</sup> Gene D. Overstreet, Marshall Windmiller, *Op. cit.*, pp. 529-30.

national revolutionary elements invariably had and could have to a still greater extent, had it been constantly and consistently carried into effect, on the development of the communist movement in India.<sup>1</sup>

So, it was enough for Roy to have come forward with his particular stand on the national and colonial question, which was at variance with Lenin's principles, to be elevated to the rank of a true Asian Marxist and revolutionary. This has been done along with producing the argument that Roy's position shaped up under the impact of the various developments in Indian life which he knew and which Lenin's theory failed to reflect.<sup>2</sup> That is wrong. Roy came to Moscow after long wanderings far away from India and, as he wrote in his recollections, he had had no contact at all with his native land while he stayed in Mexico. His attitude to Indian bourgeois democracy had developed under the influence of the policy of the moderate sections in the INC who prevailed after the defeat of the movement of 1906-1908. Roy did not know the INC renovated by the activities of Mahatma Gandhi and by mass civil disobedience campaigns, as well as by the revolutionary upsurge in the country brought about by the October Revolution and the end of World War I. His particular stand at the Second Congress of the Comintern had not been produced on the Indian national soil. Neither in 1920, nor at a later stage did Roy feel any respect for or even tolerate the customs and traditions of India, the life-style and mentality of the Indian peasantry and the religious creeds of the majority of the Indian population. He invariably and honestly wished well to India and her people, but self-righteously believed that since he had indicated the way for India to progress, she was bound to follow it because the merits and inevitability of that way stood proved. The class interests, political and cultural level of the masses, the political situation, etc., did not look to Roy to be the factors which were to mould a revolutionary. Roy qualified the diversity of the political trends in India, which had a history and traditions of their own, a social base and real class interests and, therefore,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 533-34.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example: Philip Spratt, "Two Notes on M. N. Roy and His Ideas". In: *M. N. Roy—Philosopher-Revolutionary*, p. 37.

were objectively indispensable in large measure, as “the lunatic asylum of Indian politics” with his own followers being “the only sane group” in it.<sup>1</sup> John Haithcox, who has studied a vast amount of factual material, including some borrowed from archives, and published some of it, writes that Roy’s “alienation from Indian culture and society, his distrust of the peasantry, and his atheism caused him to stumble”<sup>2</sup>. True, it is Marxism that this American scholar blames for it: “Although Roy was aware of the need to modify the Marxian political formula to meet objective conditions, in India that formula was not sufficiently flexible for the task.”<sup>3</sup> But it is clear to any unbiassed person that it is exactly tolerance and patience that Lenin urged Roy to exercise along with that very flexibility in the application of the principles of scientific socialism to the Indian conditions which, in Haithcox’s opinion, was disallowed by Marxist science and which the Indian Marxist, Roy, simply lacked in actual practice.

One of Roy’s associates, V. M. Tarkunde, who broke away from his group in the early 1940s, said that the Royists “were suffering from ‘ultra-leftism’, but instead of being the ‘infantile disorder’ of which Lenin spoke, it was the result of ‘overrationalism’”. The Royists, in his judgement, were sacrificing their movement “on the altar of rationalist purity”.<sup>4</sup>

So, what Roy put before the Comintern was not a specifically Indian line of approach, but one of the commonly known variations of deviation from Marxism-Leninism—leftism. Roy’s position verged on Trotskyism. “In the past, Roy and Trotsky had been in agreement on at least one thing—their opposition to any strategy based on support of bourgeois nationalism in the colonial and semi-colonial areas,”<sup>5</sup> Overstreet and Windmiller write. In actual fact, the coincidence of their views had been much greater than Roy would admit it. Coming forward years after

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from: John Patrick Haithcox, *Op. cit.*, p. 294.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 257.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 258.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 294.

<sup>5</sup> Gene D. Overstreet, Marshall Windmiller, *Op. cit.*, p. 99.

with a critical assessment of Trotsky as a person and as a politician, Roy wrote that "all along, ever since his opposition to the New Economic Policy [this continued until the late 1920s—*Auth.*], I was inclined to take up Trotsky's point of view".<sup>1</sup>

All attempts at presenting Lenin as a voluntarist alleged to have reduced Marxism merely to a technique for engineering coups d'etat and to have set off Roy against him as a man who always showed a feeling for the broader social effects of political changes are a far cry from what is required to establish the truth.<sup>2</sup> Roy himself never underestimated Lenin. He had the courage to admit the immaturity of his views of 1920 and expressed his admiration not only for Lenin's personal characteristics as the leader of the masses, but for the objectivity and scientific justification of his approach to identifying the political course to follow. "Lenin believed in his power to build, to create something great," Roy wrote. "But he knew that he must create out of material which was not within himself. In other words, the unfolding of his creative genius was dependent upon numerous other factors.... With all my strong dislike for Trotsky's personal characteristics I also made the mistake of considering his attitude more revolutionary. But ... I could learn and gradually attain the maturity of intelligence necessary for discriminating unostentatious solidity from imposing flares. So imperceptible was my political differentiation from that of Trotsky that he was shocked at my 'defection'. That was in the historic session of the Executive Committee of the Communist International towards the end of 1927, when Trotsky was removed from its membership."<sup>3</sup>

But in 1920 Roy was still a long way off from this change of views.

<sup>1</sup> M. N. Roy, *Men I Met*, Lalvani Publishing House, Bombay, 1968, p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, the article by Philip Spratt, a former British Communist, one of the defendants in the Meerut Case, who subsequently betrayed the communist movement, just as Roy did (Philip Spratt, *Op. cit.*, p. 37).

<sup>3</sup> M. N. Roy, *Op. cit.*, pp. 40, 43-44.

After the Second Congress of the Comintern, Roy set off for Tashkent to work among the Indian revolutionaries who had emigrated into Soviet Russia. They had formed a communist group which proclaimed itself an Indian Communist party. Roy proposed to make arrangements for a trek of Muslim emigres and detachments made up of borderland tribes to India across Afghanistan. That plan, which Lenin described as utterly unrealistic when he talked to Roy, had to be given up.<sup>1</sup>

In 1922 Roy, together with the Indian foreign communist centre he had set up, moved to Berlin and began to contact the Marxist groups springing up in India, in an effort to coordinate their activities on behalf of the Comintern. Roy's prestige among the members of the early Marxist groups in India was high. They heeded his advice, taking it for the Comintern's line. However, the divergence between Roy's and Lenin's positions, brought out at the Second Congress, was never surmounted. Nor did Roy rid himself of his sectarian views and, although he had to reckon with the Comintern's overall policy on the national and colonial question, these views made themselves felt in his recommendations to the Indian Communists, which were at times marked off by inconsistency and change of principles—from a pursuit of an alliance with the INC, which corresponded to the Comintern's tactics, to attempts at exposing the INC to make it demonstrate its "non-revolutionary character" which betrayed Roy's typical habit of opposing the communist movement to the national liberation movement led by bourgeois democrats.

That tendency was particularly manifest in the "Action Programme of the Indian Congress", written by Roy, which was distributed at the INC Gaya Congress (1922).<sup>2</sup> At a time

<sup>1</sup> For details about Roy's activities in Tashkent see: M. A. Persits, *India's Revolutionaries in Soviet Russia. The Mainsprings of the Indian Communist Movement*; Rostislav Ulyanovsky, *Op. cit.*, pp. 257-64.

<sup>2</sup> *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India*, Vol. I, People's Publishing House (Private), Ltd., New Delhi, 1977, pp. 577-88. This document was characterised as "extremely sectarian" by the Indian Marxist historian G. Adhikari (*Ibid.*, p. 563).

of a massive anti-British campaign being wound up, the National Congress was confronted with obviously unrealistic objectives which, as Roy admitted, were designed to convince revolutionary forces of the necessity of creating a special mass revolutionary party under the control and direction of the Communists.<sup>1</sup>

There was a certain contradiction in the making between the Comintern's line of principle and the views of Roy who was supposed to stick to it. That attracted and is still attracting the attention of bourgeois scholars. Misinterpreting Comintern policy in India as an attempt at "capturing" the INC rather than acting in alliance with it, they do not equate Roy's and the Comintern's approach as applied to the early 1920s. "In order to satisfy the Comintern that he was carrying out its policy, he was forced to attempt to gain influence in the Congress," Overstreet and Windmiller write. "But he did not cease trying to discredit the Congress in the eyes of the Comintern in the hope of bringing about a revision of its policy."<sup>2</sup>

The ambiguity of Roy's position and his ambition to impose his own concept of the revolutionary movement without openly opposing Lenin's propositions became clear at the Fourth Congress of the Comintern. Roy theoretically admitted at that Congress that the bourgeois-nationalist movement in the colonial countries was objectively revolutionary and, consequently, had to be supported. But he made a reservation in the same breadth by saying that an objective force cannot be seen as unconditional, for one has to take into account the specific historical circumstances in every particular case. The bourgeoisie, Roy argued, becomes a revolutionary factor whenever it raises the banner of struggle against the feudal order of society, while in India, from his point of view, things were different. Roy subdivided the colonial countries into three groups: 1) the countries with advanced capitalism and class differentiation, 2) the countries with a low level of capitalist development and with a preponderance of feudal relations, and 3) the countries dominated by primitive or feudal-patriarchal conditions. Roy put India into the first group. The

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 595.

<sup>2</sup> Gene D. Overstreet, Marshall Windmiller, *Op. cit.*, p. 44.

evaluation of its revolutionary potential which Roy brought up at the Fourth Congress of the Comintern squared perfectly with the book *India in Transition*<sup>1</sup> he published in 1922 which, as regards the assessment of the policy of imperialism and the position of national capital, can be seen as an anticipation of Roy's somewhat later theory of "decolonisation". Roy's book opened with the claim that India could not be considered a feudal country because it was the bourgeoisie which was rising and which had already done much to strengthen its foothold that was her major political factor. He presented its political evolution in the following way. Restricted by the narrow possibilities of development for industry, the bourgeoisie started a political struggle against British imperialism. The political consciousness of the masses was growing parallel with the development of bourgeois nationalism. Imperialists were yielding ground to the bourgeoisie in order to forestall an alliance between the bourgeoisie and the masses which could undermine British rule. These concessions induced the bourgeoisie to waver. On the one hand, it realised only too well that its bargaining chips in confrontation with the British authorities were as high as the degree achieved in the revolutionary commitment of the masses, while, on the other, it feared lest the political activity of the masses should put its own existence at stake. That is why one ought to expect the bourgeoisie to agree to a compromise arrangement with imperialism and to relinquish all revolutionary role of its own. Roy's ultimate conclusion was that the bourgeoisie would be acting in step with the masses until a certain limit beyond which it would attempt to halt the revolution, that in the relatively developed colonial countries it would betray the cause of national liberation. That is to say that the main task was to train genuinely revolutionary forces capable of assuming the leadership of the national liberation movement in a not too distant future.<sup>2</sup>

Roy's position, which combined erroneous and correct points, was, by and large, a far-fetched skeleton position

<sup>1</sup> See: Manabendra Nath Roy, *India in Transition*, Edition de la Librairie J. B. Target, Geneva, 1922.

<sup>2</sup> See: *Bulletin of the IV Congress of the Communist International*, Moscow, No. 19, 1922, p. 26.

based on a number of factual errors and theoretical misconceptions. Subsequently, Roy admitted that he had overestimated the development of capitalism in India and relied on unconfirmed statistical data.<sup>1</sup> But that strikes at the very root of his entire concept. Since the level of capitalist development is overplayed, the same should be said about imperialism's concessions to the Indian bourgeoisie and about the degree of the political maturity of the workers and peasants and, consequently, about the readiness of national capital for a compromise with imperialism. Roy did have some happy ideas about the duality of the position of the bourgeoisie and of its waverings which had originated already in the theses he had submitted to the Second Congress of the Comintern,<sup>2</sup> but his conviction that national capital was bound to break with the masses before the attainment of national independence prompted him to take up a sectarian stand. This has been disproved by the history of the national liberation movement in India and in other countries. Roy underestimated the power of feudal relations in India to survive and totally disregarded imperialism's policy of teaming up with feudal reaction, rather than with national capital. Yet the major flaw of Roy's platform was his failure to understand the modifications which the national anti-imperialist struggle was making within the alignment of class forces. Roy forgot about the extremely intricate interlocking of class and national interests, class and national consciousness in India as well as about the fact that national aims were objectively put into the foreground there. That was a measure of his divorce from Indian realities, while many bourgeois commentators have been depicting him as a true "Asian Marxist" and opposing him to the "European" or "Russian" Marxist—Lenin.

The Fourth Congress of the Comintern, favouring the idea of a united anti-imperialist front, rejected Roy's argument about the inevitable betrayal by national capital of the cause of the liberation of the colonies in relatively developed countries. Nevertheless, Roy was elected first alternate member and then full member of the ECCI and memb-

<sup>1</sup> *M. N. Roy's Memoirs*, Allied Publishers (Private), Ltd., Bombay, 1964.

<sup>2</sup> See: G. Adhikari, "Lenin on Roy's Supplementary Colonial Theses", *Marxist Miscellany*, Delhi, No. 1, 1970, pp. 6, 15.

er of the Presidium of the Comintern.

Roy upheld his views at the Fifth Congress of the Comintern as well. These were not accepted again, although some of the leaders of the international communist movement had by then developed sectarian tendencies of their own which were close to Roy's concepts.<sup>1</sup> In 1926 Roy published the book *The Future of Indian Politics* in which he maintained that the nationalist bourgeoisie had already separated itself from the revolutionary masses and was seeking to make a united front with the imperialist forces.<sup>2</sup> This book is noteworthy because it expresses an attitude to the INC in connection with the lively debate that was going on in the Comintern and among Indian revolutionaries over the question of creating mass revolutionary parties which would help towards radicalising the anti-imperialist movement and bringing democratic elements into a closer relationship with the Communists.

The need for the creation of such parties began to be felt in India in the early 1920s. Certain gains of the communist movement were evident by then. These resulted in the founding of the Communist Party of India in 1925. Yet the Marxist vanguard was in difficulty trying to contact the democratic and nationalist elements who would not accept Marxist ideology. At the same time, the early stirrings of the Indian Communists brought on harsh reprisals by the British Government (as evidenced by the anti-communist trials at Peshawar and Kanpur in 1923-1924). Prominent Indian Marxists, in particular active trade unionists, were thrown behind bars. The legal activity of Communists became extremely difficult. All that combined prompted the conclusion that the consistently Marxist vanguard, having to operate underground, would do well to act together with a legal mass revolutionary party putting forward democratic demands, which the Communists could rely on.

Roy was one of the protagonists of that idea, but he introduced leftist elements into it. His programme for the Revolutionary Nationalist Party (1924) comprised, along

<sup>1</sup> See: *The Comintern and the East*, Moscow, 1979, p. 170.

<sup>2</sup> See: M. N. Roy, *The Future of Indian Politics*, Published by R. Bishop, London, 1926, pp. 78, 90.

with the points calling for national independence, abolition of feudalism and landlordism, nationalisation of land, mines, and public utilities,<sup>1</sup> which was unacceptable to the bulk of the INC members. On the other hand, true to his own concept of an inevitable betrayal by national capital and of the necessity of the working-class party's hegemony in the anti-imperialist movement, Roy was coming round in the 1920s to seeing a mass revolutionary party not as a means of broadening the base for the communist movement, which by no means ruled out an alliance with bourgeois nationalism, but as a kind of a substitute for the INC which, he argued, had proved its non-revolutionary character. In *The Future of Indian Politics* Roy, considering it to be the pressing task before the Indian revolutionaries to organise the forces of the nationalist movement into a democratic party, declared that "none of the existing Nationalist parties can serve the purpose". Overstreet and Windmiller are right when they say that Roy's democratic party was to be "a new Congress, minus its bourgeois element".<sup>2</sup>

That concept rested on an obvious overestimation of the influence of the anti-imperialist forces, those of the Communists above all. Indian Marxists realised that, Roy's prestige in their midst began to decline, his policy touched off displeasure, and attempts were even made to eschew Roy's mediation in relations with the Comintern.

#### *THE SIXTH CONGRESS AND ROY'S EXPULSION FROM THE COMINTERN*

The foregoing was an account of the conflict between Lenin's strategy of alliance of all anti-imperialist forces and Roy's sectarian and dogmatic ambitions as it developed since it broke out at the Second Congress of the Comintern until the late 1920s.

A political line with a certain touch of sectarianism with respect to the national bourgeoisie of the colonial and dependent countries prevailed for a time in the Comintern

<sup>1</sup> See: John Patrick Haithcox, *Op. cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>2</sup> Genc D. Overstreet, Marshall Windmiller, *Op. cit.*, p. 84.

where Roy was not alone to uphold the leftist trends in dealing with the national and colonial question. That line found expression in the documents and resolutions of the Ninth Plenum of the ECCI (February 1928) and of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern. Although the deliberations and resolutions of that Congress revealed a clash of conflicting trends,<sup>1</sup> the dominant argument was that the national bourgeoisie had essentially lost the character of an anti-imperialist force and that the hegemony of the proletariat in the national liberation movement was becoming a condition for its success. There was sharp criticism of petty-bourgeois parties and groups. These parties were recognised as revolutionary only in their opening stages, while their transition to the positions of national reformism was believed preordained and, consequently, the Communists were called upon not so much to strive for an alliance with petty-bourgeois radicals as to challenge them for the influence over the working masses.

At that time Roy, just back from China where he had been delegated by the Comintern, did not believe at all that Chiang Kai-shek's betrayal was enough to warrant a change of principle in the policy on the national and colonial question in other countries, notably in India. Roy's views underwent deep change in 1928-1929. He began to realise that his policy was out of keeping with the Indian conditions. The fresh winds in the Congress and throughout the country made a great impression on him. In 1927 the Indian liberation movement passed through a turning point. The stalemate which followed the defeat of the 1919-1922 "civil disobedience campaign" gave way to a new upswing. The rise of the working-class and peasant movement and the revolutionising of the urban petty bourgeoisie served to strengthen the positions of the INC's left wing led by Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose. The annual session of the Congress in Madras in 1927 voted to accept Jawaharlal Nehru's resolution demanding full independence and a boycott of the Simon Commission which was sent by London. When the moderates, who had the report by Motilal Nehru as their banner, brought the INC back to accepting the slogan of dominion, the left set up the Indian

<sup>1</sup> See: *The Comintern and the East*, pp. 187, 190-91, 434-41.

League for Independence whose programme did not only call for full independence but proclaimed that "socialism must be one of the aims of the movement" and spoke up for removal of economic inequalities, equitable redistribution of wealth, nationalisation of key industries and transport services. It demanded "the introduction of a uniform system of land tenure with the annulment of agricultural indebtedness and even abolition of landlordism for the peasants".<sup>1</sup>

Faced by the obvious radicalising of the Indian liberation movement, Roy admitted that it was contrary to logic to renounce an alliance with democratic elements and urged the continuation of the united front policy which was the Comintern's tradition.

The changes of principle in Roy's approach at the time were obvious. However, it would be wrong to presume that Roy advocated "a four-class united front policy for India", as Haithcox writes,<sup>2</sup> and that at a time when there was a trend towards sectarianism within the Comintern Roy was the only one to stick to the correct position in the national and colonial question (as the Indian Royists believed).

In actual fact, Roy's new platform was a mixture of his earlier leftist ambitions with Lenin's idea of a united front of anti-imperialist forces. Roy's attitude to the national bourgeoisie—the major object of controversy between him and Lenin—remained unchanged. It showed itself in the resolution on "decolonisation" which Roy submitted to the Comintern soon after his return from China. The "decolonisation" thesis came under harsh, yet generally fair criticism at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern, if misaccentuated sometimes. Roy was reproached from time to time with having propagated certain views which implied that imperialism was going to lead the Indian people to its freedom by the hand. That was wrong. Roy never brought to an extreme his ideas about the concessions which, he claimed, imperialism was prepared to make for the national bourgeoisie in fear of the mass movement, neither did he

<sup>1</sup> Clemens Dutt, "The Indian League for Independence", *Labour Monthly*, Vol. XI, No. 1, 1929, pp. 26-28.

<sup>2</sup> John Patrick Haithcox, *Op. cit.*, p. 88.

write off the contradictions between imperialism and the national interests, nor did he doubt the necessity of extending and radicalising the liberation struggle. His "decolonisation" theory reflected, to a certain extent, some trends in the policy of imperialism which were to be seen only in broad outline after the First World War and in the 1920s. Later on, at the time of the collapse of world colonialism, those trends, having developed into a ramified system of political and economic measures, came to be defined as "neo-colonialism" in Marxist theory.

Roy's basic idea in his "decolonisation" theory was that the bourgeois, getting an opportunity, through the concessions made by the imperialists, of competing with them in the exploitation of the masses, had exhausted its revolutionary potential and ceased to be an anti-imperialist force.<sup>1</sup> It would be no exaggeration, probably, to say that the theory of "decolonisation" had arisen just as a confirmation and elaboration of that thesis. In that sense the criticism it came under at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern was absolutely correct.

While Roy's attitude to national capital remained unchanged, his views of the petty bourgeois did change radically. In the early 1920s, Roy considered the petty bourgeois to be a reactionary factor opposed to two advanced forces supporting the nationalist movement— "the progressive bourgeois and the militant proletariat".<sup>2</sup> This assessment of the petty bourgeois, which can be explained only by the fact that, unlike the national bourgeois and the proletariat, the petty bourgeois was not associated by Roy with the contemporary mode of production, was the starting point of Roy's evaluation of Gandhism as "the acutest and most desperate manifestation of the forces of reaction".<sup>3</sup> In the latter half of the 1920s, Roy dropped that evaluation of the petty bourgeois. "The future of Indian politics (of national liberation) will, therefore, be determined by the social forces which still remain and will always remain antagonistic to imperialism," he wrote in

<sup>1</sup> See: Gene D. Overstreet, Marshall Windmiller, *Op. cit.*, pp. 103, 104.

<sup>2</sup> *International Press Correspondence*, Vol. 3, No. 21, 1923, p. 165.

<sup>3</sup> Manabendra Nath Roy, *India in Transition*, p. 205.

1926. "These social forces are composed of the workers, peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie (small traders, artisans, employees, students, petty intellectuals, etc.)."<sup>1</sup> The book *The Future of Indian Politics*, just quoted, is usually viewed as a systematised exposition of Roy's earlier, sectarian line. However, his position in the interpretation of the alignment of class forces did not change even at the end of the 1920s, although he is commonly believed to have been a partisan of the united front in that period.

In a series of articles published in 1928-1929 Roy, criticising the guidelines of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern, singled out the following elements in Indian political life: "class differentiation inside the nationalist ranks, and a resulting radicalisation of the nationalist movement"; the petty bourgeoisie which he had earlier identified with religious and social conservatism was "rapidly outgrowing the leadership of the big bourgeoisie"; socialism, practically unknown in India just a few years before, was now being preached by all petty-bourgeois organisations of the National Congress.<sup>2</sup>

Roy's evaluation of the prospect ahead for left nationalists is very interesting. He believed that they would inevitably fall again under control of the big bourgeoisie or turn into a Social-Democratic party unless the proletarian vanguard led them to a revolution, which Roy saw as the historic mission of the workers' and peasants' parties. He was quite right in considering the renunciation of alliance with the petty-bourgeois groups just when they were in opposition to the INC leadership as profoundly mistaken. So, in the late 1920s Roy advocated an alliance of three, rather than four classes, setting it off against national capital which, he believed, must be dislodged from the leadership of the movement, and still insisted on working-class hegemony in a bloc of left anti-imperialist forces as a condition for the victory of the national revolution. The reason why the alliance with the petty-bourgeois elements proved to be of interest to Roy was not the alliance as such, nor because it had been conditioned by a sustained objective conver-

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from: Gene D. Overstreet, Marshall Windmiller, *Op. cit.*, p. 83.

<sup>2</sup> See: *International Press Correspondence*, Vol. 8, No. 91, 1928, p. 1733; *Ibid.*, Vol. 9, No. 4, 1929, p. 65.

gence of interests, but only so much as those elements could, as it seemed to him, take the side of the proletariat in the given transitional period and follow it along a consistently revolutionary path. Roy's united front concept of the late 1920s suffered from glaring sectarian flaws which told on his subsequent activities.

To underline the community between Roy's views of the early and the late 1920s does not mean, of course, that there had been no serious change about them. In addition to a changed assessment of the petty bourgeoisie, there were two more things which were extremely essential. First, Roy admitted that the nation was unprepared for an immediate socialist revolution, he realised that the way to communism lay through the national liberation struggle, and called on the Communists to rally the working class and the democratic forces behind a short-term programme, rather than a long-term programme, and to work with the mass organisations to that end. Second, with respect to political and organisational matters, Roy shifted the emphasis from Communist to workers' and peasants' parties. That happened for the following reasons, most likely. The CPI, persecuted by the authorities and mistrusted by the nationalists, was in a tight corner. Its condition was in sharp contrast to the gains of the workers' and peasants' parties whose aims had a pronounced general democratic character. Besides, Roy counted on an early passage of the petty-bourgeois radicals to the consistently revolutionary positions and believed that the platform of the workers' and peasants' parties was to be more acceptable for cooperation with them. That naive faith in winning over petty-bourgeois democracy led Roy to develop a liquidationist attitude towards the CPI and to forget Lenin's principle of safeguarding the organisational and political independence of Communist parties. Roy even advised that the CPI should be disbanded.<sup>1</sup> The warnings of the ECCI and the Sixth Congress of the Comintern about the danger of workers' and peasants' parties turning into petty-bourgeois organisations (although they did achieve some progress in mobilising and rallying the working people), as well as their appeal for action to prevent the CPI from being weakened through

<sup>1</sup> See: John Patrick Haithcox, *Op. cit.*, p. 109.

a search of the form of an alliance with left nationalists were designed to offset Roy's liquidationist aspirations.

Roy was not present at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern. In 1928 he left Moscow for Berlin to contact the leaders of the communist movement opposed to the resolutions of the Sixth Congress. In Berlin, which was then the centre of emigres from British colonies, Roy brought together a group of Indian students to rely on in carrying forward his political activities and propaganda for India. Roy published a series of articles critical of the decisions of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern. Years later Roy would say in his autobiographical notes: "In 1928, I severed my relations with the Communist International for reasons of disagreement regarding both the theory and practice of Communism."<sup>1</sup> In actual fact, he was expelled from the Comintern (in September 1929), and after the Seventh Congress, when he presumed his ideological differences with it to have been reconciled, he applied for reinstatement in that organisation.<sup>2</sup>

In 1930, as stated earlier on, he returned illegally to his native country but had to hide from persecution by the authorities. There was a group of his supporters in Bombay at the time who remained loyal to him until his dying day. At Jawaharlal Nehru's invitation, Roy attended an INC session in Karachi in 1931 under an assumed name. He tabled an amendment declaring the Gandhi-Irwin settlement to be "a betrayal of India by the bourgeoisie", which was turned down.<sup>3</sup> In those years Roy assailed the CPI, claiming that the party was practically non-existent outside Bombay and Calcutta, that its influence among the workers was on the wane and that it was turning into a student movement. The Royists did their bit towards subverting the CPI's influence in the trade unions. They echoed the charge against the Communists alleging them to be playing into Britain's hands and seeking to divide the nationalists. The Communists were labelled "anti-nationalists".<sup>4</sup> Roy himself considered the CPI's line a sheer abstraction.

The CPI did pay some generous tribute to left-sectarian

<sup>1</sup> *M. N. Roy—Philosopher-Revolutionary*, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> John Patrick Haithcox, *Op. cit.*, pp. 213-14.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 188.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182.

misconceptions in that period which found striking expression in the "Draft Platform of Action of the Communist Party of India".<sup>1</sup> That document announced that the aim of the movement was to establish a Soviet form of government, and create an Indian federal republic of workers and peasants, proclaimed violence as the only possible way of dealing with imperialism and condemned not only Gandhi, but the "left" national reformists", such as Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose, declaring them the most dangerous adversaries of the revolution in India. But at a time when the communist movement in India was up against formidable difficulties both because of changed strategy and because of the reprisals visited upon it in 1928-1929, Roy's criticism was objectively directed not against the left-sectarian strategic line, but against the CPI as such, and it tended to subvert the mass base of the communist movement.

The charge of "anti-nationalism" against Communists which appeared to anticipate the line taken against them by the State prosecutor in the Meerut case, stood in sharp contrast to the widespread public support the Meerut prisoners had. All Indian democrats saw them as victims of the repressive policies of British imperialism designed to crush the national liberation movement. Back in the early 1929, when the government of India tried in vain to get the legislative assembly to pass a Public Safety Bill, providing a legal basis for reprisals, an INC "old guard" veteran Motilal Nehru, pointing out that the Bill was aimed against the INC as much as against the CPI, declared that both parties sought to overthrow the British rule in India and that the only difference between the members of the Congress and the Communists was about the technique, while the essence of the difference was whether or not to resort to violence.<sup>2</sup> That is the opinion of a man far from entertaining any sympathy for the Communists, one of the most prominent leaders of the INC's right wing. It is a kind of reply to the spurious assertions which call in question the CPI's devotion to the cause of national liberation.

<sup>1</sup> This text appeared in *International Press Correspondence*, Vol. 10, No. 58, 1930, pp. 1218-22.

<sup>2</sup> See: *The Times*, February 7, 1929.

After Roy and some of his closest associates had been arrested in the middle of 1931, to pursue Roy's line still implied creating two parties—a legal one (this time within the INC framework, although the members of the Congress never supported the idea seeing it as a danger of splitting the INC) and an underground one. Underground groups of Royists were actually set up in some cities. In 1934 they formed what came to be known as the Revolutionary Party of the Indian Working Class.

#### LEFT PARTIES IN THE LATTER HALF OF THE 1930s

The new trends which appeared in Roy's views by the late 1920s manifested themselves in full when he was set free from prison in 1936, resumed full-scale political activity and "began an active effort to reestablish himself as a leader of the Indian Communists".<sup>1</sup>

In that period Roy did not call for any action to achieve the ideals of socialism as an immediate objective of the movement. "Socialism or communism," Roy said, "is not the issue of the day, and Socialists and Communists should realise that the immediate objective is national independence."<sup>2</sup> Roy coupled this correct appreciation with a substantial change in his evaluation of the class forces making up the bedrock of the communist movement. In earlier times Roy used to overplay the maturity of the Indian working class and its readiness to lead the liberation movement and the socialist revolution. Now he ran into another extreme—to a nihilistic assessment of the revolutionary potential of the proletariat, having virtually crossed out the decades that had gone into the moulding of its class consciousness and the performance of the Communist Party of India. In one of his letters, quoted by Haithcox, Roy asserted that "Indian workers are too backward politically to play a completely independent role", and to try to establish an independent organisation would only serve to isolate them from the anticolonialist struggle.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gene D. Overstreet, Marshall Windmiller, *Op. cit.*, p. 147.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from: John Patrick Haithcox, *Op. cit.*, p. 247.

<sup>3</sup> "Letter from M. N. Roy to August Thalheimer, Dehra Dun, November 4, 1934". In: John Patrick Haithcox, *Op. cit.*, p. 174.

These ideas were originally to be found in the preference which towards the end of the 1920s Roy had given to the workers' and peasants' parties over the Communist Party. Their subsequent development revealed Roy's lack of flexibility as well as his considerable addiction to adventurism. In the Comintern's early years the debate was about creating a Communist party in India, and Roy saw its goals (immediate, not ultimate) as nothing but a socialist revolution and the establishment of a Soviet form of government. When Roy found these unrealistic he began to think of diluting the communist vanguard in a larger democratic and petty-bourgeois movement. The need for the struggle by the Communist party, maintaining its organisational and political independence, for the achievement of the general democratic objectives of the national liberation movement, which Lenin emphasised and which now underlies the tactics of the Communists in the developing countries, turned out to be beyond Roy's comprehension. Hence his venturesome plan to disguise the Communist party and communist ideals and to give a different colouring to them.

Since the mid-1930s Roy's idea of having communism replaced by the "Jacobinism of the 20th century" served for carrying out this plan. In 1940 Roy said outright that Indian Communists should "raise the banner, not of Communism, but of Jacobinism".<sup>1</sup> Roy considered the slogan of "national democratic revolution" to be ideologically due to "petty-bourgeois radicalism" with Jacobinism as its political expression. He saw Jacobinism as Marxism applied to the countries which, like India, had pre-capitalist and capitalist conditions existing side by side. Roy found the historical French Jacobins to have been the "Marxists of their time" and called on Indian Communists to "imitate their Jacobin forebearers". He suggested that materialistic views should be concealed for reasons of expediency, saying that nationalism "will not swallow the whole of Marxism" with its materialism.<sup>2</sup>

Roy saw the "Jacobinism of the 20th century" as a political movement supported by a heterogeneous social base workers, peasants and the petty bourgeoisie, though

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from: John Patrick Haithcox, *Op. cit.*, p. 171.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 171-72.

under proletarian hegemony.<sup>1</sup> On the last point, Roy's views remained unchanged. He believed that in the 20th century Marxism had great opportunities of influencing the Jacobins and that their coming to power would only serve as an intermediate stage in the advance towards socialism.

Nevertheless, Roy's idea of the "Jacobinism of the 20th century" appears to have been fruitful. Even now, three decades later, the policy of petty-bourgeois radicals who have come to power in a number of countries of Asia and Africa brings to one's mind an association with the Jacobinism of the French Revolution of the late 18th century. The stage of a "Jacobin type" cannot be ruled out for certain developing countries. The ideas about Marxism's powerful impact on the "Jacobinism of the 20th century" and about the possibilities of the latter's evolution towards Marxism are also interesting and quite realistic. That way to achieve socialism cannot be excluded at all, in point of principle, and, in fact, it is meant precisely as one of the variations of present-day Marxist concepts of non-capitalist development. Roy was mistaken not in having turned to the experience of a relatively distant revolutionary past, put in having attempted to draw upon that experience uncritically and unmindful of the new conditions as they existed in the 20th century. Roy wanted to reduce the communist movement to the level of Jacobinism, to dissolve it and make it part and parcel of petty-bourgeois radicalism which was foreign to it in principle, and to induce the Communists to play the role of Jacobins instead of building relations between Communists and "Jacobins" as between two allied, though independent, trends, that is, without sacrificing the political and organisational possibilities of the communist movement as the most consistent revolutionary force of the 20th century.

Reminiscences of the Jacobin Convent were behind one of central ideas of Roy's programme of the 1930s, the idea of a constituent assembly. With that assembly dominated by the "Jacobins", Roy hoped to turn it into a vehicle of the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry under working-class hegemony on the understanding that this dictatorship would acquire right away some of the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172.

features appropriate to a socialist state.<sup>1</sup> Such a constituent assembly was to spring from a popular uprising. Roy called for the role of the local committees of the National Congress to be raised and for them to be converted into a network of democratically elected parallel bodies of government which were to become the backbone of the new state after the revolution. The appeal for an election to the national constituent assembly was to serve as the signal for an insurrection at local level with the slogan of "all Power to the Congress Committees". Subsequently, these committees were to elect their representatives to a constituent assembly.<sup>2</sup>

The project for a constituent assembly brought some new elements into Roy's political line of the 1930s, that is, after his release from prison. In earlier times Roy had opposed the Congress, finding it to be incapable of leading the struggle for national liberation. Now Roy intended to fight for independence not even together with the Congress but through the Congress, winning over the masses and trying to take advantage of that most authoritative political organisation of the country. Once out of jail, he became an INC member. "My message to the people," Roy said in November 1936, "is to rally in the millions under the flag of the National Congress and fight for freedom.... We should realise that the National Congress is our common platform."<sup>3</sup> Roy claimed that it was through the INC only that contact with the mass of the Indian people could be made.

The Congress, Roy imagined, should not remain unchanged. He still believed that the nation's democratic forces had "to free an essentially revolutionary movement for national independence from the leadership of the bourgeoisie",<sup>4</sup> from Gandhi and from the "old guard". But while in earlier days Roy considered resolving that problem without the Congress, opposing to it a communist-oriented revolutionary mass party, since the mid-1930s he referred to work inside the Congress and to action to win over the Congress, to rid it from the influence of Gandhism and from that of the bourgeoisie which was supporting its tactics in

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from: John Patrick Haithcox, *Op. cit.*, pp. 172-73.

<sup>2</sup> See: John Patrick Haithcox, *Op. cit.*, p. 174.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 247.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170.

the liberation movement and to turn the INC into a revolutionary people's party, a party of the Jacobins. Those changes in the political course led to Roy's particular view of united front tactics.

Faced by the objection that such a policy was unrealistic in respect of the party of the Indian national bourgeoisie and the petty-bourgeois elements, Roy replied that the Congress was a mass nationalist movement and as such was not objectively the party of any particular class.<sup>1</sup> Roy and his supporters saw the Congress in the 1930s as synonymous to a united national front.<sup>2</sup> Hence, all attempts of left forces to create an organisation of working people and revolutionary elements, independent of the Congress, with a view to their class and political self-determination, were opposed since, in Roy's opinion, they tended to weaken the Congress and, consequently, ran counter to the united front policy.

Roy invariably stuck to that position whenever he saw the forces left of the Congress leadership show a determination to achieve independence to the extent of an autonomy. He sought to prove that the organisation of a Congress Socialist party would lead to the expulsion of the left wing from the INC and weaken its influence, that the formation of a party inside the Congress would prevent it from accepting an alternative to Gandhi's programme for a national revolution, and that an ill-timed propagation of socialist slogans, in his opinion, would divide the Congress between the proponents and opponents of socialism whereas the actual watershed should pass between militant nationalists, on the one hand, and Gandhians, on the other.<sup>3</sup>

The same considerations prompted Roy's reaction to the peasant, youth and trade unions being established by Communists and Socialists, as well as to the idea of their collective admission to the INC.

The workers' and peasants' movement went into high gear in India in the latter half of the 1930s. Radical class demands were put forward through the All-India Kisan

<sup>1</sup> "Letter from M. N. Roy to August Thalheimer, Dehra Dun, November 4, 1934". In: John Patrick Haithcox, *Op. cit.*, p. 174.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>3</sup> "Letter of Resignation of Bengal Royists from CSP, Bombay, July 17, 1937". In: John Patrick Haithcox, *Op. cit.*, pp. 249-50.

Sabha (peasant league), created with the active participation of Communists and Socialists in January 1936, and its local bodies, as well as through the trade unions. The Indian Communists, just as Socialists and other left elements in the Congress, considered these organisations as their own social base and as an effective instrument of pressure on the INC leadership and one of fighting for consistent anti-imperialist, democratic social reforms and the pressing needs of the working people. This implied merging the national anti-imperialist movement with the workers' and peasants' struggle for their rights. But that was entirely at variance with the theories of Gandhi and the right wing of the Congress whose strategy was confined to a purely anti-imperialist struggle with the class interests of the workers and peasants artificially detached from it. Gandhi did his best to avoid the fusion of the trade union movement with the political struggle as well as independent political action by the working people, above all the resort to such a purely proletarian method of political warfare as strike action. When peasant unions began to be formed, Gandhi saw them right away as a threat to the hegemony of the Congress and even declared in 1938 that the only object in setting up independent peasant organisations was to capture the Congress.

The issue of peasant and trade unions became quite dramatic in the latter half of the 1930s because of the proposals for their collective membership of the INC. The left parties saw collective membership as a way of democratising the Congress. An appropriate resolution was moved by Socialists at the Lucknow Congress in 1936 and seconded by Communists and by the entire left wing of the INC with Jawaharlal Nehru at the head. Yet it was defeated by the centre-right majority which was joined by Roy and his supporters. The same happened at the Faizpur Congress of the INC a year later. The right-wing majority opposed the idea of including mass organisations of working people by a resolution providing for a link with the masses through a Congress organisation. A Mass Contacts Committee of the Congress Party was set up with Roy on it.

Naturally, the positions of Roy and right-wing Congress leaders were diametrically opposite. Roy was not afraid of the workers' and peasants' movement but, true to his idea

of capturing the Congress, he wanted that movement to stay within the Congress framework. Instead of galvanising the peasant and trade unions, he called for the peasants and workers to join the Congress, for the Congress to adopt their social programme, for its local committees to become the vehicles of struggle for the interests of the working people, as well as for the INC structure to be democratised to make it an elective institution while its lower echelons and rank-and-file members were to be offered greater opportunities to influence the formulation of the political course. But insofar as the INC party machinery was in the hands of the bourgeois leaders, both at national and local level, and because neither Roy nor any of his associates were strong enough to wrest that machinery from these leaders or even diminish their control (which they were to see for themselves soon afterwards), Roy turned out to be opposing the only possible means of increasing the influence of the democratic elements in the Indian liberation movement, that is, their independent organisation. Roy's line of approach was objectively converging with that of the INC leadership. They even used similar arguments in their effort to prove the need to consolidate the Congress for the sake of the struggle for independence. "A federated body, composed of autonomous organisations ... cannot lead the revolutionary struggle for the capture of power,"<sup>1</sup> Roy wrote as he commented on the issue of collective membership of the INC. In spite of his subjective revolutionary impulses he, in point of fact, was in that particular case acting along with Gandhi who was still insisting that there was no need for independent peasant organisations and got a resolution accepted at the annual INC session in Haripur in 1938 warning the Congressmen against any act of solidarity with the peasant leagues along with urging them instead to devote all their energies to strengthening the Congress committees in the countryside. That was the upshot of Roy's misinterpretation of the actual possibilities of struggle.

When he was released from prison in 1936, Roy obtained a prominent position in Indian political life "because of his revolutionary past". He was popular, his name was seen as a

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from: John Patrick Hainthcox, *Op. cit.*, p. 261.

symbol of uncompromising struggle against imperialism, he was listened to, and young men flocked to him.<sup>1</sup> "But this advantage was quickly dissipated," Haithcox pointed out. "The Royists by their policies soon isolated themselves from virtually all other groups within the Congress Party."<sup>2</sup> Roy's group was declining, both in numbers and in influence,<sup>3</sup> which led to its political collapse.

Being as he was a partisan of united national front, Roy failed to get along with those political forces which were closest to him. He intended to push the Congress leftward not by relying on the organisations of left forces which had arisen or were in the making, but bypassing them.

Neither did Roy find a way of getting along with the Communist Party of India, first and foremost. True, while still in prison, Roy recommended to his supporters to work for an association with the Indian Communists. But, of course, his own conflict with the Comintern and his manifestly negative attitude to the CPI in the late 1920s and the early 1930s were not helpful to this end. The main obstacle, however, in the way of an alliance of two political trends acting under the banner of Marxism was the fundamental divergence of their political strategies. Roy saw a united front in an entirely different way from the concept of the CPI and the Comintern. Roy's tactics were directed against the CPI's independent action and against its influence being spread to the workers' and peasants' organisations. Roy consigned to oblivion the principle of independent organisation, which was unquestionable for the Communists since the Second Congress of the Comintern, and developed liquidationist trends with respect to the CPI, which he showed first back in the 1920s.

Haithcox points out that the programme of Roy's supporters was the closest of all political trends to the Congress Socialist Party (CSP). They were united by a determination to work within the Congress for the achievement of political independence and for the implementation of social and economic reforms as well as by the rejection of Gandhi's

<sup>1</sup> See: Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle 1920-1942*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1964, pp. 327-28.

<sup>2</sup> John Patrick Haithcox, *Op. cit.*, p. 252.

<sup>3</sup> See: David N. Druhe, *Op. cit.*, p. 153.

ideas of non-violence and trusteeship.<sup>1</sup> However, Roy did not go as far as to establish the unity of action with the Socialists either.

In has been pointed out earlier on that Roy saw the creation of an autonomous Socialist party as a danger of weakening the INC left wing. When that party sprang up (in 1934) and went on record for cooperation of all left groups, Roy's reaction to it was sceptical. Having studied Roy's archives, Haithcox writes that Roy regarded the Socialists as merely a "vague, heterogeneous radical tendency in the national movement" and suspected that they could "degenerate" into "reformism", that is, into "bourgeois-parliamentarianism".<sup>2</sup> Both Roy's assessment and his forecast proved right. The Congress Socialist Party did represent a fragile association of groups of different political convictions with nothing to keep them together beyond a disappointment over Gandhi's course and the INC leadership. Some of the Congress Socialists (Jay Prakash Narayan, Acharya Narendra Deva) considered themselves Marxists, while another group (Minoo R. Masani and Asoka Mehta) aspired to "democratic socialism" and still another (Ram Lohia) had the socialist trends of Gandhi's utopian doctrine of *sarvodaya* as their starting point. As Haithcox points out, "socialism at this time was in vogue among young, educated Indians, but it more closely represented an ill-defined sentiment than a distinct ideology".<sup>3</sup>

It may well be that Roy's sceptical attitude to the socialism of the Congressmen had enough reason to justify it. But while regarding the members of the Congress Socialist Party as bad Socialists, one could just as well give a positive assessment of their anti-imperialist and democratic potential as radical nationalists. Roy proved incapable of such a differentiated approach. Having admitted that the national liberation, rather than the socialist revolution, was the order of the day, Roy could not make the next move by recognising the need for an alliance at that stage with the political trends having a stake in the achievement of independence, although being inconsistent in their view of socialism.

<sup>1</sup> See: John Patrick Haithcox, *Op. cit.*, p. 225.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 230.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219.

During the united front period, too, Roy stuck to his conviction that “unless the party of the working class can become an effective political force and assume the leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle, not in word but in practice, the political perspective of the country is dark”.<sup>1</sup> It is from that point of view that he approached the problem of alliances in the national liberation movement. The only force that could be his ally was the one that would help towards converting the party of the proletariat into a supreme force in the anti-imperialist struggle. In doubt as to the seriousness of the socialist convictions of the Socialists, Roy, guided by his own leftist principles, refused to cooperate with them. Roy saw the difference between the socialist and radical-nationalist potential of the Congress Socialist Party as no more than a difference between good and bad Socialists. Ignoring the objective reasons for an alliance with the Socialist Party as a whole, Roy singled out the most radical leaders within it and urged support for them alone in the hope of raising their influence and transforming the party into “the rallying ground of the radical elements of the de-classed intellectuals—the elements objectively heading toward the party of the proletariat”.<sup>2</sup> To support those hopefuls, in Roy’s opinion, called for severe criticism of the inconsistency and vacillations of the Socialist Party as a whole.

When the Congress Socialist Party was formed, most of the Royists became active in it and influenced its policy guidelines, notably on such important issues as the recognition of the struggle for independence, rather than for socialism, as its immediate concern, and of the idea of a constituent assembly. However, Roy assailed the Socialists’ platform and in March 1937 his group decided to withdraw from the Congress Socialist Party.

Roy produced a variety of reasons for his break with the Socialists: ideological instability of their leaders, the formulation of a number of radical social demands by Socialists which, in Roy’s opinion, could weaken the unity of the Congress, and excessive hopes the Socialists had for Jawaharlal Nehru to bring the INC to socialism, their

<sup>1</sup> John Patrick Haithcox, *Op. cit.*, p. 237.

<sup>2</sup> John Patrick Haithcox, *Op. cit.*, p. 230.

different lines of approach to collective membership and to elections for provincial legislatures (Socialists believed that participation in such elections would be tantamount to a betrayal of the demand of full independence, while Roy favoured that participation because he saw it as a tactic to distract the right forces in the Congress and a way to left leadership).<sup>1</sup> Yet all of these differences eventually stemmed from Roy's maximalist idea of capturing the Congress as a whole and his reckless ambition to do that without relying on the political groups which actually existed and had a solid social base to stand on, but through a political manoeuvre. In actual fact, since Roy was opposed to an alliance with left parties and factions and to an independent movement and the organisations of workers and peasants, he had no means left of "capturing" the Congress beyond the backstage activity of a group of his followers bereft of a social base and unwilling to support the independent action of the working people for the sake of the utopian ambition to achieve everything at once by capturing the Congress. No wonder that their intention to convert the Indian National Congress into a Jacobin club ended in utter failure.

So, Roy and his group failed to disguise themselves as nationalists, to win the confidence and respect of the Congress or to create their own base within its local organisations. On the other hand, one typical feature of the latter half of the 1930s was a considerable rise of the influence of the left forces in the INC, witness the election of left leaders, Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose, as its presidents. Roy's group, which had isolated itself from its own objective allies—Communists and Socialists—made no essential contribution to that process of strengthening the left. But when the right wing of the INC, worried by the consolidation of the radical elements, decided to confront them head-on by forcing them to take their choice between Gandhi and Bose, Roy attempted to swing the Congress abruptly to the left.

That happened at the INC session at Tripuri in March 1939. The session had been preceded by an ostentatious resignation of the right-wing members of the INC Working

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 239.

Committee, which made it impossible for the left wing INC chairman Bose to discharge his functions. At that session, the right-wingers tabled a resolution underlining their immutable faith in Gandhi's principles and calling on the INC president to form a Working Committee in line with Gandhi's wishes. It was clear to everybody at the session that the resolution was aimed against Bose, and that meant taking a choice between Gandhi and Bose.

That was an extremely intricate dilemma for the left forces as they realised perfectly well how dangerous the consequences of an INC split could be for the anti-imperialist movement. The Indian Communists spoke up for the INC to stand united. They emphasised that the interests of the liberation movement "demanded not the exclusive leadership of one wing but a *united* leadership under the guidance of Gandhi".<sup>1</sup> The Socialists, who after 1936 had been pressing for left participation in the leadership, rather than for Gandhi's leadership to be replaced by the left, declared themselves neutral. Roy supported Bose. His attitude to that radical, yet controversial leader was not quite positive. A decade later Roy wrote: "In 1938, Subhas Bose could have made history, for good or evil. His weakness plus Sardar's [Patel, right-wing INC leader—*Auth.*] iron will frustrated his ambition and saved the Gandhist Congress."<sup>2</sup> Soon after the Tripuri session, Roy characterised Bose as a fascist sympathiser who was merely exploiting the left-wing groups for his personal purpose.<sup>3</sup> But at the Tripuri session, Roy decided to take advantage of the right versus left confrontation in the hope that he could see the INC turned into a party of the "Jacobins of the 20th century". The results, however, were exactly opposite. They showed that Bose enjoyed no majority support. When Gandhi refused to cooperate with him in forming the Working Committee, Bose had to resign. It was Rajendra Prasad who became the INC president. That was followed by a campaign to strengthen discipline and centralism in the Congress, which led to the left being dislodged, as planned, from the positions they had gained.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from: Gene D. Overstreet, Marshall Windmiller, *Op. cit.*, p. 168.

<sup>2</sup> M. N. Roy, *Men I Met*, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> See: John Patrick Haithcox, *Op. cit.*, p. 288.

The upshot of the Tripuri session made Roy drop the idea that the formation of autonomous factions in the Congress tended to weaken the party's left wing. That had been the major point of tactical disagreement between Roy and Communists before. After Tripuri, Roy organised an independent League of Radical Congressmen (LRC) within the Congress Party with the declared object of combating the Gandhist ideology under the "Historic banner of Jacobinism".<sup>1</sup> That was the starting point of the departure of Roy and his supporters from Congress work.

Roy's alliance with Bose was of short duration. The Royists, just as Socialists and Communists, refused to enter the Forward Bloc Party, which was formed after Bose's resignation from INC presidency, but they agreed to cooperate with it. A Left Consolidation Committee was then set up only to fall apart by the end of 1939. Roy's group did not support the joint action by the left (the protest demonstration in Bombay against some decisions of the All-India Congress Committee).

At the INC session in Ramgarh in March 1940, Roy made his last, though futile, attempt at persuading the Congress to accept his idea of a constituent assembly. Rajendra Prasad declared that the resolution proposed by Roy presented an entirely different picture of independent India from what the Congressmen imagined it could be. At the same time, Roy was seeking his election as president of the Congress, but he was defeated by Moulana Abul Kalam Azad who polled ten times as many votes. At Ramgarh, the INC, being convinced of the futility of all efforts to induce the British Government to grant home rule to India in time of war, decided to resort to a traditional sanction—*satyagraha*. That was not the start of a campaign but that of an effort to prepare the people and to accept the necessity of civil resistance unless Britain yielded ground. Yet at the same time the INC leadership was taking steps to prevent the projected campaign of disobedience from going beyond the limits of Gandhist tactics. All members of the Congress were invited to swear full obedience to Gandhi and allegiance to the principle of non-violence. The Working Committee recommended to those who did not want to assume any

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 287.

obligations of that kind to relinquish their administrative functions in the Congress. That went still further towards undermining the positions of Roy and all those who disagreed with Gandhi's leadership.

The Ramgarh session destroyed the illusions of Royists about the possibility of the Congress being transformed into a Jacobin party. The LRC conference in June 1940 placed it on record that the village INC organisations were in the hands of well-to-do peasants and that all attempts at rousing them to fight for the interests of the exploited masses were being suppressed by the "party bosses". The same conference reaffirmed the intention to oppose Gandhi's policies and to relinquish administrative posts in the INC or leave the party altogether, if necessary.<sup>1</sup>

It was the Royists' attitude to the war that served as the official excuse for their complete break with the INC. At the beginning of the Second World War, the LRC took up a neutral stand and called for the earliest possible ceasefire. But soon afterwards (before Hitler Germany's attack on the USSR) Roy came to the conclusion that Britain's war effort must be supported for the sake of the international struggle against fascism.

In the meantime, the Congress, while expressing its readiness to play its full part in the war against fascism on being granted independence, and convinced of the British Government's unwillingness to meet its demands, decided to launch the *satyagraha* in defence of the right to preach opposition to war. Roy, in a statement for the press, described that decision as a betrayal of democratic and progressive forces and called for cooperation with the British Government. As a result, he was relieved from all of his posts in the elected INC bodies. In October 1940 the LRC declared that Congress membership was incompatible with anti-fascist convictions and announced that a Radical Democratic Party of India was being set up outside the INC. Twelve years later Roy said that he had severed his relations with the Congress because of disagreement with its anti-war activities.<sup>2</sup> In actual fact, the reasons lay deeper. The LRC's withdrawal from the Congress was a logical

<sup>1</sup> John Patrick Haithcox, *Op. cit.*, p. 293.

<sup>2</sup> Sec: M. N. Roy - *Philosopher-Revolutionary*, p. 4.

sequel to the failure of the attempts of Roy and the Royists to impose their own platform on the Congress. That was the failure of Roy's political line, and the transformation of the LRC into a Radical Democratic Party of India signified no more than a delay in admitting that fact. That party had not become an appreciable factor in Indian political life, and in 1948, when Roy's bankruptcy had become perfectly obvious, it was disbanded.

### *TWO CONCEPTS OF UNITED FRONT TACTICS*

When the Seventh Congress of the Comintern rejected the sectarian distortions of Lenin's strategy in the national and colonial question, Roy decided that his contradictions with the Comintern had been overcome and that the Comintern had accepted his standpoint. But he did not see the difference between his and Lenin's understanding of a united anti-imperialist front. His followers thought likewise. Bourgeois students of the Comintern's oriental policy are not inclined either to underline the difference between Roy's and the Comintern's methods of approach in the latter half of the 1930s. There are two objectives behind it. First, Roy is set off against the leftist trends of the period of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern as a true Indian Marxist perfectly conscious of the objective requirements of the communist movement in his country. Second, Roy's concept of united front and Roy's policy in general in the 1930s are attributed to the communist movement which is thereby accused of being insincere in the treatment of democratic and nationalist organisations and of an ambition to exploit united front tactics solely for its own interests so as to divide the alliance of anti-imperialist forces.

Yet Roy's platform in the 1930s just as well differed, in principle, from Lenin's strategy in the national and colonial question.

Lenin saw united front tactics as arising from the recognition of the objective necessity of an alliance of all anti-imperialist forces, including the patriotic elements of the national bourgeoisie, and objective background to, and historical progressive role of, the bourgeois-democratic and anti-imperialist movements in the colonial countries, with the working class and Communist parties absent or underdeveloped.

Roy, just as before, dismissed the revolutionary anti-imperialist potential of bourgeois nationalism. Even after the proclamation of the Republic in 1947 he still considered the advent of the Indian bourgeoisie to power as "very largely ... a gift of decayed imperialism" and described the conquest of independence as "an easy victory".<sup>1</sup> Consequently, he was still convinced of a collusion of national capital and the INC leadership with the British authorities.

Fascist methods were repugnant to Roy, Philip Spratt writes. Roy saw them as a confirmation of the "Marxist doctrine" about the reactionary nature of contemporary nationalism. Roy had always been suspectful even of Gandhist nationalism, Spratt goes on to say. The neutrality of the Congress in the holy war against Hitler followed, in Roy's opinion, from an "ideological sympathy between Gandhism and Nazism".<sup>2</sup> This is a clear case of a distortion of Marxism in the sense of vulgar interpretation peculiar to Roy. The idea about the reactionary nature of contemporary nationalism in general is an anti-Leninist argument which bourgeois writers have been trying to ascribe to Marxism so as to set it against the national liberation movement. Lenin had never spoken of the reactionary nature of nationalism in general. He viewed nationalism, just as any phenomenon for that matter, from a concrete historical angle and insisted on a clear line of distinction being drawn between the nationalism of the oppressor and oppressed nations, between reactionary nationalism expressing none but the interests of an exploitative minority, and democratic, anti-imperialist nationalism possessing considerable revolutionary potentialities for that form of nationalism embodied the primordial aspirations of the working masses for freedom and social justice. That was precisely the subject of the dispute between Lenin and Roy at the Second Congress of the Comintern, and that was what Roy failed to understand until his dying day as he saw any nationalism as being synonymous to reaction.

According to Lenin's theory, the policy of the united front of anti-imperialist forces at the stage of national liberation implied acceptance, in point of principle, of the

<sup>1</sup> M. N. Roy, *Men I Met*, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Philip Spratt, *Op. cit.*, p. 38.

leadership by the bourgeois-democratic nationalist parties if Marxist forces did not have enough authority to fulfil that mission. Hence the idea of supporting the revolutionary trends of bourgeois nationalism and its leaders. Roy disagreed with that. His idea was one of an immediate hegemony of the proletarian party. His attitude to the INC leaders was vehemently and unequivocally negative.

Throughout his life Roy was unable to appreciate the actual merits of Gandhi's immense contribution to the Indian national liberation movement. Only after Gandhi was gone did Roy recognise his humanism, his lofty ideals of solidarity and justice, remaining, nevertheless, intolerant of Gandhist nationalism and religious teaching.<sup>1</sup> Just as during his dispute with Lenin, Roy invariably spoke about the "anti-revolutionary essence of Gandhism",<sup>2</sup> and one of the publishers of the Royist magazine *Radical Humanist*, Sibnarayan Ray, proudly stated that Roy "refused to make any compromise with the medieval obscurantism of the Mahatma, with the hypocrisy of his political disciples or with the prejudices of the people".<sup>3</sup> Gandhi "stood for everything the Communists opposed",<sup>4</sup> Overstreet and Windmiller write. But this statement misrepresents the substance of the matter and the position of Indian Communists. However, it is a little closer to the truth as far as Roy is concerned. In this case, too, Roy's views are attributed to the communist movement. As to the CPI, it has not always maintained a negative attitude to Gandhism which developed during the period when Roy was considered to be the leading Indian Marxist. To pursue the Leninist policy of a united anti-imperialist front demanded a substantial re-evaluation of Gandhism. That was how things were in 1939, when a prominent CPI leader, S. G. Sardesai, called for the positive potentialities of Gandhism, particularly those relating to the period of 1919-1920, to be used in the interest of the national movement. That was how things stood, too, in the second half of the 1950s, when books by Indian Communists about Gandhi and the "Sarvodaya and Communism" debate in the columns of the

<sup>1</sup> See: M. N. Roy, *Men I Met*, pp. 29-31.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> *M. N. Roy—Philosopher-Revolutionary*, p. 32.

<sup>4</sup> Gene D. Overstreet, Marshall Windmiller, *Op. cit.*, p. 509.

*New Age* magazine served not only for a Marxist criticism of the social utopianism of Gandhism and his sustained compromise with the bourgeois INC leadership, but for an exposition of the non-bourgeois features of the ideology of Gandhism, Gandhi's conflict with bourgeois leaders in the twilight of his life, his commitment to the ideals of social justice, and certain revolutionary possibilities arising from Gandhist tactics of non-violent resistance. In consequence, cooperation with Gandhi's followers was accepted and even welcomed if they showed themselves willing to act with determination in defence of the interests of the working masses.<sup>1</sup> So, the CPI discarded the unobjective criticism of Gandhi and Gandhism which had been typical of Roy and his disciples.

Roy's attitude to Jawaharlal Nehru was a case of extreme sectarianism. It may be recalled that at the time of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern some leaders of the international communist movement regarded petty-bourgeois leaders as disguised and, therefore, most cunning and dangerous enemies of the communist and national liberation movement. Roy, although he disagreed with the general tenor of the decisions of the Sixth Congress, invariably guided himself by this erroneous principle, rejected by Communists shortly afterwards, in his assessment of Nehru. The emergence of Nehru in the 1930s as INC left-wing leader, his determination to rely on trade unions and peasant organisations and the enunciation of his allegiance to the principles of socialism in his speech at the INC Lucknow session were then welcomed by all revolutionary forces. An underground CPI magazine described that speech as "the clearest anti-imperialist appeal ever made from the Congress chair".<sup>2</sup>

Roy found otherwise. Since Nehru had not adopted the positions of scientific socialism, Roy refused to appreciate even the fact that he was more to the left than any of the generally recognised leaders of the Congress. Roy always thought in extreme terms: either a consistent revolutionary or a counter-revolutionary. Roy believed that all Nehru did was to disguise the positions of the right, enable them to carry on their political game and make the masses trust and

<sup>1</sup> See: E.M.S. Namboodiripad, *The Mahatma and the Ism*, New Delhi, 1959; Hiren Mukerjee, *Gandhiji. A Study*, National Book Agency (Private), Ltd., Calcutta, 1958; *New Age*, Vol. 7, Nos. 1, 3, 4, 8, 9, 1958.

<sup>2</sup> *The Communist*, Vol. 1, No. 12, 1936, p. 16.

follow them. That was the only view Roy had of Jawaharlal Nehru's political role. At the time of accentuated contradictions between the "old guard" of the INC and the young radicals of the 1930s, Nehru, in Roy's judgement, "confused" issues by associating nationalism with vaguely conceived socialist ideals. He was instrumental in arresting the process of differentiation between the forces of progress and conservatism by captivating the immaturity of the former with the lure of a socialist utopia. Conservative nationalism was rationalised as the means to social revolution. Nehru's socialist professions galvanised the antiquated cult just when it was losing its appeal to the progressive and democratic forces. Swayed by the silver-tongued oratory of the sea-green incorruptible people's tribune, they were fired with the fanaticism of reconverts and herded back to the fold of Gandhism, which had in the meantime shed the oddities which were incongruous in a struggle for mundane power.

"Nehru missed the chance to lead the movement for national liberation towards the higher goal of a social revolution of the kind which had brought Europe out of the twilight of the Middle Ages. Personal attachment to Gandhi precluded his moving in the direction of a genuine political greatness and creative leadership."<sup>1</sup>

Nehru's reluctance to accept the "Jacobinism of the 20th century", suggested by Roy, was enough for him to be identified with classic bourgeois nationalism and Congress bosses, representing the interests of the right-wing forces and Big Business. Roy argued that Nehru's "modernism serves the undemocratic and reactionary purpose of the Congress" and, therefore, his high place in the INC "has been conceded to him by the real bosses of the organisation".<sup>2</sup> Roy failed to appreciate the progressive measures taken by the Nehru Government and tended to explain them by demagogic considerations. For example, Roy attributed Nehru's historic rejection of US economic aid on terms implying an encroachment on the sovereignty of the new-born state to a vainglorious ambition to deserve the cheers of left forces on the world scene and those of the

<sup>1</sup> M. N. Roy, *Men I Met*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from: John Patrick Haithcox, *Op. cit.*, p. 246.

petty-bourgeois nationalist elements in India. Roy sympathetically quoted *The New York Times* as having found Nehru's action to be "one of the greatest disappointments of the post-war era".<sup>1</sup> However, it was Nehru's visit to the US, which Roy dismissed as an utter failure, that laid the groundwork for the policy of non-alignment.

Having labelled Nehru's socialist and democratic ideals as demagogic once and for all, Roy manifestly gave preference to political leaders outspokenly committed to more conservative, bourgeois-nationalist positions. His article about Sardar Patel was full of respect for "the man who would never be my ideal". That kind of respect was conspicuously absent in his numerous pronouncements about Nehru. Roy set Nehru off against even Chiang Kai-shek, holding the latter to be an honest nationalist who "did not want to play the Hamlet of China, like his more successful contemporary in India".<sup>2</sup>

The CPI's attitude to Jawaharlal Nehru had nothing in common with Roy's subjectivist criticism. Indian Communists, conscious as they were of Nehru's compromise position and inconsistency of his socialist views, do give its due to his immense contribution towards the Indian people's struggle for independence, towards the propagation of socialist ideals in India and other developing countries, and towards the elaboration and application of the principles of home and foreign policy to assure the advance of the Republic of India along the road of progress.

One of the favourite allegations of the bourgeois criticism of the united front policy applied by the Comintern and the CPI was that it aimed to capture the nationalist organisations and bring them under their own influence. This idea runs all through the book by two American authors on the history of the CPI. "Although Comintern policy for India was to take over the nationalist movement by capturing the Indian National Congress," Overstreet and Windmiller write, "Roy continued to oppose this policy [ in the early 1920s—*Auth.* ] and did his best to get the Comintern to abandon it."<sup>3</sup> Commenting on an article by British

<sup>1</sup> M. N. Roy, *Op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16, 116.

<sup>3</sup> Gene D. Overstreet, Marshall Windmiller, *Op. cit.*, p. 44.

Communists R. Palme Dutt and Ben Bradley "The Anti-Imperialist People's Front",<sup>1</sup> which referred to an intensification of left trends in the national liberation movement and the need for their influence to be further built up, Overstreet and Windmiller conclude: "The goal of capturing the Congress, and optimism as to its achievement, were therefore transparently proclaimed."<sup>2</sup> Having ascribed that line to the CPI and the Comintern, the American authors went on to speak about an intrinsic contradiction of the united front policy which was alleged to require the CPI to unite the nationalist movement along with attempting to capture it, while those two objectives cancelled each other out.<sup>3</sup>

However, neither the CPI nor the Comintern had ever aspired to "capture" the Congress, being perfectly aware of the solid positions of the national bourgeoisie within that organisation and realising how unrealistic such an undertaking would have been. It is Roy who had been trying since the late 1920s to capture the Congress when, discouraged by the difficulties facing him, he despaired of a possibility of creating a strong independent Communist party. So, it was Roy's line, not the one of the CPI and the Comintern. It logically followed from his principle that the hegemony of the proletariat in the national liberation movement was indispensable. Since the leadership by the working class and its party was proclaimed to be crucial to the success of the anti-imperialist struggle, a united front with the Congress or any other party for that matter could have any sense only if they yielded their leading positions to Roy's supporters. It was in the expectation of that turn of events that Roy launched his slogan of the united front which he interpreted as anything but the way Lenin and the Comintern saw it.

Overstreet and Windmiller produced a false dilemma alleged to have confronted the CPI. That was because of their undialectic perception of Lenin's united front idea as either the capture of nationalist organisations or total submission to them and the loss of one's own face. Lenin's

<sup>1</sup> *International Press Correspondence*, Vol. 16, No. 11, 1936, pp. 297-300.

<sup>2</sup> Gene D. Overstreet, Marshall Windmiller, *Op. cit.*, p. 161.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 167.

concept, on the contrary, implied combining an alliance with bourgeois parties with a struggle for influence upon them and, above all, upon the masses that followed them, and for a turn towards a genuinely consistent and uncompromising anti-imperialist course.

It is the one-sided understanding of the united front, arising, to some extent, from Roy's policy, that underlies the bourgeois criticism of the Indian Communists' attitude to the Congress Socialist Party in the 1930s. The CPI's position in this case, too, has quite often been identified with that of Roy, which was done first by Congress Socialists themselves when they accused Roy and the CPI of subversive activity following the withdrawal of the Royists from the Socialist Party. In a preface to an anti-communist publication of CPI documents, one of Roy's co-workers, V.B. Karnik, writes about the allegedly treacherous manner in which the Communists pursued their tactics of a united front.<sup>1</sup> Haithcox has also referred to the factionalism of the CPI and the Royists.<sup>2</sup>

However, the Indian Communists' attitude to the Congress Socialist Party was fundamentally different from the Royists' platform. The latter, as stated earlier on, had joined the Socialist Party in the hope of bringing it under their own influence. In that sense they held the same position as they did in respect of the INC. Having found that aim unattainable, the Royists withdrew from the party. They saw a united front involving differences of principle inside it as unacceptable to them. Indian Communists, whose own party was banned, never pledged themselves, when joining the Congress Socialist Party individually, to renounce the idea of an independent organisation and political line or that of committed criticism of the inconsistency and vacillations of the heterogeneous leadership of the Congress Socialists. They remained Communists, never acting as Jacobins. They joined the Socialist Party because they saw some real ground for joint action with it, just as the Socialists themselves, in their turn, were members of the INC, without ever considering this to be an obstacle to their criticism of its leadership's political course. The Socialists

<sup>1</sup> See: *Indian Communist Party Documents 1930-1956*, p. V.

<sup>2</sup> See: John Patrick Haithcox, *Op. cit.*, p. 233.

were intolerant of the independent position of the Communists and saw all their criticisms of the party leadership, as well as their desire to build up and rally their ranks and to win the working masses over to the party line, as factionalism. In June 1937 the Communists had to protest against a "heresy hunt" in the CSP and opposed the attempts at berating any party member critical of its executive as a "disruptor".<sup>1</sup> Disturbed by the growing influence of the Communists, the Socialists stopped admitting them to the party. The right-wing socialist leader M. R. Masani demanded the total expulsion of the Communists and succeeded in imposing his view on the entire party in 1940. The rupture of the alliance of the two left parties was, therefore, a result of the Socialists' unwillingness to put up with the independence and the rising influence of the Communists. Indeed, many rank-and-file members of the Socialist Party, which called itself Marxist, defected to the Communists because they saw them as the most steadfast and consistent champions of the working people's cause and as true partisans of scientific socialism.

It was stated earlier on that Roy's perception of the united front idea was different from Lenin's and from the guiding principles of the CPI, for it implied denying the necessity for an independent proletarian vanguard and for its mass base to be formed by the class organisations of workers and peasants never absorbed by the national bourgeois parties. There have been some attempts in bourgeois literature, nevertheless, to justify Roy's nihilistic attitude to an independent peasant movement by allusions to Lenin. This has been coupled with the traditional argument about Marxism's contempt for the peasantry<sup>2</sup> and about its rejection of independent political activity.

Roy wrote: "It should not be difficult for a Marxist to grasp that nothing could be a greater obstacle to Socialism than a peasantry organised in their independent class organisation."<sup>3</sup> Haithcox attributes these views to Lenin. In his opinion, "Roy also shared Lenin's aversion to separate organisations of non-proletarian classes", "Roy also shared

<sup>1</sup> Gene D. Overstreet, Marshall Windmiller, *Op. cit.*, p. 165.

<sup>2</sup> See: John Patrick Haithcox, *Op. cit.*, p. 253.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted from: *Ibid.*, p. 264.

Lenin's view that separate peasant organisations were not only unnecessary, but undesirable".<sup>1</sup> In so doing, Haithcox not only misrepresents Lenin's attitude to the peasant movement in general, but passes over the distinction between socialist and bourgeois-democratic revolution, between the conditions of Russia and those of the East, making the same mistake as Roy did. Lenin always attached paramount importance to the position of the peasantry in a revolutionary movement and its organisation, never losing sight of the fact that the class base of that organisation changed depending on the particular stage of the revolution. The outstanding role of the peasantry in Eastern societies, where it is the bulk of the population, was obvious to him. "We must realise," Lenin said, "that the transition to communism cannot be accomplished by the vanguard alone. The task is to arouse the working masses to revolutionary activity, to independent action and to organisation, regardless of the level they have reached."<sup>2</sup> It is a matter of record that, unlike Roy, the CPI strongly supported the independent peasant movement and made a big contribution towards organising peasant unions and guiding them in a revolutionary way.

#### M. N. ROY'S IDEOLOGICAL REGENERATION

The closing years of Roy's life were not only those of bitter disappointment in his political activity, but those of a total revision of his outlook. Having renounced political activity in 1948, Roy founded the Indian Renaissance Institute, a cultural and educational institution through which to preach his new philosophical "ideas of radical (or integral) humanism, or new humanism".

Roy's supporters, seeing him diverge step by step from Marxism, and still more from what they called the "Marxism of the Bolshevik school", maintained nevertheless that Roy's ideas remained "in broad outline Marxist".<sup>3</sup> Some

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 264, 263.

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Address to the Second All-Russia Congress of Communist Organisations of the Peoples of the East, November 22, 1919", *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, p. 162.

<sup>3</sup> Philip Spratt, *Op. cit.*, p. 41.

have even suggested that Roy enriched Marxist concepts with the latest research findings.

In actual fact, Roy's ideological evolution of the late 1940s and the early 1950s was a total renunciation of Marxism and of his own views of the preceding period. All that remained of the Roy of old was his intolerance of religion and nationalism as well as his advocacy of modernism in every area of life as a counterbalance to the traditional life-style.

The new Roy came down upon historical materialism, announcing that "Marxist economic determinism is no less antithetical to the idea of social revolution than the religious theological view of nature, life and society".<sup>1</sup> He substituted his own speculation on the nature of man for the Marxist concept of classes and the class struggle as the real substance of social development eventually determined by the level of productive forces. "The origin of the laws of social evolution must be traced in anthropology, in the nature of man," Roy wrote. "Human history, like natural history, is a determined process. But it is self-determined; and it is not absolute determinism.... The dynamics of ideas and the dialectics of social development are parallel processes, both stimulated by man's biological urge for freedom. They naturally influence each other.... Man's struggle for freedom is a continuation of the biological struggle for survival, on a higher level..."<sup>2</sup>

Roy substituted a biological and anthropological analysis for a social one. His concept, hostile to religion and retaining some vestiges of the earlier materialistic philosophies (to underline the distinction from Marxist materialism, Roy employed the term "physical-realism"), has its roots reaching back into the 18th century. "At the close of the Middle Ages in Europe ... man revolted against the tutelage of God and started moving towards the realisation that he could be self-sufficient and self-reliant," Roy wrote. "The classical revolt of man, reinforced by the expanding scientific knowledge, reached the highwater mark in the eighteenth century, when a great advance was made in the age-long

<sup>1</sup> M. N. Roy, *Reason, Romanticism and Revolution*, Vol. 2, Renaissance Publishers (Private), Ltd., Calcutta, 1955, p. 285.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 286, 287, 288.

effort to formulate a humanist social philosophy, including a secular ethics, on the basis of a materialist metaphysics.... The tradition of the eighteenth-century naturalist Humanism and of its development in the nineteenth century alone can inspire a philosophy which will set man free, spiritually as well as socially.”<sup>1</sup> So, Roy reverted from Marxist materialism to pre-Marxian naturalism. His appeal for the “regeneration of man” should be understood not only as the aim of social development, but also as an attempt at replacing the science of classes and society by speculation on the abstract, biological man in the spirit of materialist philosophers of the 18th century.

The social aims which Roy set himself towards the end of his life went through no less change than his philosophy. Roy renounced the ideals of socialism and communism. “The popular remedies offered by the leftist parties will not serve the purpose,” he reasoned. “When a country has still to build industries, their nationalisation is evidently a premature proposition. Socialism was conceived as a way out of the crisis of capitalism in advanced societies with a high degree of industrialisation and a mature working class. That is a very different matter from building up new industries in backward countries where the workers are still half peasants. Socialism today would mean a more or less equal distribution of poverty. Therefore, the main plank in the economic programme of the leftist parties has very little in common with the scientific Socialism evolved by Karl Marx under entirely different circumstances.” Having pointed out that a reorganisation of the Indian economy should be started in its main sector—agriculture—Roy re-emphasises that the agricultural reform that India needs has nothing in common with socialism. He speaks of a sound and rational modern economy and poses the problem of increasing soil fertility and meeting the peasants’ demand for housing, clothing and food and also refers to the need to build roads, set up consumer cooperatives, etc.,<sup>2</sup> reducing all reform to technical and agronomical change, while passing over without any mention at all the resolution of class

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 298-99.

<sup>2</sup> M. N. Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, Renaissance Publishers (Private), Ltd., Calcutta, 1960, p. 160.

contradictions in the countryside and the social, not technical, resources for the advance of the national economy, consisting in the abolition of exploitation, inequality and parasitism.

To socialism and communism Roy opposed the vague goals of "progress and prosperity". According to Roy, "New Humanism advocates a social reconstruction of the world as a commonwealth and fraternity of free men, by the cooperative endeavour of spiritually emancipated moral men". Roy emphasised the cosmopolitan character of "New Humanism". The commonwealth of spiritually free men "will not be limited by the boundaries of national States—capitalist, fascist, socialist, communist, or of any other kind—which will gradually disappear under the impact of the twentieth-century Renaissance of Man".<sup>1</sup>

Roy rejected the communist ideal. He called the Communist parties' goals and political line "communist adventurism",<sup>2</sup> the term which, with the prefix "pseudo" added to it, would identify his own past. His repudiation of communism was coupled with his loss of "faith in the liberating significance of the Russian revolution".<sup>3</sup>

The revulsion of nationalism, cosmopolitan ideas, as well as, perhaps, the old theory of "decolonisation", brought Roy to a manifest ignorance of imperialist exploitation and a failure to understand its new, neo-colonialist methods. "The leftists," said Roy, "who are merely acting as the extremist wing of nationalism, maintain that even today Imperialism is still pooling wires and oppressing India."<sup>4</sup> So, Roy ceased to understand the general democratic tasks before India. Hence his criticism of Nehru's position with regard to American aid and his denunciation of nationalism.

It is worth noting the evolution of Roy's political views in the restricted sense of the term. There was not a trace left of the ideas of a Jacobin constituent assembly or of action to bring it about. The radical dictatorship with proletarian revolutionaries to play the leading role was supplanted by anarchist concepts designed to uphold the

<sup>1</sup> M. N. Roy, *Reason, Romanticism and Revolution*, p. 310.

<sup>2</sup> M. N. Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, p. 83.

<sup>3</sup> See: John Patrick Haithcox, *Op. cit.*, p. 298.

<sup>4</sup> M. N. Roy, *Op. cit.*, p. 206.

freedom of an abstract, non-class individual. "Ever since the days of Plato, the fundamental problem of politics has been the relation between the State and the individual," Roy wrote, proposing that the problem should be solved in keeping with anarchist traditions. "The basic idea of a new, revolutionary social philosophy, therefore, must be that the individual is prior to society, and individual freedom must have priority over social organisation."<sup>1</sup>

It is a political system based on decentralisation that was supposed to achieve that objective. In it, the state is to be built on the foundation of "local republics", whose principal functions should be to train the citizens to develop a sense of their sovereign rights and to create the conditions for such rights to be reasonably exercised. Local republics appeared to be something like a network of political schools, but the right of recall of deputies and referenda will give them the power of direct and effective control over the entire machinery of the state. "Such a democracy," Roy writes, "will transcend the limits of party politics. Individual men will have the chance of being recognised on their merits. Party loyalty and party patronage will no longer eclipse intellectual independence, moral integrity and detached wisdom."<sup>2</sup>

The task is, therefore, to remove the parties which Roy found intent on abrogating the power belonging to the people and to be disintegrating on contact with it. Roy's supporters were not seeking political power. Their only mission was to convince the people that they must hold all power in their hands, guided by their personal convictions, without delegating power to political parties.

To educate the citizens in the spirit of genuine democracy was declared to be the only means of influencing the course of social development. "That sounds like Fabian gradualism," Roy admitted, but the supporters of "New Humanism" had nothing else left for them, in Roy's own judgement.<sup>3</sup>

Roy's political ideals in the closing years of his life tilted towards undisguised anarchism, comprising an exaggeration

<sup>1</sup> M. N. Roy, *Reason, Romanticism and Revolution*, pp. 282, 284.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 280.

<sup>3</sup> M. N. Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, p. 83.

of individual freedom and the treatment of the relations between the individual and the state as a major problem of politics, and excessive decentralisation, as well as political apathy which showed itself in an ambition to write off all political parties. One could not have vindicated all those views without crossing out the theory of the class struggle and the political struggle of the parties it is bound to engender. Roy's anarchism, among other things, had nothing revolutionary or radical about it. That was an inoffensive anarchism of an enlightenment kind, capable of doing nothing except misguiding the masses and in no way threatening the privileged classes and the state.

Astonishing though it may seem, towards the end of his life Roy had come round to sharing the views which were amazingly close (except as regards the attitude to religion, modernism and nationalism) to the ideals of the man he had fought against unsuccessfully for years—Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. Roy's local republics, repudiating the parties, substituting enlightenment and serving the people as much as possible for political action, were nothing short of Gandhi's non-violent anarchism. That is why Jay Prakash Narayan, who had adopted the Gandhian position of "partyless democracy" by the early 1950s, noted a similarity between his views on the matter and Roy's concepts.<sup>1</sup>

It is important to underscore Roy's ideological evolution of the late 1940s and the early 1950s because bourgeois authors are inclined to pass him off for a critic of the Comintern from what they describe as the positions of a truly revolutionary and creative Marxism nurtured on Indian soil.

The whole of Roy's social activity was marked by instability and waverings from one extreme to another. That was true of his abrupt turn from combating the INC to working within the INC framework, from his advocacy of a mass revolutionary party outside the Congress to his preaching of the idea that the CPI was unnecessary and, finally, from his active political struggle to his sermon of "New Humanism".

Much of what Roy attributed to his contemporaries was typical of his own personality. He would describe Jawaharlal Nehru's gravitation towards socialism and Marxism as a

<sup>1</sup> See: John Patrick Hainthcox, *Op. cit.*, p. 332.

“typical groping of the lonesome individual of the 20th century ... for a vaguely conceived new world”.<sup>1</sup> The upshot of Roy’s ideological evolution shows that this assessment can well be applied to himself. Roy had arrived at Marxism not as a proletarian revolutionary having grasped the underlying fundamental principles of the historical process, but as a subjective-minded national revolutionary seeking the means for a radical transformation of the world. He had looked forward to Marxism establishing a dictatorship of the proletariat in India immediately and, once he saw that to be unattainable forthwith, he threw Marxism by the wayside.

Roy spoke ironically from time to time about people who would strive to play the role of great personalities destined to perform a historic mission without considering that the possibilities for social reorganisation were not within themselves but in the objective conditions. But that was one of Roy’s own basic defects. All of his political activity was stamped with revolutionary impatience, adventurism, wishful thinking, inability to make a scientific analysis of objective realities, a failure to understand the exceptional complexity as well as the manifold and sustained character of the struggle for socialism in colonial countries. It is these qualities that brought Roy to political bankruptcy.

The balance of his life was controversial. At the beginning of his activity, Roy played a great role in propagating the ideas of Marxism-Leninism in India and in bringing young Indian revolutionaries into the communist movement. He could do so in virtue of his personal revolutionary commitment, energy, power of conviction and prestige he had among radical nationalists. But there was a process of ideological and political dissociation that went on without interruption in the communist movement of all countries, particularly in the colonial countries. The transition from radical-nationalist and petty-bourgeois positions to consistently socialist ones was very complicated, and not everybody succeeded in bringing it off. Roy turned out to be one of those who had failed to travel that road to the end and broke with the communist movement, having given

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 246.

preference to the “New Humanism” which he preached as a special and revolutionary system. His ideological and political crisis stood in sharp contrast to the history of the CPI which, having survived the years of hard struggle, setbacks, errors, and occasional defeats, has retained its loyalty to Marxism-Leninism and the interests of the Indian working people. It is the activities of Roy in rejecting the Leninist line of the Comintern that had brought him up a blind alley.

## COMINTERN POLICY FOR CHINA (1921-1927)

V. I. GLUNIN

Bourgeois historiography has been showing unflagging interest in Comintern policy for China over the years, with the limelight on the problems of the revolution of 1925-1927.

American historians, who lead the bourgeois world in research into the history of China in general and that of the Chinese Revolution in particular, have produced a series of works on the Comintern's Chinese policy of the 1920s. Those which, in our view, are best known are by Conrad Brandt, Robert North, Xenia Eudin, Clarence Martin Wilbur, Julie L. How, and Benjamin Schwartz. Various aspects of Comintern activities in China are invariably dealt with also in all bourgeois studies on general and particular problems of the Chinese Revolution and of the Communist Party of China, with their authors usually relying on the conclusions of the above-mentioned "classics" of American historiography (books and articles by Lyman Van Slyke, Jerome Chen, James Harrison, Jacques Guillermaz, Gottfried-Karl Kinderman, Jürgen Domes, D. Bing, Wu Tianwei, Wu Kuo, Li Yunhan, Jian Yongjing and others).

The heightened interest of Western historiography in Comintern policy for China has been prompted by a variety of reasons.

In virtue of objective historical circumstances, China became the first big country to have the basic propositions of Lenin's theory of the national revolutionary movement after the October Revolution tried out in its own liberation

movement through revolutionary developments of a major historical dimension. In the 1920s in China the Comintern for the first time applied and theoretically generalised many aspects of the strategy and tactics of a national-colonial revolution which have since entrenched themselves as the stock-in-trade of the international communist movement and are being widely used in the developing countries at the present stage of the revolutionary process. These are the problems of the correlation between the national and social aspects of the revolution, mass movements and revolutionary armed action, non-capitalist development, national democracy, a united anti-imperialist national democratic and progressive front, national revolutionary and vanguard non-communist parties, successive stages of the movement and shifts in the alignment of class forces, etc. The thrust of bourgeois historiography in the treatment of Comintern subjects by quoting the facts of the Chinese Revolution of 1925-1927 has once more corroborated the outstanding role which the Comintern played in assuring the growth and consolidation of the forces of the Chinese Revolution, as well as the relevance and abiding importance of the Comintern's Chinese experience of the 1920s for modern times.

Another reason behind the furious criticism of the Comintern, which is no less important and even predominant for a number of authors, is their transparent political, anti-communist and anti-Soviet ambitions. Many bourgeois sinologists see the events of the 1920s as fertile ground for the ideological and political warfare against Marxism-Leninism, the international communist and national liberation movement, and against the Soviet state and the entire socialist world. Political bias is particularly typical of the outspokenly anti-communist and anti-Soviet writings of Conrad Brandt, Robert North and other American sinologists engaged in Comintern studies. It is indicative that their works invariably use as their starting points the standard postulates formulated by such Western "authorities" on the Comintern's general history as Borkenau, Braunthal, Seton-Watson, to mention just a few.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See: A. B. Reznikov's article in the present collection and also: G. Z. Sorkin, *Reality Versus Fiction. Critique of Bourgeois and Reformist Historiography of the Communist International*, Mysl

What has been at least as noteworthy is the extensive allusions to the "evidence" of Trotskyites, above all the oft-reprinted opus by Harold R. Isaacs, as well as the writings of some defectors from the Communist Party of China, including Zhang Guotao's memoirs, published in the United States after thorough preparation with the participation of American sinologists, which were recognised by bourgeois Sinologists straight away as a major source for research into the history of the CPC and Comintern policy in China. These sinologists are, of course, perfectly aware of the deliberate bias and dishonesty behind the writings of Trotskyites and CPC renegades, as well as the inconsistency of their concepts and versions, which has been reaffirmed over and over again in their own writings. For example, Conrad Brandt, who makes great play of Trotskyite versions and documents in a bid to prove the Comintern's "incompetence" in Chinese affairs, nevertheless, considers Trotsky's position in the Chinese question to have been inconsistent and assumes that it would have doomed the Chinese Revolution to failure.<sup>1</sup> The fact that Trotskyites totally distorted the situation in China and, notably, "overestimated the power of the CPC in the 1920s" has been also conceded by Dan N. Jacobs and Hans N. Baerwald.<sup>2</sup> However, bourgeois critics of the Comintern's Chinese policy are still making deliberate uncritical use of such "sources" to draw some of their important arguments from. The influence of anti-communist and anti-Soviet stereotypes, produced by bourgeois historiography, is also manifest in the studies by those sinologists who are doing their best to stick to academic, objectivist positions. Because of the fallacy of the starting methodological premises, some attempts at an honest analysis of the concrete historical material as often as not turn out to be depreciated by a repetition of anti-communist clichés. The result is that bourgeois historiography presents the Comintern's Chinese

Publishers, Moscow, 1974; L. A. Berezny, *Criticism of Methods of American Bourgeois Historiography of China*, Leningrad University Press, Leningrad, 1968 (both in Russian).

<sup>1</sup> See: Conrad Brandt, *Stalin's Failure in China 1924-1927*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1958, p. 163.

<sup>2</sup> *Chinese Communism. Selected Documents*, Ed. by Dan N. Jacobs and Hans H. Baerwald, Harper and Row Publishers, New York, Evanston, London, 1963, p. 5.

policy distorted, whether wittingly or unwittingly, and this historiography abounds in contradictions, ambiguities, omissions and sometimes sheer slander.

The studies by bourgeois sinologists of the Comintern's Chinese policy as well as of the history of the CPC and the Chinese Revolution of the 1920s are dominated by two main subjects: the problems of the united front and the "failure" of the Chinese Revolution, the CPC and the Comintern in 1927. Comintern policy in China figures invariably as central to all of these bourgeois studies of the united front tactics and the reasons behind their "failure".

Bourgeois historiography appears to have been more or less objective in selecting its main subjects. The tactics of the united anti-imperialist national front were, indeed, the central political problem of that period of the revolutionary struggle in China, for the main protagonists of the united front of the CPC and the Kuomintang as well as for the Comintern, while the tragic events of 1927 left an indelible imprint on the history of the Chinese Revolution and went far towards shaping its subsequent course. But that is where the objectivity of bourgeois historiography ends.

All the general and particular problems of the united front, the reasons behind the 1927 defeat, and the Comintern's role in China are treated by bourgeois sinologists from explicitly or implicitly anti-Soviet and anti-communist positions. The interpretation of the theoretical and tactical fundamentals of the Comintern's policy and its specific activities in China is in line with the general distortion of the Comintern's theory and tactics of national liberation revolutions, with all kinds of the Comintern's "mistakes", "miscalculations" and "failures" magnified and gloated over. Besides, bourgeois sinologists are making great play of the shopworn clichés, borrowed from general Western publications on Comintern history, about the in-built "conflicting structure" and "intrinsic fallacy" of Comintern policy in China and about the Comintern's "responsibility" for the "failure" of the Chinese Revolution and the CPC in 1927.

There has been an appreciably increased tendency for bourgeois historiography over the past few years to set off the allegedly mistaken line of the Comintern in the 1920s against the political course of the CPC in the 1930s and

1940s. In the same vein, one should consider the attempts to present the left-sectarian position of Chen Duxiu and other CPC leaders on the question of the first united front as more responsive to the conditions of China than the Comintern's line. Bourgeois sinology, strange though it may seem at first glance, has been increasingly posing as self-styled advocate of the opportunist elements in the CPC leadership, passing them off for innocent victims of Moscow's self-seeking interests and the Comintern's fallacious and unprincipled policy. The cynicism and hypocrisy of such a stance strike the eye particularly in the light of the general bid of the same authors to explain the violent reprisals of Chiang Kai-shek's thugs against Communists by the same "intrigues" of Moscow and "miscalculations" of the Comintern. .

There is a multi-purpose political ambition behind the anti-Comintern stand which is common to bourgeois sinology. This is, first, to denigrate and discredit, by any means, the Comintern as the international communist organisation guided by the principles of Marxism-Leninism, and in that way to prove scientific communism to be "inapplicable" to the Eastern countries; second, to plant an ideological and theoretical bomb in the body of the principles of proletarian internationalism and the unity of the international communist movement, and encourage the nationalistic, chauvinistic and divisive trends within its ranks; third, to sow the seeds of distrust in the international communist movement, in the USSR and the rest of the socialist community among representatives of the national revolutionary movements in the developing countries gravitating towards scientific communism, to isolate the national liberation movement from its natural allies; fourth, to discredit the whole idea of the united front as if proved worthless in practice.

One of the overriding preoccupations of bourgeois sinologists is to belittle the impact of the Great October Socialist Revolution on the world revolutionary process, including the revolution in China. While magnifying the organisational and political weakness of the early communist and working-class movement in China, bourgeois historians are wont to claim that it was a communist and working-class movement in name and in form only, not in

substance, and that the founding of the CPC was not due to an objective incipient process of fusion of Marxism-Leninism with the working-class and national liberation movement and, finally, that it was the Comintern that had imposed a communist movement on China.<sup>1</sup> That implies that the tactics of a united national front had also been imposed on China, that is to say, that it had no objective historical background. Conrad Brandt, for example, claims, without any evidence to prove it, that "there was ... no historical necessity in Sun's Russian orientation".<sup>2</sup> Such utterances are in crying contrast to reality and to Sun Yat-sen's numerous pronouncements, which are, certainly, well known to Brandt and his colleagues, in which he, drawing upon his own experience and that of his party, convincingly explained the historical necessity of the "Russian orientation" of the Kuomintang and the entire Chinese Revolution. In his deathbed message to the Soviet Union, Sun Yat-sen expressed that idea with perfect clarity: "I adjure the Kuomintang to carry forward its work in the field of the national revolutionary movement so that China could cast off the yoke by which the imperialists had reduced it to the status of a semi-colonial country. For the sake of this goal, I have enjoined the Party to keep on consolidating cooperation with you."<sup>3</sup>

While denying the existence of the socio-economic and political background to the united front and the objective necessity and expediency of its creation in China in the early 1920s, bourgeois historiography has been striving to prove the united front to have been "detrimental" both to the Kuomintang and to the CPC. Viewed from this standpoint, the appeal of the "romantically-minded" Sun Yat-sen for an alliance with the USSR and the CPC looks like the Kuomintang's historic "miscalculation" caused by the "perfidy" of Moscow and corrected by Chiang Kai-shek, the "realist". That paved the way to dismissing the very idea

<sup>1</sup> The work by James Pickney Harrison admitting the endogenous origin of the communist movement in China does not clinch the argument in bourgeois Sinology (see: James Pickney Harrison, *The Long March to Power. A History of the Chinese Communist Party, 1921-72*, Praeger Publishers, New York, Washington, 1972.).

<sup>2</sup> Conrad Brandt, *Op. cit.*, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Sun Yat-sen, *Selected Works*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1964, p. 556 (in Russian).

of the united front as well as the necessity and possibility of social and economic change in the context of a united front.

One of the basic aspects of the campaign to misrepresent the united front tactics in China by bourgeois historians is that of twisting and turning the facts concerning the aims, form and actual substance of cooperation between the CPC and the Kuomintang. Ignoring the dialectics of the revolutionary process, they have been playing off the Soviet Union's "national egoism" against the proletarian internationalism of the Comintern's policy documents, and the Kuomintang's "unselfishness" and the "romantic imagination" of its leaders against the "selfish", purely partisan aims of the Comintern and the CPC. The whole sense of the united front tactics for the Comintern and the CPC boils down, therefore, to the attainment of hegemony in the revolution as an end in itself, rather than to furthering the interests of the revolution. The emergence of the Chinese proletariat and the CPC as the foremost force of the revolution is presented as a consequence of the Comintern's and the CPC's "scheming" and "subversive activity" within the Kuomintang, rather than a result of the natural development of the revolution and the rising role of the mass of the people in it. The unwillingness of the bourgeois historians to concede that the steady rise of the CPC's role in the revolution of 1925-1927 was due not only to the "activity" of Communists, but also to the class limitations of the Kuomintang leaders and their inability and, quite often, refusal to resolve the problems of the country's revolutionary remaking, has been prompted, apart from everything else, by their desire to find a historical excuse for the demolition of the united front by the men of Chiang Kai-shek and for their violent reprisals against Communists. It is indicative that Western historians dodge, as a rule, analysing the internal party strife within the Kuomintang and the evolution of the left and centre wings of the Kuomintang and its leaders in 1924-1927, borrowing their anti-communist arguments from the speeches and publications of Kuomintang right-wingers as well as Trotskyites and CPC renegades.

This prompts the conclusion that it is the political bias that is bringing Western sinologists to a deliberate

self-restriction in choosing the range of sources for their exploration of the Comintern's Chinese policy and to a deliberate neglect of numerous Soviet publications and a wealth of documentary material kept in the US libraries and Taiwan archives and still ignored by American Kremlinologists who are by no means anxious to subject these documents to a scientific analysis. The same must be the reason behind the somewhat outwardly strange fact that for all the abundance of American publications on the history of the Chinese Revolution of the 1920s and the particular attention to the Comintern's Chinese policy and the united front tactics, bourgeois historiography has so far produced no special comprehensive monographic study on the history of the first united front in China. The only Western work on the history of the united front in China which we know of, the book by Lyman P. Van Slyke *Enemies and Friends. The United Front in Chinese Communist History*, practically leaves out of sight the very important period of the 1920s.<sup>1</sup>

This is, in broad outline, the set of subjects and arguments of bourgeois historiography present, in one way or another, in most of Western (principally American) publications, dealing with the Comintern's Chinese policy in the 1920s.

It is Robert C. North who has been one of the first in bourgeois sinology to introduce the notion of "unresolvable contradiction" between Lenin's and Roy's theses which are alleged to be discernible, in various forms, in all the subsequent approaches of the Comintern and the CPC to the united front problems of the 1920s and 1930s. His book, *Moscow and Chinese Communists*, holds a prominent place among the "classic" Western post-war publications on the Comintern's Chinese policy and the history of relations of the CPC with the Comintern and the CPSU(B).<sup>2</sup> The book by North set out the major interpretations of Comintern policy in China in the 1920s which later became generally accepted in bourgeois sinology. Subsequent works

<sup>1</sup> Lyman P. Van Slyke, *Enemies and Friends. The United Front in Chinese Communist History*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1967.

<sup>2</sup> Robert C. North, *Moscow and Chinese Communists*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1953.

by North, written in co-authorship with Xenia Eudin, retained the starting points behind his arguments unchanged, if only brushed up by quoting newly found material.<sup>1</sup>

North formulated his main argument as follows: "Turning their attention to China, Russian Communist leaders in the 'twenties promoted peasant and working-class unrest while seeking at the same time to preserve an alliance with 'bourgeois-nationalists' of the Kuomintang. The results were confusion, distrust and, finally, the near annihilation of the Chinese Communist movement." It was as late as the 1930s and the 1940s that the CPC independently, unaided by the Comintern, "achieved a working balance between the policy of promoting class conflict and that of effecting nationalist alliances. So, too, the Chinese peasant—rather than the urban workingman—turned out to be the main force of the revolution. Even the term 'Soviet' was abandoned. But throughout this thirty-year tangle of events and ideas the concepts of Lenin and Roy, enunciated at the Second Congress, interweave like two scarlet threads."<sup>2</sup> The idea North tries to impress is that the alleged attempt of the Comintern's leadership to "reconcile" Lenin's and Roy's concepts in Chinese policy produced an endless chain of errors which cost many Chinese their lives.

As presented by North and other bourgeois authors, the united front of the 1920s had no objective historical background of its own and looked like the Comintern's subjective decision and as the Kremlin's "wholly tactical and Machiavellian" policy.<sup>3</sup> It is in the sense of Moscow's notorious "Machiavellianism" that all of the Comintern's tactical decisions about the united front in China are presented light-mindedly and without any evidence to prove them. The upshot is that the whole history of the Chinese Revolution of the 1920s and the history of the CPC and the united front is interpreted as a Moscow-sponsored international "communist conspiracy" aimed at undermining the

<sup>1</sup> Xenia J. Eudin and Robert C. North, *Soviet Russia and the East 1920-1927. A Documentary Survey*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1957; Robert C. North and Xenia J. Eudin, *M. N. Roy's Mission to China. The Communist-Kuomintang Split of 1927*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1963.

<sup>2</sup> Robert C. North, *Op. cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

positions of the Western powers in China and the social system which existed there and at destroying the Kuomintang, the major united front ally.

North and his followers saw the aims of the Comintern and the Chinese Communists in the united front as confined to a desire to use the Kuomintang for the infiltration of the working-class and peasant masses, capture the Kuomintang, erode it from within and oust it from leadership of the revolution.<sup>1</sup> Now, the Comintern's Chinese "failure" in 1927 was explained principally by "gross mistakes" in the evaluation of the Communists' united front ally and its "misunderstanding of the Kuomintang",<sup>2</sup> as well as its "incompetence" in Chinese affairs.<sup>3</sup> Another reason behind the Comintern's "setback", as North and those like him hold, is said to have been the Comintern's inability to find the right way of approach to the solution of the peasant question in China. They have even reproached the Comintern with "restraining" the peasant movement: "Stalin and his supporters failed to harness or exploit the peasant discontent they had aggravated. The countryside was on the edge of revolt, but the Stalinists—at what was, perhaps, the crucial moment—held them back" in an attempt to "avoid agrarian revolution at all costs".<sup>4</sup> This applies to the working-class movement, too, which was alleged to have also been "crippled" by Moscow's misguided directives. So, it was the poor Chinese Communists, condemned by Moscow to "near disaster" who had to pay for the results of that "pernicious" policy of the Comintern. North was particularly furious in attacking the Comintern's policy during the "Wuhan period" which he presented as a series of "tragicomic farces".<sup>5</sup>

So, North puts all the blame for the "failure" of the Chinese Revolution and the Communist Party of China's heavy losses in 1927 entirely on the Comintern, its leadership and its representatives in China whose policy was

<sup>1</sup> Robert C. North, *Op. cit.*, p. 53. See also: Xenia J. Eudin and Robert C. North, *Soviet Russia and the East 1920-1927...*, p. 243.

<sup>2</sup> Robert C. North, *Op. cit.*, p. 82.

<sup>3</sup> See: Xenia J. Eudin and Robert C. North, *Op. cit.*, p. 290.

<sup>4</sup> Robert C. North, *Op. cit.*, p. 90.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

alleged to have been entirely mistaken and unworkable in the first place because of its inherent unresolvable contradictions. "Scarcely anyone of them," North writes, "really understood what was taking place; none foresaw clearly and sufficiently in advance the difficulties inherent in harmonising revolution 'from above' with revolution 'from below'."<sup>1</sup> In so doing, North draws heavily on Trotskyite concepts, slightly modernising them.

The same purpose of discrediting the Comintern's Chinese policy was behind the collection of *Documents on Communism, Nationalism and Soviet Advisers in China, 1918-1927*, compiled by C. Martin Wilbur and Julie Lien-Ying How.<sup>2</sup> The collection contains 50 disconnected and haphazardly selected documents, put together so as to illustrate and substantiate the arguments about the "hand of Moscow" and the Comintern's "incompetence" in Chinese affairs and, consequently, about the futility of its attempt at directing the revolution in China.<sup>3</sup> Wilbur, just like North, argues that "a great conflict within the revolutionary leadership" between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party of China "was inevitable from the beginning", since the united front was no more than a means for the Comintern and the CPC to seize leadership of the revolution in order to establish communism in China.<sup>4</sup>

A similar concept of "wrong leadership" by the Kremlin and its "misunderstanding" of the Chinese conditions has been advanced by Dan Jacobs and Hans Baerwald who compiled another collection of documents on CPC history. "The experiences of the present leaders of the CCP in the 1920s and 1930s," the authors maintain, "provide them with ample evidence that the Russian comrades may well be misinformed about conditions in China.... Over the years, the leadership of the CCP has thus seen the Kremlin guilty of many errors and double dealings."<sup>5</sup> Referring to the issue of the united front, the authors declare that "the alliance

<sup>1</sup> Robert C. North and Xenia J. Eudin, *M. N. Roy's Mission to China. The Communist-Kuomintang Split of 1927*, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> See: C. Martin Wilbur and Julie Lien-Ying How, *Documents on Communism, Nationalism and Soviet Advisers in China. 1918-1927*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1956.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 463.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 458.

<sup>5</sup> *Chinese Communism. Selected Documents*, pp. 4, 5.

between the Nationalists and Communists in China in the period 1923-1926—an alliance dictated more by Moscow politics than by an analysis of the political realities in China—ended disastrously for the CCP”.<sup>1</sup> Another man who was harping on the Kremlin’s “mistakes” was Ross Dowson. The CPC leaders, he argues, “clearly sensed the falseness of the Comintern policy” in 1927, and opposed “this adventurous policy”. Therefore, the responsibility for the “disaster” should be placed entirely on the Comintern.<sup>2</sup>

An outspokenly anti-Soviet book by Jerome Chen *Mao and the Chinese Revolution*<sup>3</sup> is quite in line with the concepts of North and Brandt. He interprets the united front tactics in the light of the same supposedly unsolvable conflict between “revolution from above” which has a “bloc within” to match it and “revolution from below” more consonant with a “bloc without”.<sup>4</sup> The left wing of the Kuomintang was, in Chen’s opinion, “no more than a pillow-case stuffed with red feathers” and “an empty shell”.<sup>5</sup>

The root of the “failure” of the CPC in 1927 lay, Chen argues, in the mistaken policy of “revolution from above” and its corollary, the “bloc within” policy proposed by the Comintern. Both policies were rendered “meaningless” after Chiang Kai-shek’s coup of April 1927 and should have been abandoned.<sup>6</sup> That conclusion of Chen’s suggests that the “Wuhan period” of the united front was nonsense which did the CPC more harm than good. It is the same argument that Trotskyites used.

One of the few Western publications expressly designed to consider the united front in China was Lyman P. Van Slyke’s book *Enemies and Friends. The United Front in Chinese Communist History*. The author’s starting assumption was this: “In the 1920s, united front tactics were involved in the nearly disastrous defeats the Party suffered; but during the 1930s ... a new concept of the united front

<sup>1</sup> *Chinese Communism. Selected Documents*, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Ross Dowson, “Chinese Revolutionists in Exile”, *International Socialist Review*, Vol. 24, No. 3, 1963, pp. 78, 79.

<sup>3</sup> See: Jerome Chen, *Mao and the Chinese Revolution*, Oxford University Press, London, 1965.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 122, 126.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

emerged. Developed essentially on the Chinese initiative, the united front derived from real needs and actual experience more than from theoretical considerations. Gradually ... it became an integral part of Chinese communist thought and practice.”<sup>1</sup> Under this guideline, the experiences of the united front in the 1920s take up no more than one-twentieth of the text of the book which concentrates most on the tactics of the 1930s and 1940s.

The author claims to have produced a new concept of the united front in China, interpreted as a large problem of the interrelationship between the leading elite and the masses. Criticising the interpretation—common to Western sinologists—of the problem of the united front as a temporary tactical alliance, Van Slyke tends to consider the united front “an integral part of the Communist movement in China”.<sup>2</sup> However, as far as the assessment of the experiences of the 1920s is concerned, Van Slyke borrows, lock, stock and barrel, standard anti-communist concepts prevalent in Western sinology and the Trotskyite writings, and regards the united front of the 1920s as no more than a temporary tactic of the Comintern and the CPC.

The most common practice of bourgeois historiography in the evaluation of united front tactics in China in the 1920s is, as stated earlier on, to oppose the objective internal dialectics of the development of the united front by supposedly subjective, contradictory and even mutually exclusive guidelines of the Comintern in China. It is this kind of arguments that Van Slyke resorts to. He has presented the united front tactics, evolved by the Comintern, as intrinsically wrong and unworkable because the Comintern set the CPC and itself the aims which cancelled each other out in advance or the “choice” between the national and social revolutions or, in a more restricted political sense, the “choice” between the consolidation of the Kuomintang and the simultaneous growth of the CPC. In other words, the Comintern “tried to eat its cake and have it too”.<sup>3</sup> “Thus the call to step up the peasant movement,” the author writes, “was combined with a demand for continued colla-

<sup>1</sup> Lyman P. Van Slyke, *Op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

boration with groups that wanted to slow it down. One policy overrated the CCP's ability to control the action of the masses and thereby create independent strength. The other policy exaggerated the CCP's ability to dominate and direct its bourgeois political and military allies."<sup>1</sup> Apart from this "intrinsic contradiction", Comintern policy was said to be "indecisive". It is because of this unresolvable intrinsic contradiction that the Comintern pursued what Van Slyke described as the "unsuccessful united front policy" in China in the 1920s which brought the CPC to the brink of "nearly total destruction".<sup>2</sup> Van Slyke's anti-Comintern position had its fullest expression in the conclusion from the chapter on the united front of the 1920s: "Although the CCP won impressive victories, it had no real chance of attaining its goal as long as it acted in accord with the Comintern conception of a tactical, international, and revolutionary united front."<sup>3</sup>

John Patrick Haithcox also claims to have produced a "new interpretation" of the dispute between Lenin and Roy at the Second Congress of the Comintern. However, while criticising North for an overestimation, and Whiting for an underestimation of the influence of Roy's concept on Comintern policy in the national and colonial question, the author arrives at the same trivial conclusion about an unresolvable contradiction between "revolution from above", i. e., "national" revolution, and "revolution from below", i. e., "social" revolution.<sup>4</sup>

The author of one of the latest summing-up American publications on the history of the CPC, James Harrison, is one of the bourgeois sinologists who lay major stress in their research efforts on the "revolutionary nationalism" of the CPC leadership as the dominant feature of its political thinking since the party's inception to this day. In this sense, as well as by their social origin, communist leaders, in Harrison's judgement, did not essentially differ from Sun Yat-sen or Chiang Kai-shek; they were no less patriots than

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>4</sup> See: John Patrick Haithcox, "The Roy-Lenin Debate on Colonial Policy: A New Interpretation", *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 1, 1963, pp. 93-101.

the men of the Kuomintang because they had adopted the communist doctrine, foreign to the traditions of China, not as a class-proletarian ideology, but as the most suitable political instrument they thought necessary to "save China".<sup>1</sup>

In Harrison's opinion, the distinction between the Communists and the Kuomintang was not so much qualitative as quantitative: Communists came to realise that the condition of China in the early 20th century "defied" moderate solutions, and that it would have been impossible to "save China" without profound social change. It is for this particular reason, rather than for any other, that the more radical representatives of the Chinese bourgeois-landlord intelligentsia adopted communist ideology and politics as a "technical means" of saving the nation by adjusting Marxism to the Chinese tradition, and combining the "Western revolutionary intellectual tradition with mass politics, Chinese style".<sup>2</sup> A specific product of the adjustment of Marxism to Chinese nationalism was the notorious "mass line" which became the major weapon for the conquest of power by the Communist Party of China. So, it comes out, Harrison sums up, that the complex history of Chinese communism over the past half-century has been dominated by two interlocking themes. "The first has been the ability of the Communists to appropriate the spirit of revolutionary nationalism that has permeated twentieth-century Chinese life. The second has been their ability to organise the people through the 'mass' line for both the national revolution against warlords and foreign powers and the social revolution to create a 'new' socialist China."<sup>3</sup> The historic merit of the CPC is, according to Harrison, consequently, the fact that in the 1940s it removed the theretofore unresolvable contradiction between "revolution from above" and "revolution from below", having resolved it by giving free rein to nationalism which brought the CPC to victory.

It is in the light of this general concept that Harrison examines the tactics of the first united front in China.

<sup>1</sup> James Pickney Harrison, *Op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6,7.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 512.

Unlike other bourgeois authors, Harrison does not consider the united front to be an “unnatural” alliance created “at the behest of Moscow”, since all the parties to it—the Comintern, the CPC, and the Kuomintang—had entered that alliance, naturally each in its own way, proceeding, above all, from nationalist considerations. The break-up of the united front in 1927 was due, above all, to the fact that by that time of a profound accentuation of contradictions within its ranks neither the Comintern, nor the CPC, which was weak at the time (the Kuomintang was not capable of it altogether), could find a satisfactory way of combining national and social revolutions, which was found through the “mass line” ten years later. “In truth,” Harrison says, winding up his analysis of the tactics of the first united front, “the situation [in 1927—*Auth.*] was so difficult and complicated as to block success for the Communists at this stage....

“A final irony resides in the fact that, several years earlier, the Communists had succeeded only too well in reorganising the Kuomintang—so well that they could not reorganise it a second time. Both parties had become infinitely stronger, but, in subordinating themselves to the nationalists, as Sun Yat-sen and the Comintern had demanded, Chinese Communists were deprived of the opportunity to develop the ‘illegal machinery’ with which they might have challenged their superiors.

“Beyond such considerations, in the 1920s the Kuomintang counted for far more than did the Communists among those who controlled military force and hence the political direction of a country so often torn by warfare. Even for the intellectuals, Marxism was still ‘new and foreign’ in the 1920s to claim dominant loyalties. It was an age of revolutionary nationalism, but for most that still meant war against the warlords and imperialists, not against the Chinese society itself. Hence, the first united front, itself a product of surging nationalism, broke down over the ultimate question of the sort of country China was to be.”<sup>1</sup> In that way Harrison, in fact, eventually shifted the “blame” for the breakdown of the united front on the Comintern, opposing the “right” line of the CPC in the 1930s-

<sup>1</sup> James Pickney Harrison, *Op. cit.*, pp. 116-17.

1940s to the Comintern's "mistaken" line.

Another writer, Zhang Guotao (Chang Kuo-tao), repeatedly underlines the decisive role of the Comintern's "mistakes" in the "failure" of the revolution of 1925-1927, although he does not absolve the CPC either from the responsibility for that "failure". The author's general idea is that Chinese Communists should have taken up a more "independent" position both in the 1920s and later on with regard to the Comintern whose "mistakes" he castigates unsparingly.<sup>1</sup>

For all the determination of the whole of bourgeois Sinology in dealing with the Comintern's Chinese policy, the history of the CPC and the Chinese revolution to discredit by all means the very idea of a united national anti-imperialist front and, above all, Comintern policy with regard to the first united front in China, most of the Western authors still acknowledge the sweeping achievements of the CPC due to the practical implementation of the united front tactics. Yet they do so not because they want to be objective, but because they have to, following the preconceived idea of the CPC's "subversive" designs against the Kuomintang or that of opposing the CPC to the Comintern. Besides, isolated and casual remarks about some positive aspects of the united front are drowned by exactly opposite declarations.

"The Communists," Robert North writes, "committed serious mistakes, but they also achieved significant gains, and their leaders made startling predictions of events to come."<sup>2</sup> Some authors, like Martin Wilbur, careful to safeguard their solid academic reputation, admit that the united front was useful not only for the CPC but for the Kuomintang as well. When they entered the united front, Wilbur writes, the men of the Kuomintang wanted to exploit the CPC and the Comintern, particularly Russian money and arms, as well as the support of the masses that followed the Communists, for the capture of power.<sup>3</sup> The objectives the Comintern had set before the CPC turned out

<sup>1</sup> See: Chang Kuo-tao, *The Rise of the Chinese Communist Party 1921-1927*, University of Kansas Press, Lawrence, 1971, pp. 664, 667.

<sup>2</sup> Xenia J. Eudin and Robert C. North, *Soviet Russia and the East 1920-1927...*, p. 243.

<sup>3</sup> See: C. Martin Wilbur and Julie Lien-Ying How, *Op. cit.*, p. 460.

to be higher than the latter could ever attain, in Wilbur's opinion.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, both the CPC and the Kuomintang learned a great deal from Soviet Russia.<sup>2</sup> In spite of the heavy defeat of 1927, the CPC "gained invaluable experience" in the organisation of the party, the army and the united front and in the organisation of the masses, which eventually brought it to victory in 1949. So, the united front tactics "was a major source of strength in the Communists' rise to power".<sup>3</sup>

While stressing in every way the nationalism of the Chinese—whether those of the Kuomintang or the Communists, Wilbur still concedes that, in spite of the events of 1927, "the Russians ... made a powerful impress upon the country". "The great asset of the Russians [in face of the West—*Auth.*] was that they had something practical to offer to Chinese patriots searching for ways to save their country. They had a theory of revolution, and technical skills in the conduct of revolution and war, and they could provide money and arms."<sup>4</sup>

It was, perhaps, Jacques Guillermaz, a prominent French sinologist, who was more objective than most Western authors in his assessment of the united front. The author makes no secret of his political sympathy for the Kuomintang, yet, unlike other bourgeois sinologists, he believes the united front of the 1920s to have been a natural alliance of all of China's revolutionary forces in the struggle against their common enemies—feudalism and imperialism.<sup>5</sup> It is not the Communists alone but the Kuomintang members as well who derived some benefit from that alliance, with the Communists having made particular contribution of their own towards the Kuomintang's activities.<sup>6</sup> Right until the "events of the 20th of March", 1926, there had been, by and large, good agreement between the CPC and the Kuomintang since the Communists were quite "reserved and reasonable", while the Comintern and its representatives in

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 461.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 457.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 467.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 465.

<sup>5</sup> Jacques Guillermaz, *Histoire du Parti communiste chinois (1921-1949)*, Payot, Paris, 1968, p. 77.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

China showed themselves "very cautious and at the whole honest" with regard to the Kuomintang.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, this author, like the whole of bourgeois sinology as such, virtually tries to justify the break-up of the united front, brought about by the Kuomintang, and the Chiang Kai-shek terror, seeking to explain both principally by the "excesses" and "omissions" of the CPC and the Comintern in 1927.

One of the particular features of the bourgeois interpretations of the Comintern's Chinese policy was to put forward the form of the united front as a central problem. The artificial overplaying of this problem was by no means accidental for that artless ploy was used in an effort to blur over, push into the background or ignore altogether such basic, indeed, fundamental aspects of any liberation movement as the character, purposes and the motive forces of the revolution, the dynamics behind the relationship of the class and political forces, specific historical, economic, political, national, cultural, everyday and other conditions of the struggle, that is, the objective socio-economic and political premises for the formation and development of class alliances and blocs, with the first united front in China as one of its varieties. The avoidance of an examination of the specific historical and objective conditions of the revolutionary movement of China in the 1920s which were essential eventually to any particular form of struggle forcing itself or being pushed into the foreground, including that of the united front, offers wide scope for all kinds of arbitrary subjective theories with no scientific basis to rest on and for the construction of various contemplative schemes, ascribed to the political opponents, which are then effectively dismissed.

All bourgeois speculation about the form of the united front in China, as well as about other aspects of the Comintern's Chinese policy, turned on the dispute between Lenin and Roy at the Second Congress of the Comintern, with Roy's theses played off against those of Lenin's as fundamentally conflicting. Besides, it hinged on what was described as the Comintern's abortive attempt to get this "contradiction" composed through an approval of both

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

“mutually exclusive” resolutions, one of which (Lenin’s theses) envisaged a “revolution from above”, i. e., a “national” revolution, while the other (Roy’s theses)—a “revolution from below”, i. e., a “social” revolution. The former was alleged to predetermine the “internal” form of the united front (“bloc within”), while the latter predetermined the “external” form (“bloc without”).

In elaborating on this idea, Western authors maintain that the Comintern gave preference to the “national” revolution in China and the appropriate “internal” form of the united front, i. e., to the one providing for the Communists to join the Kuomintang, guiding themselves not by a concrete analysis of the situation in the country, but proceeding essentially from an abstract scheme discounting Chinese realities. At the same time, for pragmatic considerations, the Comintern attempted to stage a “revolution from below” in China, that is, to apply Roy’s concept by fostering the workers’ and peasants’ movement which was supposed to undermine basically the “bloc within” of the CPC and the Kuomintang. Therein lay, as Western authors argue, the in-built contradiction of the Comintern’s entire Chinese policy which foredoomed it to an unavoidable defeat and which did irreparable damage to the Communist Party of China and to the Chinese revolutionary movement as a whole.

Let us note, somewhat in anticipation, that the “contradictions” ascribed to the Comintern’s Chinese policy run through, in actual fact, the historical explorations of the bourgeois sinologists themselves. The Western authors, naturally, have all their sympathy for the “revolution from above”, interpreted in the larger sense as a reformist nationalism, or a restricted revolutionary bourgeois nationalism at the best, in contradistinction to the class struggle of the working people in keeping with the principles of proletarian internationalism. At the same time, they furiously attack the “internal” form of the united front in China, which the Comintern stood for, by claiming it to be opposed by a gravitation of some of the Chinese Communists and members of the Kuomintang towards the “external” form said to be more adequate to the actual situation in China. The general sense of the Western authors’ speculation on the form of the first united front in China is that the

Comintern, having insisted on the Communists joining the Kuomintang, restricted the CPC's action by depriving it of the freedom of manoeuvre and condemning it to a submission to the Kuomintang and to the defeat of 1927. The Comintern's "guilt" was, besides, in having supposedly ignored the changed situation in China as the revolutionary events unfolded and, having dogmatically clung to the "internal" form of the united front it had once selected, while checking all attempts of the CPC (especially in 1926) at replacing it by the "bloc within" form before it was too late. When, however, the Comintern eventually realised the failure of the "bloc within" (in the spring of 1927), it was, indeed, too late to change anything at all.

Here is how Van Slyke put the question of the form of the united front: "The bloc within, a united front from above, was essentially a Russian formulation accepted by a weak and unarmed Chinese Communist Party. Obviously, a new approach was necessary."<sup>1</sup> It was that "new approach", as Van Slyke maintains, that was worked out in the 1930s and 1940s without and in spite of the Comintern.<sup>2</sup> A similar position of condemnation of the "bloc within" as a purely Russian Comintern policy is held by James Harrison. Substituting, as the majority of bourgeois authors, the question of the form of the united front for that of its content, Harrison presumes that it is an "external", rather than "internal", alliance between the CPC and the Kuomintang that would generally have been more useful for the Communists and the united front. At the same time, he considers the "bloc without" form to have been equally fruitless, giving preference to a "third type" of united front said to have been discovered in the 1930s or 1940s. In his opinion, the Chinese Communists should have termi-

<sup>1</sup> Lyman P. Van Slyke, *Op. cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> For more evidence of the utter groundlessness of the arguments about a "purely Chinese" origin of the "new approach" to the united front tactics of the 1930s and 1940s see: A. M. Grigoriev and A. B. Reznikov, "G. Dimitrov and the Problems of the United Anti-Imperialist Front". In: *Georgi Dimitrov, an Outstanding Leader of the Communist Movement*, Politizdat, Moscow, 1972, pp. 274-93; A. M. Grigoriev, "G. Dimitrov and the Elaboration of the Strategy and Tactics of the Chinese Revolution in the Mid-1930s". In: *Georgi Dimitrov—an Outstanding Leninist Revolutionary*, Politizdat, Moscow, 1974, pp. 228-45 (both in Russian).

nated the united front altogether as early as 1926, following Chiang Kai-shek's coup in Canton on March 20.<sup>1</sup>

Zhang Guotao holds a similar view in his memoirs. Reaffirming his viewpoint of the early 1920s, Zhang Guotao declares that the CPC's principal mistake in the realisation of the united front tactics was in having agreed to the Comintern-recommended "bloc within" form of alliance with the Kuomintang. The mistaken choice of form of the united front had, in his view, become the major reason behind the united front break-up in 1927.<sup>2</sup>

As bourgeois authors see it, the "bloc within" form of the united front was equally detrimental both to the CPC and the Kuomintang. This reveals one more contradiction in the Western interpretations of the Comintern's Chinese policy. On the one hand, as stated earlier on, the "bloc within" is alleged to have "restricted" the CPC and obstructed the unfolding of its own forces, while, on the other, it turns out to have stimulated the Communists' "subversive activity" in the Kuomintang and to have helped them "destroy" the Kuomintang from within, which brought on a "legitimate" retaliation from the Kuomintang leaders, "constrained" eventually to visit murderous reprisals upon the Communists. The Kuomintang, as a form of organisation of united front in the 1920s, was no more than a "Trojan horse" for the Communists to gain control of China, in the opinion of North and other authors.<sup>3</sup> A similar idea has been advanced by Conrad Brandt who sought to justify Chiang Kai-shek's counterrevolutionary terror in 1927 by alleging that they had no other means of countering the Communists' subversive activity within the Kuomintang except by armed force.<sup>4</sup>

In its treatment of the choice of form of the first united front in China, as well as, incidentally, of all other aspects of the Comintern's Chinese policy, bourgeois Sinology has, in point of fact, neglected the method of concrete historical analysis, although it does speculate quite often on the impact the particular Chinese events may have had on decision-making in Moscow. That speculation of Western

<sup>1</sup> See: James Pickney Harrison, *Op. cit.*, pp. 48, 75.

<sup>2</sup> See: Chang Kuo-tao, *Op. cit.*, p. 656.

<sup>3</sup> See: Robert C. North, *Op. cit.*, pp. 53, 66.

<sup>4</sup> See: Conrad Brandt, *Op. cit.*, p. 45.

authors about the Comintern's "dogmatic" or "inflexible" approach to the question of the form of united front in China, said to have been determined by an a priori Leninist theory approved by the Second Congress of the Comintern, has been a fruit of the obvious political bias, or theoretical ignorance. In this particular case, just like in many others, the Comintern and the Marxists-Leninists are alleged to have held the views and undertaken the acts which were foreign to their very nature.

Marxism-Leninism is known to differ from all primitive forms of socialism by never associating movement with any particular form of struggle. It "positively does not reject any form of struggle" and "demands an absolutely *historical* examination of the question of the forms of struggle".<sup>1</sup> It is from this standpoint of a concrete historical analysis that the Comintern viewed the forms of the national liberation movement in various countries, including China. And it is not by chance that the general theses of the Fourth Congress of the Comintern on the Eastern question, which called on the Communist parties of the East to apply the tactic of a united anti-imperialist front, should have said nothing about the forms of the united front.<sup>2</sup> The form of united front in a particular country was decided by the Comintern in each case and in every stage of the struggle, depending on the situation of a given movement at a given stage of its development. This applies to China in full measure.

The question of choosing the form of the first united front in China has been but inadequately studied. Nevertheless, the material available and research studies do provide enough evidence to establish quite definitely that the particular settlement of this question was determined eventually by the general correlation of the committed class and political forces in China, that being done not only by the Comintern but also by the CPC and especially by the Kuomintang. One can even say that it is the Kuomintang, as

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Guerrilla Warfare", *Collected Works*, Vol. 11, pp. 213, 214.

<sup>2</sup> See: *The Comintern's Strategy and Tactics in the National-Colonial Revolution as Applied to China*, The Institute of World Economy and Politics, Moscow, 1934, pp. 44-53 (in Russian).

the stronger partner in this political bloc, that had the final say throughout the life-time of the first united front. To sum up everything we know about this problem, we can draw the following conclusions.

1. For many reasons it was more preferable for the Comintern to see the CPC join the Kuomintang as an ideologically, politically and organisationally independent faction originally destined to act as the enterprising, stimulating and cementing core of the loose and motley party of Sun Yat-sen, called on to assume the role of the political organisation of the united front adequately representative of all political parties, alliances and groups capable of taking part in the national liberation revolution.<sup>1</sup>

2. The CPC originally agreed to an alliance with the Kuomintang only on terms of equal partnership, precluding any form of the Communists entering the Kuomintang.<sup>2</sup>

3. The Kuomintang rejected both an equal partnership with the CPC and the CPC's admission to the Kuomintang as an independent faction.<sup>3</sup>

The tough negotiations and struggle over the question of the form and terms of the united front, involving the Comintern, the CPC and Kuomintang, ended in the adoption of a compromise decision on Communists joining the Kuomintang individually, with the ideological, political and organisational independence both of the CPC and the Kuomintang being preserved intact. Naturally, such a decision implied a certain convergence of the political guidelines of both parties and their cooperation in working out a mutually acceptable common political platform for the united front to stand on. In actual practice, that meant, above all, a fundamental reorganisation of the Kuomintang with its ideological and political guidelines generally revolutionised and radicalised, and with it drawing closer to the working masses inside the country and with the USSR and the Comintern outside. The new, revolutionary political

<sup>1</sup> See: S. A. Dalin, *Chinese Memoirs, 1926-1927*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1975, pp. 97-98 (in Russian).

<sup>2</sup> See: "CPC Statement of June 15, 1922 on the Situation in the Country". In: *Reference Material on the History of the Chinese Revolution*, Issue 1, Peking, 1957, pp. 9-19 (in Chinese).

<sup>3</sup> See: Li Yunhan, *From the Admission of Communists to the Party Purge*, Hong Kong, 1966, pp. 80-125 (in Chinese).

platform of the Kuomintang had been elaborated, at Sun Yat-sen's request, with the participation of the CPC and the Comintern,<sup>1</sup> approved at the First Congress of the Kuomintang (January 1924)<sup>2</sup> and reaffirmed at its Second Congress (January 1926).<sup>3</sup> The First Congress of the Kuomintang also approved the party's reorganisation in keeping with the principles similar to those of the organisational structure of Communist parties and authorised the admission of Communists to the party's central and provincial executive bodies.

While calling on the CPC to apply the united front principle by having Communists join the Kuomintang, with the CPC's ideological, political and organisational independence preserved intact, the Comintern proceeded from the assumption that the working-class movement and the Communist Party in China were still weak and that the revolution was still under control of the national bourgeoisie as represented by the Kuomintang Party which had agreed to admit Communists to its ranks. Had there been a sweeping organised working-class movement in the country and a strong mass Communist party, the Communists simply would not have had to join the Kuomintang, the more so since such a step would have meant rolling back the whole movement.

The "bloc within" form, worked out with the Comintern's participation, which virtually implied converting the Kuomintang into a form of organisation of the united front, along with preserving intact its ideological, political and organisational independence as a party, responded to the most far-reaching objectives of the Chinese revolution and, at the same time, equally took into account the interests both of the Kuomintang and the Communist Party. The Kuomintang, while admitting Communists, emerged from a previous condition of political isolation and cut the way for itself to an alliance with the international revolutionary

<sup>1</sup> See: "ECCI Resolution on the Relations Between the Chinese Communist Party and the Kuomintang". In: *The Communist International 1919-1943. Documents*, Vol. 2, Oxford University Press, London, New York, Toronto, 1960, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> See: Sun Yat-sen, *Selected Works*, pp. 399-412 (in Russian).

<sup>3</sup> *Congresses and Conferences of the Kuomintang*, Moscow, 1928 (in Russian); *The Manifesto and Resolutions of the Second Congress of the Chinese Kuomintang*, Canton, 1926 (in Chinese).

movement and with the Chinese working class and the peasantry, as well as to the creation of its own armed forces. At the same time, while urging the Communists to work inside the Kuomintang, the Comintern saw that as an effective way of opening up a wide access for the CPC to the masses and turning it within the shortest possible space of time into a strong mass political party relying on a well-organised powerful working-class and peasant movement led by it, rather than by the bourgeoisie. The Comintern's mission arose from the objective conditions of the Chinese people's national struggle against imperialism and from the historical necessity of the fundamental dismantling of the Chinese agrarian system and consisted, therefore, in aiding a united effort by the CPC and the Kuomintang since, disunited, neither of the parties could lead China's revolutionary masses to resolving these problems.

The Comintern-proposed form of united front (individual admission of Communists to the Kuomintang) proved well worthwhile and turned out to be the most expedient one in the particular context of China in the 1920s. Resistance to the Communists joining the Kuomintang or the premature withdrawal of Communists from the Kuomintang, which the Trotskyites and left-sectarian elements in the CPC tried to impose on the Comintern and which was also sought by the right wing of the Kuomintang, would have inevitably had the effect of drastically narrowing down or breaking up the united front ahead of time, as well as that of intensifying the conciliatory and counterrevolutionary elements inside the Kuomintang itself.

The unprecedented scope of the Chinese Revolution, led by the Kuomintang in cooperation with the Communists and resulting in the collapse of the militarist regime, is the best evidence of the Comintern's correct political choice. Throughout the three and a half years of the united front in the "bloc within" form, the revolution in China was invariably in the ascendant, and that development was temporarily interrupted only when the Kuomintang broke off its alliance with the Communists and with revolutionary democracy, trampled its own revolutionary programme bequeathed by Sun Yat-sen, and acted as the hangman and killer of the revolution.

Any political bloc, whatever its form, exists only as

long as the political conditions and the alignment of class forces allow it to continue and, consequently, as long as its constituent political parties and groups have any stake in it. The first united front in China existed in the unchanged form of "bloc within" for a relatively long period of time just because it responded in the best and most fruitful way to the character and objectives of that stage of the Chinese Revolution and because it was to the benefit both of the CPC and the Kuomintang, not to the Comintern alone, as Western historiography has been hopelessly trying to convince everybody. It is not for nothing that from 1923 to April 1927 the Kuomintang, generally speaking, invariably turned down the attempts of the right-wingers first to prevent the admission of Communists to that party and then to break from them organisationally and politically (when the Kuomintang was reorganised in 1923, at its First and Second congresses, and at the plenary sessions of the KMT Central Executive Committee in August 1924, May 1925, May 1926 and March 1927). That fact alone totally disproves the allegation of bourgeois authors that the "bloc within" had been imposed on China by the Comintern.

The overriding objectives of the national revolutionary movement in China in the 1920s were the final establishment of national independence and territorial integrity, restoration of China's national sovereignty, the overthrow of the power of imperialist agents in the shape of feudal militarists, the country's political unification under a democratic national government, and the creation of a unified independent national state. That was coupled with the proclamation of bourgeois-democratic freedoms, political and social emancipation of the working masses and improvement of their living conditions.

The pronounced national liberation and national unification character of the revolution determined a fairly wide spectrum of the participants in it. The national bourgeoisie,<sup>1</sup> the urban petty bourgeoisie, the working class and the peasantry—those were the principal motive forces of the national revolution of 1925-1927; the national liberation

<sup>1</sup> The term "national bourgeoisie" is usually applied to the tradesmen and manufacturers of the bourgeois middle classes unconnected or little connected with foreign capital.

movement was also joined in various stages by considerable sections from the landlord class as well as isolated feudal militarists and militarist groups and various groups of the compradore bourgeoisie. The objective requirements of the revolutionary struggle dictated the need to unite all those sections and groups within a single anti-imperialist national front. That implied, naturally, that various classes and social segments and political groups had not an identical role to play within the united front. The balance of forces within the united front also changed continuously as did the objective conditions of the struggle, and the presence of political forces in the united front differed in time and duration.

The steady rise of the role and importance of the Chinese proletariat was the distinguishing feature of the revolutionary events in China in the 1920s. Having entered the scene of political struggle for the first time during the "May Fourth Movement" of 1919, the Chinese proletariat rose within an incredibly brief space of time to the position of the vanguard force of the revolution and could even challenge the hegemony of the bourgeoisie. Working-class action was the most striking episode of the revolutionary struggle of that period ("May Thirtieth Movement" of 1925, the Hong Kong-Canton Strike of 1925-1926, the uprising of the Shanghai proletariat in the spring of 1927, to mention just a few). All those episodes revealed the greatest heroism of the proletariat, its organisation, cohesion and sense of solidarity as well as the tremendous force of its creative initiative and revolutionary enthusiasm. The Communist Party of China was the principal leader and organiser of the revolutionary struggle of the Chinese working class.

The active participation of the Chinese working class not only in the revolution itself but also in its leadership imparted a special dimension to the liberation struggle and predetermined the application of specifically proletarian forms and methods of struggle and, which was particularly important, the fusion of the Chinese national revolutionary movement with the world-wide working-class movement, and its contact with Soviet Russia. The latter factor was of paramount importance for China. Proletarian internationalism was a feature of the Chinese proletariat ever since the opening stages of its independent class strug-

gle and active involvement in the overall national struggle.

However, much of the revolutionary action by the working class in that period was unavoidably spontaneous and disunited; independent class organisations of the proletariat on many occasions were unstable, often superficial, involving as they did a relatively small proportion of the most politically conscious workers. The Communists, who were conducting political work and organisational activity among the workers, had not yet the intimate connection with the broad proletarian masses.

One current argument in sinological publications is about the absolute and relative weakness and duality of the Chinese national bourgeoisie. In actual fact, however, for all its obvious frailties, the national bourgeoisie at the time was far stronger than the proletariat. The strength of the bourgeoisie resided in its capital assets, better organisation and greater political experience, but, more particularly, in the ramified and close connections with the other propertied classes, the military establishment and foreign capital.

The absolute and relative weakness of the Chinese proletariat did not allow it to gain the hegemony of the revolution, although the proletariat did play a rather active, and very often vanguard, role in it and took part in its leadership. The revolution of 1925-1927 was jointly led by two classes—the national bourgeoisie and the workers as represented by the Kuomintang and the CPC. The reason behind such a paradox was that neither of these classes (nor their respective main parties) was yet in a position to lead the revolution on its own.

Conscious of their weakness, the national bourgeoisie and the Kuomintang were looking for massive support from the workers and peasants, while trying to fall back also upon the patriotically-minded sections of the landed gentry and, more particularly, on the army officers. In the international arena, the Kuomintang, never disdaining cooperation with the competing imperialist powers, pressed for moral, political and, above all, material support from the USSR, and persistently sought organisational connections with the Comintern. As long as the working-class and communist movement in China were weak and did not threaten the foundations of the existing social order, the national bo-

bourgeoisie was ready and willing to cooperate with the Communists within the framework of a united anti-imperialist front and even agreed, to a certain extent, to share the leadership of the revolution with them, retaining, however, the decisive positions in its own hands. When, on the other hand, the workers' and peasants' movement began to push aside the limits established by the bourgeoisie and there emerged a prospect for the leadership of the revolution to pass into the hands of the proletariat, the bourgeoisie, together with landlord elements adjoining it, betrayed the revolution and drowned it in the blood of Communists and hundreds of thousands of non-party workers and peasants. The Kuomintang turned from a national revolutionary party into one of the reactionary bourgeois-landlord parties of the East. The mass of workers and peasants, with Communists at their head, did not have enough influence to outmatch the organised forces of exploiter classes involved in the revolution so as to bring the revolution to its victorious conclusion at the time.

The national revolution of 1925-1927 was a complex combination of overall national anti-imperialist struggle for independence and national unification, involving large sections of the people, including the national bourgeoisie and even some segments of the landowning class, and the class struggle of the proletariat, the social urban grass-root movement and anti-feudal actions by the peasantry. The role and significance of these individual streams were dissimilar. While the proletariat was almost totally involved in the struggle, if in different periods, the peasant movement unfolded at a relatively slow pace in the opening stages and assumed considerable dimensions only in its closing stages, with the revolution already in the grip of a crisis. The peasants were manifestly and notably late in supporting the proletariat, which permitted the national bourgeoisie to deal with the working class first and, together with the landowners, suppress the peasantry afterwards.

The forms of the revolutionary struggle were diverse: economic and political strikes, political demonstrations and armed uprisings of the proletariat, peasant disturbances and riots, purely bourgeois parliamentary campaigns and, finally, military marches of revolutionary armies against the warlords. In other words, there was a combination of

massive revolutionary action by the working people with the armed struggle of regular revolutionary armies commanded by officers of bourgeois and landlord origin. It was, however, armed action that predominated as a form of the revolution. This predominance of the military factor was the Achilles heel of the revolution, since the bourgeois and landlord officers defected into the fold of counterrevolution as soon as they sensed the imminent danger of the working class superseding the national bourgeoisie as the leader of the revolution. It is because of the preponderance of the military factor that the bourgeois and landlord leaders of the revolution and the bourgeois-landlord officers under their control, those Chinese Cavaignacs, found it a relatively easy thing to stage at a crucial moment a series of counterrevolutionary coups, led by generals, to suppress the revolutionary masses.

The united front played a major part in the revolution of 1925-1927. Chinese, as well as Soviet, historiography has recognised right from the outset that the united national front of the 1920s represented a political bloc of four classes—the working class, the peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie, and the national bourgeoisie. This definition of the class composition of the united front is generally correct, though insufficient, for, first, it does not embrace all the social components of the united front, second, it does not show the place and the role of each of the four classes in the united front at various stages of its development, and, third, it does not take into account the dynamics of the united front and the major class shifts which took place in it as the revolution went on.

Research studies of recent years have shown that it is necessary to supplement the class characterisation of the first united front in China.

First, the above-mentioned four classes represented but the core of the united front, not the whole of it. Besides those four classes, the united front comprised from the very outset considerable sections of the landowning class (liberal elements) and those of the urban and rural lumpen-proletariat; the united front was joined, in and for various periods of time, by some of the militarists and feudal-militarist groups as well as by isolated regional groups of the big compradore bourgeoisie. The military, as repre-

sented by the bourgeois and landlord commanding officers of the national revolutionary and national armies, constituted a very important social and political component of the united front which was playing a growing independent political role. The struggle for the army and against the army was one of the most important elements of the internal tensions within the united front. This struggle was won by the reactionary warlords who acted as the grave-diggers of the revolution and of the united front along with it in 1927.

Second, the extreme unevenness of the development of the Chinese Revolution, its rather essential distinguishing feature which the Comintern detected as early as the 1920s, was quite typical of the united front just as well. It is because of that unevenness that the united front did not shape up at once and in full. What was, in point of fact, emerging as the united front came to be organised early in 1924 was a political bloc of the proletariat with the national bourgeoisie, the urban petty bourgeoisie and some sections of the landowning class, adhering to the Kuomintang, along with small south-western militarist groupings which were under the influence of the revolutionary Kuomintang and served as its military prop. In fact, the formation of the new political bloc amounted at first to the proletariat joining the existing progressive bourgeois and landlord movement as expressed by the Kuomintang Party.

As far as the peasantry was concerned, it did not form part of the united front at the outset, either independently or in alliance with the proletariat or the bourgeoisie. It was not until after the united front had been created that the peasantry began to be drawn and incorporated into the revolutionary movement, and it is as late as the second half of 1926, i. e., by the end of the revolution, that this involvement had acquired considerable proportions. However, even at the height of the peasant movement, from the autumn of 1926 to the spring of 1927, the overwhelming majority of the Chinese peasantry remained politically inactive on a national scale, or still under landlord influence.

This reveals what has become a traditional feature of the national bourgeois leadership of the liberation movement in the countries of the East: the invariable ambition of the national bourgeoisie to separate the anti-feudal revo-

lution from the anti-imperialist one, disjoin them in time, prevent them from merging, and replace a revolutionary solution of the agrarian and peasant issue by one through restricted liberal-landowner reforms.

It has to be borne in mind that the united front originally comprised only a small proportion of the proletariat as well as a proportion of the petty urban bourgeoisie and national bourgeoisie. Besides, considerable contingents of the proletariat (especially in Canton, partly in Shanghai and some other cities) were (and remained subsequently) under the political influence of the bourgeoisie. But even that small section of the proletariat, which was organised and politically consolidated by the Communists by the time the united front was established, was still far from playing a politically independent, let alone leading, role in the revolutionary movement. It was only in the course of the revolution that political independence, very relative though it was, was won by the proletariat with the Communists in the lead.

So, the first united national front in China had been originally created as if "from above", through the application of the left-bloc tactics proposed by the Comintern and thoroughly elaborated by the CPC, by the teaming up of two political parties—the CPC and the Kuo-mintang—which, however, had no broad mass base to rest on. It was again in the course of the revolution itself that broad masses of the urban proletariat, the urban petty bourgeoisie and, subsequently, the peasantry were drawn into the united front. The social base of the united front was broadened, both in terms of quality and quantity, along with the extension of its military and territorial base. At the same time, the parallel and interconditioned processes of the enlargement of the united front, both socially and territorially, were taking place in an extremely uneven way, often out of joint in time, place and pattern of change, with various social segments and their regional groups entering the struggle within the ranks of the united front or departing from it in disarray and discord. Simultaneously, the emergence and development of the united front went on parallel with an uninterrupted exacerbation of class antagonisms within its ranks. All that predetermined the extreme complexity of the tactics which the Comintern and

the CPC had to work out and apply in actual practice. An exact notion of the CPC's points of departure in creating the first united front is quite indispensable for a correct, historically concrete assessment of the party's political line for the subsequent years, as well as for the comprehension of the impressive achievements which the party had gained, starting as good as from scratch, through the application of united front tactics. Furthermore, the degree of accuracy in the evaluation of the performance of the second (1937-1945) and third (1947-1949) united fronts, which had a qualitatively better base to spring from, depends, in turn, on a proper assessment of the results achieved by the tactics of the first united front. Such a historical retrospective view is all the more necessary because of the unending attempts of bourgeois historiography to play down as much as it can the significance of the first united front and to set off the Comintern's and the CPC's "failures" and "defeats" in 1927 against the "achievements" and "victories" of individual CPC leaders in the 1930s and 1940s.

In playing up the argument about the "bloc within" form having been "imposed" by the Comintern, bourgeois historiography is more and more often stressing the "differences" between the CPC and the Comintern, trying to create the impression that the Communist Party of China in general and its leadership in particular consistently opposed the entry into the Kuomintang and advocated a change of form of the united front to a "bloc without". In so doing, bourgeois authors allude principally to some utterances of the then General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee, Chen Duxiu, mostly to his well-known "Message to Comrades of the Whole Party", written at the end of 1929, after his expulsion from the CPC, as well as to Zhang Guotao's memoirs. Thus, one of the aspects of Brandt's concept is to set Chen Duxiu, as a more orthodox Marxist, off against the "unprincipled" Comintern.<sup>1</sup> The dubious value of this kind of evidence is only too obvious. At the same time, bourgeois historiography is at pains to pass over numerous pronouncements by a large group of influential CPC leaders in support of the Comintern's line. So, the picture of the CPC's in-

<sup>1</sup> See: Conrad Brandt, *Op. cit.*, p. 146.

fighting over the form of the united front and the relations between the CPC and the Comintern are grossly distorted.

The general pattern of relationship between the CPC and the Comintern, presented by bourgeois historiography as a kind of "diktat from Moscow", which the newborn Communist Party of China was supposedly too weak to challenge, is a far cry from the true state of things for one more reason: because it leaves out the reverse effect of the then condition of the CPC on the Comintern's Chinese policy. While stressing what they describe as a disastrous outcome of united front tactics for the CPC, bourgeois historians have been trying to create the impression that the "disaster" had been caused by the Comintern imposing an "unbearable" burden on the CPC, without lending it due assistance. Thus, Van Slyke writes: "These hard facts—a small and inexperienced Party, absence of military strength, and a mass movement partly out of control—limited the alternatives available to the CCP".<sup>1</sup> The authors of such pronouncements ran into an obvious contradiction without being aware of it. If the CPC itself was still weak and inexperienced at the time, as indeed it was, what had the Comintern to do with that? For the "unbearable" burden was imposed on the CPC by history itself and by the Chinese Revolution in which the party could not but have taken a most active part, regardless of how much it was prepared for practical revolutionary action. As one can see from Soviet research studies,<sup>2</sup> it was not the Comintern's directives that predominated in its relations with the CPC, although the Comintern did issue straight directives, whenever necessary, for the still young and inexperienced Chinese Communist Party to correct its mistakes. The main thing, however, was the aid the Comintern gave to the Chinese Communists. In point of fact, the Comintern had to shoulder the burden of responsibility for working out the fundamentals of the theory, strategy and tactics of the Chinese Revolution

<sup>1</sup> Lyman P. Van Slyke, *Op. cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> See: V. I. Glunin, "The Comintern and the Rise of the Communist Movement in China (1920-1927)". In: *The Comintern and the East. The Struggle for the Leninist Strategy and Tactics in National Liberation Movements*, Ed. by R. A. Ulyanovsky, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1979, pp. 280-344; L. P. Delyusin, *Agrarian and Peasant Issue in CPC Policy (1921-1928)*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1972 (in Russian), etc.

because the CPC lacked the strength and experience for the independent solution of all the most elaborate and urgent problems which confronted it. At the same time, the Comintern did everything possible to accelerate the ideological, political and organisational growth of the CPC, to train its leading executives and help it penetrate the masses, i. e., to consolidate the CPC's self-sufficiency. The activities of representatives of the Comintern, the Red International of Labour Unions and the Communist International of Youth in China and the visits by the party's leading officials to Moscow for the Comintern congresses and ECCI plenums, were of inestimable importance for CPC growth. A number of fundamental decisions on the Chinese question (resolutions of the Sixth and Seventh ECCI plenums, etc.) were drafted in the Comintern in cooperation with CPC delegations. This practice became a rule subsequently.

To get a clearer idea of the Comintern's and the CPC's approach to the problem of the character and form of the united front, the foregoing has to be supplemented by a chronological review of the subject in question.

The Comintern's approach to the tactics of the united national front in China can be fairly easily broken down into three stages:

- 1) 1922-1926—the pursuit of a broad united national front in the shape of Kuomintang, based on an alliance of four classes (proletariat, peasantry, urban petty bourgeoisie, and national bourgeoisie). The idea, which had arisen within the CPC leadership back in 1924, of transforming the Kuomintang into a “workers’ and peasants’ ” party of a “bloc of three classes” (proletariat, peasantry, and urban petty bourgeoisie) under working-class guidance was supported also by some practical workers of the Comintern in China (M. M. Borodin, G. N. Voitinsky and others) and in the top quarters of the Comintern. However, the prevalent view of the Kuomintang in the Comintern until the end of 1926 was that of a bi-component party operating simultaneously as a form of organisation of the united front, i. e., a political bloc of four classes, and as an independent, predominantly bourgeois, national revolutionary party with a fairly strong revolutionary-democratic left wing but with the leadership of bourgeois and landlord origin.

- 2) From the end of 1926 (after the Seventh ECCI Ple-

num) till Chiang Kai-shek's counterrevolutionary coup of April 12, 1927—the pursuit of a transition from the united national front of four classes to a “bloc of three classes” (proletariat, peasantry, and urban petty bourgeois) in the shape of a left-wing Kuomintang with an increased vanguard role of the Communists. The principle of converting the Kuomintang into a party of the “bloc of three classes” was adopted by the Comintern because of the expected departure of the bourgeoisie from the united front, which eventually led to the national revolution developing into an agrarian revolution, with its leadership passing to the proletariat.

3) From April to July 1927 (the so-called “Wuhan period”)—the pursuit of preparations under the Kuomintang flag for what was to be an inevitable independent revolutionary struggle of the CPC in the most acute, armed form. The experience of Chiang Kai-shek's counterrevolutionary coup in April showed that the bourgeois-landlord leadership of the Kuomintang, Kuomintang generals and officers were ready to betray the revolution and their own party principles for the sake of safeguarding their self-seeking class interests and to enter into a collusion with the forces of internal and international reaction, take extreme steps for checking the revolutionary upsurge by all means, up to and including wholesale physical violence against the Communists and the class organisations of the proletariat and the poorest sections of the peasantry under their control. The counterrevolutionary action by Chiang Kai-shek's men did irreparable damage to the united front and started off a profound crisis of the national revolution from which it could never recover. The Kuomintang's Wuhan group, still in alliance with the Communists, although it did incorporate all the radical elements of that party, did not essentially differ, by its class nature, from the bulk of the Kuomintang which followed Chiang Kai-shek. The Wuhan leaders declared a war on Chiang Kai-shek and carried on their military operations against the Northern militarists in cooperation with the Communists. At the same time, the Wuhan Kuomintang was being torn asunder by waverings and disarray, with increasingly obvious trends towards winding up the revolution and checking the workers' and peasants' movement, while the Wuhan warlords

were more and more outspoken in demanding communist blood and started defecting to Chiang Kai-shek. The final break-up of the united front became an accomplished fact in mid-July 1927.

In those circumstances, when the men of the Kuomintang put accent on the bayonets in their dealings with the Communists, the Comintern arrived at the conclusion about the need to make the fullest possible use of the still remaining opportunities for work inside the Wuhan Kuomintang for a redeployment of forces and accelerated preparations by the CPC for what was seen as an impending armed clash with the whole of the Kuomintang, without desisting from attempts at keeping on the communist side some of the Kuomintang leaders, the most revolutionary sections of the Kuomintang Party membership and the Kuomintang army, which was actually done on a rather modest scale in the course of the revolutionary rearguard action in the second half of 1927. That was the general sense of the Comintern's directives and decisions on the Chinese question adopted in May and June 1927.

The CPC's attitude to united front tactics cannot be broken down into successive periods just as accurately. The process of grasping the general theoretical principles, underlying the tactics of the united national front, as well as the consequent specific political decisions, including the choice of form of the united front, was rather complex in the CPC. In the early 1920s the Chinese Communists were still groping their way to a proper understanding of the general problems of the Chinese Revolution and to working out and actually testing the CPC's political programme, strategy and tactics during the bourgeois-democratic revolution. One of the most difficult issues of the Chinese Revolution for the CPC was the theoretical and tactical problem of the combination and interaction of the national and social, class elements of the revolutionary movement, i. e., the problem of a united national anti-imperialist front, which found its specific expression in the attitude towards the Kuomintang's national revolutionary group headed by Sun Yat-sen.

The only thing one can say with a certain measure of accuracy is that the CPC seconded the Comintern's guideline of passing over to a "bloc of three classes" late in

1926 and early in 1927 and that it refused to accept the Kuomintang form of united front until the middle of 1923. Following the decisions of the Fourth Congress of the Comintern, which was attended by the General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee Chen Duxiu, and the ECCI resolution of January 12, 1923, "On the Relations Between the Chinese Communist Party and the Kuomintang", the very idea of a united national front involving the Kuomintang was no longer openly challenged within the CPC. The struggle over united front tactics resolved itself since early 1923 into an argument about the forms of the CPC's cooperation with the Kuomintang within the united front. This struggle did not subside right up to the Kuomintang's betrayal of 1927. It revolved, in actual terms, around the Comintern's recommendation for Communists to join the Kuomintang with a view to transforming it into a broad political organisation of the united front, capable of leading the national democratic revolution in China to victory.

As to the period from the middle of 1923 to the end of 1926, there was a wide range of tactical vacillations of the CPC leadership, depending on the particular changes in the political situation, from appeals for the broadest possible united front (to the extent of teaming up with individual feudal militarist groupings and the big compradore bourgeoisie) in the Kuomintang form to oft-repeated proposals for the Communists to withdraw from the Kuomintang and for the united front to be reorganised as an extra-Kuomintang unit to comprise nothing but a "bloc of three classes", i. e., without the national bourgeoisie, and even to attempts to organise an entirely independent, "purely proletarian" movement under the slogans of the national revolution.

Nevertheless, the speeches and statements in the central party press and numerous party documents make it possible to trace quite distinctly one common principle behind the CPC leadership's approach to united front tactics in 1922 through 1926. When the revolution and, particularly, the working-class movement were on the upgrade, the CPC leadership tended to narrow down the social and political composition of the united front, and, when it had entered a period of reverses and defeats, it strove to extend it to the utmost.

At the same time, throughout the entire period of exist-

ence of the first united front, the Communist Party of China, following the Comintern's line, consistently upheld the principle of the proletariat's ideological, political and organisational independence within the united front. The claim of bourgeois historiography that the CPC leadership, under "pressure" from the Comintern, often "sacrificed" the proletariat's independence in 1924-1927 for the sake of maintaining the alliance with the bourgeoisie has nothing whatsoever to do with actual reality. On the contrary, the CPC leadership's invariable emphasis on the maintenance of the proletariat's independence at any cost was interpreted by some CPC leaders as leading to a left-sectarian approach to the problems of the united front.

The prevalent trends in the CPC leadership of that period were a pronounced realistic and critical attitude to the theory and practice of Sunyatsenism, to the Kuomintang's political programme and tactics, and the CPC's ambition to "push the Kuomintang leftward" into a closer relationship with the mass of the people and with the Chinese and international proletariat.

The investigation of the form and substance of the united front in China cannot be confined to analysing the Comintern's and the CPC's positions. It requires an examination of the Kuomintang's position as well.

To define the class character of the Kuomintang and its factions is one of the most important and, at the same time, difficult aspects of the tactics of the first united front in China.

The assessment of the Kuomintang by some Communists as a petty-bourgeois or even workers' and peasants' party, which was current in the 1920s, has nothing to bear it out. It is the evaluations of the same years now prevalent in Soviet historiography, which underscored the bourgeois character of the revolutionary Kuomintang, that turned out to be closer to the truth. Research findings of recent years have made it possible to amplify this evaluation and to propose a definition of the Kuomintang as a bourgeois-landlord national revolutionary party with the leading role played by the national bourgeoisie relying on some liberal-minded landowners and their armed forces, while at the same time striving to broaden its social base by drawing in sections of the urban petty bourgeoisie, and also workers and

peasants.

One distinguishing feature of the national bourgeoisie in the 1920s was a motley collection of political groupings involved in the revolution, which found expression in the existence of right, centrist, and left factions inside the Kuomintang.

All of these factions were more or less homogeneous by their class nature, expressing only the distinctions between the political stands of individual sections, regional and other groups of the national bourgeoisie and the social forces adjoining it. This, apparently, is the reason behind the instability, mobility of Kuomintang factions and behind the absence of a clear-cut political distinction between them. The first and best to be differentiated, politically and organisationally, were the right-wingers, followed by the centrists, with the political and organisational shaping of the left having taken place only during the Wuhan period. The general trends of the development of the Kuomintang factions during the period of existence of the united front were as follows: at the first stage (from January 1924 roughly until the end of 1925), the right wing was narrowed down until breaking away from the party, with the centre consolidated and left influence extended. A reverse tendency began to prevail since late 1925 and early 1926, which ended up in the victory of centrists in alliance with right-wingers over the Wuhan left in the summer of 1927.

The social connections of the Kuomintang factions have been studied too little to give them a clear-cut class characterisation. Soviet and Chinese historiography is more or less articulate in acknowledging the connection of the Kuomintang's right wing with the big bourgeoisie, including the middlemen and the landowners. But that, in turn, means that some of the compradore bourgeoisie and landowners were also involved in the revolution to a certain extent. Our research findings bear out this conclusion, though they do indicate that a considerable proportion of the national bourgeoisie gravitated towards the right. As far as the bourgeois nature of the Kuomintang centre is concerned, a more detailed analysis prompts the conclusion that the bourgeois mass of centrists was likewise widely representative of liberal and landlord elements as well, particularly the Kuomintang officers.

To define the class nature of the Kuomintang left is a far more complex thing to do. Soviet literature was dominated since the 1920s by a trend to consider the Kuomintang left as representing petty-bourgeois revolutionary democracy. However, this point of view has yet to be confirmed by the specific exploration of the social connections of the Kuomintang left. In the meantime, the examination of the personal contingent of the Kuomintang's left leaders chronologically reveals a trend for their circle to be narrowed down with the deepening of the revolution and for their gradual change-over first to centrists and then to the right. This process of bourgeois revolutionaries moving "rightward" has been quite common and natural. It is more in line with the facts of reality, in our view, to qualify the majority of the Kuomintang left as representatives of the revolutionary-democratic wing of the national bourgeoisie and the peasant upper crust capable of "championing sincere, militant, consistent democracy" until a certain moment, as Lenin believed.<sup>1</sup>

One distinguishing feature of the left Kuomintang also was that they were most revolutionary when mouthing general political slogans (the left sometimes appeared to be more radical than the Communists in this sense), but they became far more restrained when it came to meeting the particular demands of the working people, the peasants above all. Unlike the centrists and even the right-wingers, the left did not have a well-established mass base at Kuomintang grass-roots and—which was even more important—they had no army like the one which was the mainstay of the centrists. In consequence, the temporary change of political control in the Kuomintang in favour of the left in Wuhan did not lead to the revolution passing into a higher "Wuhan stage" of development and to the conversion of the united national front into a "bloc of three classes" in the Kuomintang form. Such a bloc did actually shape up but at a later stage of the revolution under the leadership of the Communists, rather than the Kuomintang left, and not in the Kuomintang form.

Therefore, the internal party strife within the Kuo-

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Democracy and Narodism in China", *Collected Works*, Vol. 18, p. 165.

mintang did not arise from the “schemings” or “subversive activities” of the Communists, as bourgeois scholars assert, but was due to a motley composition of that party and a clash of conflicting interests of the social sections and groups represented in it. The Communists’ active involvement in the Kuomintang’s central and provincial bodies was authorised and legitimatised by the congresses and plenary sessions of that party’s Central Executive Committee because the Kuomintang *needed* communist help. Inside the Kuomintang, there had emerged something like a division of labour between the Communists and the “pure” Kuomintang members. That led to the Communists shouldering the hardest burden of everyday routine work of mobilising, organising and politically educating the masses, the work which the Kuomintang people could not and, as a rule, did not want to do. The Communists did their work honestly and selflessly and, besides, not so much for the sake of their narrow party interests as for the great goals of their country’s national and social liberation and revolutionary renovation. That is why there is nothing surprising about the masses trusting and following the Communists.

The growth of the CPC’s prestige and influence inside and outside the Kuomintang was inseparably linked up with the rising scale of the workers’ and peasants’ movement and with the development of the overall revolutionary process. This has been confirmed by CPC membership figures as well. By the time the Communists officially joined the Kuomintang, the CPC had as few as about 500 members. During the first year and a half of a most vigorous effort of the Communists within the Kuomintang (from the First Kuomintang Congress in January 1924 to the “May Thirtieth Movement” of 1925, which triggered off the revolution), the CPC membership increased to only 1,500. The turning point in the CPC’s development and its transformation into a mass party came about only after the outbreak of the revolution which saw some sweeping actions by the proletariat, students and the urban petty bourgeoisie: by January 1926 the party already had 7,500 members and in May 1926 more than 11,000. The decisions taken by the Kuomintang’s Central Executive Committee Plenum in May 1926 about restricting communist activity failed to arrest CPC growth and by May 1927 it had as

many as around 58,000 members within its ranks. The Kuomintang, too, advanced rapidly parallel with, and largely due to, the growth of the CPC.

The arguments about the Comintern's position with regard to the Kuomintang having "no principle" behind it are just as unfounded. Should a "pragmatic" Comintern have intended to "subvert", "swallow" or "capture" the Kuomintang, as some Western authors argue, it would not have declined the Kuomintang's official request to be admitted to the international communist organisation. For such a refusal limited the Comintern's opportunities of influencing the Kuomintang. So, in actual fact, the Comintern acted contrary to the "subversive" designs it was alleged to harbour against the Kuomintang. Moreover, the Comintern's representatives in China repeatedly advised the CPC to limit the number of its representatives in the Kuomintang's executive bodies (M. M. Borodin's recommendations of the spring of 1925 and G. N. Voitinsky's before the Second Congress of the Kuomintang on the "self-restriction" of Communists). Neither did the well-known resolutions of the Kuomintang's Central Executive Committee Plenum in May 1926 regarding the Communists produce any nervous reaction in the Comintern. Now, as far as Soviet material aid to the Chinese Revolution was concerned, it was canalised almost entirely, as one may recall, to the Kuomintang government which, incidentally, had no Communists in it until March 1927. In contradistinction to the imperialist powers, the Soviet Union, which is accused by bourgeois authors of "national egoism", was financing not the reactionary Chinese warlords, but the revolutionary Kuomintang government which was up to liberate China from imperialist oppression. As to the "responsibility" for the defeat of 1927, it lies, above all, with the forces of international imperialist reaction which lent extensive support to the counterrevolutionary Chinese warlords slandering the revolutionary Kuomintang and its leaders and provoking discord and division within the united front, within the very Kuomintang for that matter, by threats, direct armed intervention, bribes and promises. A striking admission to this effect is to be found in the study by American historian Brian T. George, who qualified the diplomacy of the Western powers in China in the 1920s

as a “classic counterrevolutionary stratagem”. “Out of mutual fear of Sun Yat-sen and what were viewed as his Soviet masters,” Brian T. George writes, “the United States and Great Britain attempted to move the Treaty powers into alliance with the reactionary elements in Chinese politics. The aim was to undercut a potential denunciation of the treaty structure by Sun and the Soviet-backed revolutionaries around him.”<sup>1</sup> But this is exactly what is omitted by the opponents of communism, specialising in the “criticism” of the Comintern’s Chinese policy.

<sup>1</sup> Brian T. George, “The State Department and Sun Yat-sen: American Policy and the Revolutionary Disintegration of China, 1920-1924”, *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 46, No. 3, 1977, p. 405.

## THE COMMUNIST AND NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT IN IRAN IN THE 1920s

S. L. AGAYEV AND V. N. PLASTUN

The fuller social message of the national liberation revolutions and sharper controversy over the ways of social development of emergent nations, with some of them opting for non-capitalist development and socialist orientation, and with a number of revolutionary democrats accepting the ideas of scientific socialism have combined to arouse greater interest of bourgeois historians and sociologists in the problems of the communist and national liberation movement. In their numerous works under such typical titles as "Communism and Nationalism", they have been trying hard to prove that the ideological, theoretical and political principles of communism are inapplicable to Eastern societies as, supposedly, incompatible with the requirements of their national and democratic development. To this end, bourgeois historiography has been playing up the objective difficulties of launching and advancing the communist movement in semi-feudal countries of Asia where this movement had no adequate base in the shape of an industrial proletariat to rely on in pursuit of its ultimate objectives.

The rise of the communist movement in Iran had yet another specific feature due to that country's traditional close economic links with Russia. Since the Iranian working class emerged and shaped up mostly in the southern outlying regions of the former Russian Empire where large numbers of migrant Iranian seasonal workers were concentrated, it was only natural for its early class organisations to spring up outside national frontiers. A social-democratic

organisation, Ejdemayun Amiyun (Mujahid), and a workers' organisation, Adalat, were formed in the Transcaucasus in 1905 and 1916, respectively, laying the ground for the formation of the Iranian Communist Party in 1919-1920. Each of these organisations was closely connected with the democratic, anti-imperialist and anti-feudal movement in Iran.

By trading on various specific aspects of the origin and development of the political organisations of the Iranian working class, bourgeois historians have been trying, from the 1920s on, to prove that the communist movement in Iran, alleged not to have arisen on national soil, has never expressed the immediate requirements of the Iranian society's development and has been striving for aims and objectives foreign to awakening Iranian nationalism but appropriate to the interests of some outside forces. This has been taken as the argument to support the more far-reaching allegations that the communist movement is hostile to national liberation and that there can be no cooperation between them.

#### *IRANIAN COMMUNISTS: FROM REVOLUTIONARY NATIONALISM TO MARXISM*

The system of conceptual constructs of bourgeois historiography has centred on the problems connected with the application of communist theory and practice to the particular conditions of the national liberation movement which developed in Iran under the impact of the Great October Revolution.

It is the emergence and formation of the Iranian Communist Party outside national frontiers that bourgeois historians, as stated earlier on, take as their starting point in considering these problems. On these grounds American Sovietologist Ivar Spector, for instance, has arrived at the conclusion about the decisive influence of external impulses on the course of revolutionary events in Iran, although he admits the existence of such local factors as "agrarian problems, bureaucratic corruption, and hostility to foreign occupation".<sup>1</sup> Iranian historian Schapour Ravasani main-

<sup>1</sup> Ivar Spector, *The Soviet Union and the Muslim World 1917-1958*, University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1959, p. 88.

tains that "the Iranian Communist Party was an alien body in Iranian society".<sup>1</sup> It is typical of many foreign authors to ignore the objective historical conditions in which the Iranian working class was formed and its political organisations took shape.

It appears necessary in this context to cite some figures characterising certain aspects of the formation of the Iranian proletariat towards the end of the First World War. The latest research studies by Soviet historians have shown that the industrial proletariat in Iran did not exceed 2,000, not counting the workers employed in the southern oilfields of the Anglo-Persian Oil Co. (APOC).<sup>2</sup> The total number of factory workers, railwaymen, oil and fishery workers was under 10,000.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, there were about 200,000 Iranians, mostly migrant seasonal workers, within Russia, at the most conservative estimates. There were about 100,000 Iranians in Turkestan alone by 1920.<sup>4</sup> According to the 1920-1921 census, 41,020 Iranians, mostly employed in the oilfields of Baku, lived in Azerbaijan.<sup>5</sup> A large number of migrant Iranian seasonal workers were employed in other districts of the Transcaucasus, the Volga region, the Donets coalfields and in such big cities of Russia as Moscow, Petrograd, Rostov, Kharkov, Kiev, Odessa, Armavir, Grozny, Vladikavkaz, Samara, and Orenburg. Close on 8,000 Iranians resided in Saratov in 1920, for instance.<sup>6</sup> The figures just cited point to the existence of a mass ethnic base in the territory of Russia at the time for the creation of an Iranian political organisation.

<sup>1</sup> Schapour Ravasani, *Sowjêtrepublik Gilan. Die sozialistische Bewegung im Iran seit Ende des 19. Jh. bis 1922*, AMS-Druck Berlin, Rechte beim Basis-Verlag, Berlin, p. 267.

<sup>2</sup> See: Z. Z. Abdullayev, *The Industry and the Origin of the Working Class of Iran in the Late 19th and the Early 20th Centuries*, The Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan, Baku, 1963, pp. 198-99; I. I. Palyukaitis, *The Economic Development of Iran*, Mezhdunarodniye Otnosheniya Publishers, Moscow, 1965, pp. 122, 124 (both in Russian).

<sup>3</sup> M. S. Ivanov, *The Working Class of Modern Iran*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1969, p. 121 (in Russian).

<sup>4</sup> *The Communist International*, No. 14, 1920, pp. 2889-90; *Kommunist*, Baku, July 9, 1920.

<sup>5</sup> The Central Party Archive of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism (CPA IML), s. 64, r. 2, f. 13, p. 127.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, s. 17, r. 2, f. 30, p. 30.

Another starting point used by bourgeois historiography is speculation on the strength of the Iranian Communist Party in the initial period following its structural organisation. For example, American professor George Lenczowski and West German Sovietologist Dietrich Geyer seek to picture Iranian Communists as a handful of insurgents used by outside forces.<sup>1</sup>

The available material, however, warrants the conclusion that the Iranian Communist Party was relatively numerous at the time. For example, the first regional conference of Adalat, held at Tashkent in April 1920, represented 5,630 members.<sup>2</sup> In July 1920 the Iranian Communist Party, to judge by some apparently overstated estimates, numbered about 15,000.<sup>3</sup> Accounts of the First Congress of the Iranian Communist Party (ICP), which met in June 1920, suggest that there were close on 3,000 members and sympathisers in north-west Iran, liberated from the Shah's authorities, with 2,000 of them active in Rasht,<sup>4</sup> the capital of Gilan Province which was the hub of the Iranian national liberation movement.

It is those aspects of ICP activities in Gilan in the summer of 1920 which arose from leftist moods that bourgeois historians have taken as their key argument in seeking to prove that the principles of communism are incompatible with the requirements of national development. These bourgeois authors have interpreted the instances of confiscation of land and property in Gilan at the time, unjustified requisition, prohibition of private trade, bazaar closures, attacks on the Muslim clergy and other activities, carried out by leftist-minded leaders of the ICP Central Committee,

<sup>1</sup> See: George Lenczowski, *Russia and the West in Iran, 1918-1948. A Study in Big Power Rivalry*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1949, pp. 98, 101; Dietrich Geyer, *Die Sowjetunion und Iran. Eine Untersuchung zur Aussenpolitik der UdSSR im Nahen Osten 1917-1954*, Böhlau-Verlag, Tübingen, 1955, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> *Izvestia*, Tashkent, October 22, 1920; ORCSA, s. 5402, f. 502, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> CPA IML., s. 85, r. 8, f. 23, p. 126.

<sup>4</sup> See: *Kommunist*, Baku, July 9, 1920; July 12, 1920. According to one of the Comintern's documents, the Khorasan regional organisation of the Iranian Communist Party, which was not mentioned in the reports about the Party's First Congress, numbered 1,500 in 1920-1921 (ORCSA, s. 5402, f. 522, pp. 120-25).

as a practical embodiment of the basic ideological and theoretical principles of communism in dependent and backward countries, and as a "full-fledged Bolshevik programme".<sup>1</sup> Those who make such contentions do not take the trouble to examine the objective and subjective factors which were behind that kind of action by some Communists, who, in fact, misused the principles and methods of the application of communist theory in Eastern countries.

Papers by Soviet orientalists contain a detailed analysis of the historical conditions and subjective factors which produced left-sectarian trends in the emergent communist movement in the countries of the East. Those were, in fact, cases of extremist relapses of the petty-bourgeois anti-imperialist nationalism which the Communists of the East, mostly national revolutionaries by origin, had to pass through on their way to accepting the theory of scientific socialism. The denial of the revolutionary significance of the democratic national liberation movements by "leftists" who called themselves Communists went together, as a rule, with narrow-minded nationalism. Soviet literature has pointed out that the ideological views of the early Communists of the East were "a form of transition from petty-bourgeois revolutionary nationalism to Marxism".<sup>2</sup> It is the burden of the petty-bourgeois approach to national revolution that led to some attempts at making a copy of the October Revolution on Eastern soil. So, the arch-revolutionary action of the "leftists" did not arise from any intention of theirs to abide by communist principles but was due rather to the fact that they had not yet overcome their earlier ideological and political outlook.

ICP activities in the early 1920s bore some features which were typical of the entire communist movement in the Eastern countries at the time. One should note, in particular, that the Iranian Communist Party had a preponderant contingent of members coming from socially undifferentiated traditional and marginal groups as well as

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance: Georges Ducrocq, "La politique du gouvernement des Soviets en Perse", *Revue du Monde Musulman*, Paris, Vol. LII, December 1922, pp. 89-92; Ivar Spector, *Op. cit.*, p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> M. A. Persits, *India's Revolutionaries in Soviet Russia. The Mainsprings of the Indian Communist Movement*, p. 191.

petty-bourgeois elements who preferred bellicose sloggery to painstaking and well-considered work among the working people. According to available estimates, 60 per cent of the party membership in 1920 were apprentices and workers, 20 per cent office clerks, 17 per cent handicraftsmen, and three per cent military.<sup>1</sup> It must be taken into account, furthermore, that the overwhelming majority of the workers were employed in small businesses, workshops or manufactories and retained their close ties with the countryside and agricultural production involving a semi-feudal type of fettering relations. Most of the party membership within Iran were unprepared for political activity, having joined the ICP within one or two months following the proclamation of a Soviet republic in Gilan in June 1920. It is that social and political complexion of the Communist Party that produced the instability and waverings in the implementation of party policy and, quite often, an abandonment of the fundamental principles of communist strategy and tactics.

With the process of social differentiation going on extremely slowly in Iran, the incompetent conduct of the policy of class alliances, arising from the absence of theoretically trained Communists, tended to allow non-proletarian trends to increase their influence in the party. In October and November 1920, some ICP organisations merged with those of the so-called *Beccheez* (The Poor) Socialist Party which sprang up in Iranian Azerbaijan in 1918 to group representatives of the urban and rural poor and petty-bourgeois elements (its membership in Tabriz alone was 1,400).<sup>2</sup> Somewhat later the ICP organisation in southern provinces admitted the left wing of the Party of Democrats representing the interests of the business community made up of semi-feudal landowners and merchants. All that, as a Comintern document stated, "made the organisation rather loose and fluid".<sup>3</sup>

The mistake about the ICP's line of approach to the

<sup>1</sup> See: M. N. Ivanova, *The National Liberation Movement in Iran in 1918-1922*, Vostochnaya Literatura Publishers, Moscow, 1961, p. 92 (in Russian). Intellectuals and the peasantry were hardly represented in the party at the time.

<sup>2</sup> *Kommunist*, Baku, November 11, 1920.

<sup>3</sup> ORCSA, s. 5402, f. 522, pp. 120-25.

creation of a united anti-imperialist front with the national liberation forces of Gilan, led by Kuchik Khan who enjoyed tremendous popularity among the peasants, handicraftsmen and petty-bourgeois elements, was that such a front was seen as no more than a means to increase the Communist Party's influence. Having entered into agreement with the national revolutionary forces in Gilan, the ICP Central Committee immediately set itself the aim of gradually infiltrating the army and the government of Kuchik Khan.<sup>1</sup> The ICP Central Committee's resolution of July 21, 1920 "On the Party's Objectives in Persia" said: "For the purpose of ... concentrating all elements actively hostile to the English, the party supports, and does not repulse, the present leaders of the Persian movement, systematically taking advantage of its tolerant attitude to them for continuously paralysing their personal authority and increasing the party's influence upon the mass of the people following them."<sup>2</sup>

The "left"-wing Communists' ambition to use the fastest-acting (in fact, the least effective) means of strengthening the party's influence arose from the earnest desire to convert the movement for national independence right away into a social struggle for the liberation of the working people. That was precisely the reason why the ICP Central Committee, while urging action against the British occupation forces and the Shah's government they supported, called for the total abolition of landed estates. That demand meant keeping out of the national revolutionary struggle not only the landowners but also the nascent trading bourgeoisie, a large proportion of which was closely connected with the semi-feudal system of land tenure in Iran. The above-quoted resolution of the ICP Central Committee pointed out that the Communist Party "is taking all measures to intensify and support the striving of the peasantry for the complete abolition of landed estates and for the transfer of the land to peasants", and that "it allows no restrictions or misinterpretations" in the "propagation of, and agitation for, the fundamentals of the communist programme among the broad masses of the working people".<sup>3</sup> Paragraph 1 of the resolution asserted that "the

<sup>1</sup> CPA IML, s. 85, r. 8, f. 23, p. 126.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, s. 64, r. 2, f. 29, p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

national liberation movement in Persia can rely principally on the revolutionary movement of petty-bourgeois elements (peasantry and urban petty bourgeoisie, rather than the landowning class)". Paragraph 6 read that "one of the conditions for the development of the revolution in Persia—both in the sense of military advance against the English and in the sense of building up the ICP's real force [influence] on the Persian revolutionary movement—is, above all, the organisation of military units".<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the military factor was assigned an important role to play not only in the revolutionary movement but in the enhancement of the party's prestige as well. Ten days after that resolution was passed, the "left"-wing Communists, having staged an armed coup in Rasht late on the night between July 30 and 31, 1920, toppled the Kuchik Khan government.

The effect of that policy was to depress, rather than increase, the party's authority.<sup>2</sup> It is noteworthy that bourgeois historians, as they describe ICP activities in the summer of 1920, make it a point, as a rule, of carefully passing over the committed struggle of Iranian Communists, led by Haidar Khan Amougli, against the left-sectarian policies of the Central Committee elected at the party's First Congress. While some authors, like Spector, do mention Haidar Khan's attempt at restoring the united front in Gilan, they argue at the same time that "the main purpose of this reorganisation was to appease the middle and upper classes".<sup>3</sup> Schapour Ravasani flatly contends that "the Party, as the latest events have shown, was unable to under-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> Yet Kuchik Khan's popularity remained unshaken. The Arak-Ajam regional ICP committee reported in a review, covering the period between the 1st and 11th of March 1921, that "Kuchik Khan enjoys great popularity with the large masses who love and respect him. His pictures can be seen in many homes and in some offices. Communists are reproached with having broken with Kuchik Khan through what they see as the party's fault" (ORCSA, s. 5402, f. 517, p. 103). Another report from Iran, dating from about the same period, said that "Mirza Kuchik's character, his uncommon tact, love and compassion for people around him, and for the sorry plight of the peasants and the nation earn him great love and respect" (ORCSA, s. 5402, f. 518, p. 1). It also referred to the smooth operation of the government bodies he had created, and his unassuming disposition, modesty and charm.

<sup>3</sup> Ivar Spector, *Op. cit.*, p. 90.

stand the conditions and peculiarities of Persia and to act in the interests of the Persian people",<sup>1</sup> while he does admit that "there were different factions inside the ICP" and that "Haidar Khan strove to apply a new strategy based on a Marxist analysis of the Persian society".<sup>2</sup>

It was as early as September 1920, while the First Congress of the peoples of the East was in session at Baku, that a 121-strong group of Iranian Communists, delegates to the Congress (the full Iranian delegation was about 200-strong), came forward at a meeting of the party's faction at the Congress with sharp criticism of the performance of the ICP Central Committee led by A. Sultan-Zadeh. The group's resolution of September 4, 1920, which was brought before the Presidium of the Action and Propaganda Council of the Peoples of the East, pointed out some mistaken and unjustified acts by the Central Committee: "The break with Kuchik Khan as a representative of the nationally- and revolutionary-minded classes of Persia, systematic violation of ICP resolutions and the tactics which have been worked out", "total inaction of Central Committee members as expressed in their inability to win over other revolutionary-minded sections of the population", to mention just a few. The resolution stated that "the totality of all the above-mentioned developments has caused disarray in all party affairs and has more than half destroyed the cause of the revolution in the East".<sup>3</sup> In a decision on this question, passed on September 17, 1920, the Presidium of the Council pointed out: "Our position in Persia has been compromised by the ineffective policy of proclaiming a 'socialist republic' there.... The premature implementation of certain, ostensibly 'communist' measures, resolving themselves to outright lootings, has antagonised the Persian population and reinforced the policy of the Shah's government and the position of the English."<sup>4</sup>

It is indicative that this act by Iranian Communists—delegates to the Congress of the Peoples of the East—produced a certain effect on the ICP Central Committee, which declared as early as October 21, 1920: "The party

<sup>1</sup> Schapour Ravasani, *Op. cit.*, p. 267.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 247-48.

<sup>3</sup> ORCSA, s. 5402, f. 32, pp. 1-2.

<sup>4</sup> CPA IML, s. 64, r. 2, f. 29, p. 58.

must build its tactics upon the principle of passing through all stages of bourgeois democracy, considering this to be the only way to achieve communism in a backward country.”<sup>1</sup> At a joint meeting of the ICP Central Committee, ranking party officials and representatives of the Presidium of the Action and Propaganda Council of the Peoples of the East and the Caucasian RCP(B) Bureau held on October 25 and 26, 1920 A. Sultan-Zadeh said that the bourgeoisie and landlords had deserted Kuchik Khan because of ill-timed communist propaganda and socialist measures, but blamed Kuchik Khan himself for it. At the same time, he maintained that the party will “have its base of support” among the people if it built its tactics with a view to meeting the interests of the petty bourgeoisie.<sup>2</sup> It is significant that Haidar Khan, as he explained at the meeting the mistakes made by the “left”, laid emphasis on their disregard for local conditions and peculiarities.<sup>3</sup>

The new ICP Central Committee under Haidar Khan, created late in 1920, set about correcting the mistakes made by the “left”-wing Communists. The “Appeal of the Central Committee of the Iranian Communist Party” published on January 14, 1921 said: “We, Persian Communists, are one of the contingents of the Third International. We are convinced that our victory is not far off, that capitalist Europe has its days numbered. But history has its own laws to obey. Such a backward country as Persia cannot be expected to achieve what Communists are gaining in the most advanced capitalist Europe. The ground has yet to be laid for the establishment of a socialist system.”<sup>4</sup> The party’s top priorities were declared to be: the expulsion of British imperialists; the overthrow of the reactionary government of the Shah and the establishment of an independent people’s republic; the “liberation of peasants from the landlords’ bondage and the alleviation of their lot at the landlords’ expense”; the organisation of a national army.<sup>5</sup> In the “Theses on the Socio-Economic Situation of Persia

<sup>1</sup> ORCSA, s. 5402, f. 508, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 34, pp. 1-3.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>4</sup> *Pravda*, January 14, 1921.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

and the Tactics of the Iranian Communist Party, Adalat”<sup>1</sup> and “The Minimum Programme of the Iranian Communist Party”,<sup>2</sup> the new ICP Central Committee emphatically declared itself against ill-timed measures of a socialist character in Gilan and put forward a specific programme of reforms which could be carried out at the bourgeois-democratic stage of the revolution. The measures taken upon the initiative and under the guidance of Haidar Khan in the field of taxation, agrarian reform, etc., were similar in many ways to Kuchik Khan’s programme of reforms.<sup>3</sup> The latter pointed out in his letter to the ICP Central Committee on May 7, 1921: “I have made a study of your tactics and of the theses of your respectable Committee of January 26, 1921, and their agreement with the views of local revolutionaries prompts me to accept them and to follow the same way.”<sup>4</sup>

However, the united anti-imperialist front in Gilan, re-established in May 1921, could not have been a stable one because the party, afflicted by a grave internal crisis, failed to overcome the burden of left-sectarian mistakes altogether. Contrary to the theses of the new ICP Central Committee, the Communist Party rushed into setting up Soviets of working people.<sup>5</sup> Representatives of the “left” wing of the ICP continued, even at the Third Congress of the Comintern (June 22-July 12, 1921), to oppose cooperation with the national bourgeoisie and liberal landowners. This left-sectarian position found itself reflected both in the “Outline Report”<sup>6</sup> submitted by ICP delegates Jafar Javad-Zadeh (Pishevari) and Aga-Zadch to the Eastern Commission of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, as well as in their oral statements at the

<sup>1</sup> See: *Zhizn natsionalnostei* (The Life of Nationalities), March 17, 1921.

<sup>2</sup> See: *Zhizn natsionalnostei*, September 3, 1921.

<sup>3</sup> See: *Red Iran*, February 15, 1921; May 24, 1921; ORCSA, s. 5402, f. 518, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Party Archives of the Azerbaijanian IML, s. 609, r. 1, f. 13, p. 23 (quoted from: A. N. Kheifets, *Soviet Diplomacy and the Peoples of the East, 1921-1927*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1968, p. 222, in Russian).

<sup>5</sup> USSR Foreign Policy Archives, s. 94, r. 6a, d. 106, f. 1, p. 348 (quoted from: A. N. Kheifets, *Op. cit.*, p. 223).

<sup>6</sup> ORCSA, s. 5402, f. 524, p. 1.

Congress. Aga-Zadeh, for instance, attempted to justify the refusal to support Kuchik Khan by the argument that "Gilan nationalists had expected to defeat the English and to overthrow the Shah with the help of the entire people, i. e., with the help not only of the bourgeoisie and the peasants, but also with the cooperation of khans and land-owners",<sup>1</sup> while that circumstance did not contradict the interests of the national movement. Besides, Kuchik Khan had, in fact, opposed reactionary feudal khans.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, one cannot fail to note some positive changes in the position of the Iranian "left" Communists either. In his speech at the Congress, Aga-Zadeh declared that in Iran "the process of power take-over by the working people can be a very long one, indeed; it is closely linked with the world proletarian revolution and, therefore, it is only after the victory of the social revolution at least in several advanced capitalist countries of Europe that the Persian Communists, in cooperation with the working masses, can raise the question of taking over political power and establishing the workers' and peasants' Soviets".<sup>3</sup>

The distinguishing feature about the views of the "left" was that out of the earlier three slogans: "Down with the English!", "Down with the Government of the Shah!", and "Down with the Landlords!" they retained only the first two. They banked mostly on the petty bourgeoisie, hoping with its help to prepare an armed insurrection to be directed from a "national centre" which could be elected on the basis of a minimum programme "acceptable to the majority".<sup>4</sup>

Such views reflected the petty-bourgeois approach to the art of revolution which was objectively inevitable in many respects for a party within the social structure of the Iranian society of the early 1920s and the class composition of the ICP stemming from it. It is indicative that the very interpretation of communism by the "left" ICP leaders was

<sup>1</sup> *The Third World Congress of the Communist International, Verbatim Report*, Gosizdat, Petrograd, 1922, p. 465 (in Russian).

<sup>2</sup> The property of feudal khans who escaped to the capital had been confiscated even before the proclamation of a republic in Gilan.

<sup>3</sup> *The Third World Congress of the Communist International, Verbatim Report*, p. 466.

<sup>4</sup> ORCSA, s. 5402, f. 524, p. 1.

different. Aga-Zadeh, for instance, argued in 1922 that in Iran communism had fertile ground in the people because communist science was fairly widespread among the Bakhtyars<sup>1</sup> who were living under a communal system and had common herds.<sup>2</sup> J. Javad-Zadeh, speaking at the Third Congress of the Comintern, said that "the sympathies for Communism, the influence of Communism is so strong in the East that a crisis within the Communist movement itself is making itself felt in many of the Eastern countries, which possess no powerful Communist parties as yet".<sup>3</sup>

The ICP's subsequent activities have been practically left out of sight by bourgeois historiography. Bourgeois authors are wont to replace all coverage of a 10-year period in the ICP's activities—from 1922 to 1931—by their allegations that the decline of its membership in 1922 was a "clear indication that communism had failed to make headway among the poverty-stricken masses in Iran".<sup>4</sup> However, the number of Communists had dwindled because many of them lost their lives in Gilan in 1921. Besides, in 1922, the ICP Central Committee decided on having the party purged of chance fellow-travellers and stooges. Throughout the year there was a purge which left the party with a membership of around 1,000. Simultaneously, the ICP's social composition changed. The proportion of workers rose to 80 per cent, with the remaining 20 per cent being handicraftsmen, intellectuals and representatives of other strata.<sup>5</sup> That contributed towards strengthening the party's organisational structure and ideological unity.

At the same time, the party's activities during the period under review, and more particularly in 1922-1924, were distinguished by the ICP Central Committee's fairly fruitful attempts at making a thorough analysis of the social and political conditions of Iran and working out the tactics appropriate to these conditions. The ICP Central Committee's "Political Report to the Comintern", submitted on

<sup>1</sup> A tribal group in South-West Iran.

<sup>2</sup> The original text refers to "troops", not "herds" (see: *Kommunist*, Baku, December 8, 1920).

<sup>3</sup> *Bulletin of the III Congress of the Communist International*, Moscow, July 3, 1921, p. 147.

<sup>4</sup> Ivar Spector, *Op. cit.*, p. 95.

<sup>5</sup> See: CPA IMI., s. 80, r. 6, f. 30, pp. 12, 31.

October 8, 1922,<sup>1</sup> pointed out that the feudal and landowning elements keeping Iran "on the point of approach to a capitalist order of society" and British imperialism must be "opposed by the national democratic force and the bourgeois-democratic revolution". At the same time, the Central Committee considered that there was no ground even for a bourgeois-democratic revolution for, because of "the absence of industry and insignificant trade", Iran did not have a big bourgeoisie while the petty and medium bourgeoisie were "in the stage of organisation". Guided by that, the party formulated the following objectives: extend and deepen the national liberation movement; launch a vigorous propaganda campaign against feudal and landowning elements and the sway of British imperialism; press for convening organs of people's power through the installation of regional and city *anjomans* and for the institution of an independent national government and a national Majlis, capable of carrying out far-reaching reforms and centralising political power; conduct full-scale propaganda for an alliance with Soviet Russia. The report stressed that the Communist Party was doing its best to draw large sections of the working masses and nationalist-minded middle classes into the struggle against the Shah's feudal government and British imperialism, and that it was working for the establishment of a "broad democratic bloc with all the parties in battle against the feudal order and British imperialism".

In 1922-1924 the ICP launched a large-scale propaganda effort among all population groups. The party's organ, a legal newspaper *Haqiqat* (Truth), enjoyed great popularity among the population, with its circulation having exceeded that of all Teheran newspapers. American historian of Iranian extraction Zabih Sepehr, the author of the book *The Communist Movement in Iran*, admits that on many planks "the political stand of *Haqiqat* was typical of democratic and liberal groups".<sup>2</sup> The Communist Party actively cooperated in cultural and educational societies; a number of women's and youth societies were set up with the direct

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, s. 80, r. 6, f. 30, pp. 22-27.

<sup>2</sup> Zabih Sepehr, *The Communist Movement in Iran*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1966, p. 51.

participation of Communists. The creation and consolidation of trade union organisations, with Communists having the final say, was one of the major trends in the party's activities. True, the majority of the unions, as stated in a review of the ICP's activities between the Fifth and Sixth Congresses of the Comintern, were not trade unions in the real sense of the word, but more on guild lines.<sup>1</sup>

In those years the Communist Party worked in close contact with the national-reformist, petty-bourgeois Ejtamayun Amiyun (Social-Democrats), led by a noted progressive Iranian politician Suleiman Mirza Iskandari, who subsequently became one of the organisers and leaders of the People's (Tudeh) Party of Iran. Having come forward in February 1922 with a plan to form a democratic bloc of all national forces in the country and in the Majlis, the ICP joined with Ejtamayun Amiyun in setting up a clandestine National Bloc Presidium (comprising four Communists and Sulciman Mirza Iskandari) which considerably influenced the performance of the bourgeois-landlord opposition in the Majlis.<sup>2</sup> Both parties conducted extensive anti-imperialist propaganda among various groups of the population, including the Kurdish tribes of Iran, and pressed for democratic reforms. In the spring of 1924, the ICP tried but failed to organise a worker-peasant party that could have drawn a large mass of working people into the struggle for a republican form of government in Iran.<sup>3</sup>

The ICP's record of those years totally disproves one of the main arguments of bourgeois historiography that Communists, alleged to be seeking power at any cost, did not find it possible to support any other government, not even a nationalist one. It is indicative that the ICP maintained a generally positive attitude towards the government of Reza Khan, in spite of its inconsistency and half-way policy in defending national interests. "Iranian Communists and the left wing of the progressive sections of Persian public," the *Pravda* newspaper wrote on October 31, 1925,

<sup>1</sup> See: *The Communist International Between the Fifth and the Sixth World Congresses 1924-28*, Dorrit Press, Ltd., London, 1928, p. 409.

<sup>2</sup> CPA IML, s. 80, r. 6, f. 30, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> See: *International Press Correspondence*, 8 November 1928, Vol. 8, No. 78, p. 1470.

“generally support the measures taken by the present Prime Minister Reza Khan and his followers—the measures directed towards ending the feudal-monarchic regime, reunifying, centralising and democratising Persia.” Those were the years of the Communist Party’s greatest success in establishing cooperation with all nationalist forces and organisations, political education and organisation of the working masses. The ICP had its prestige consolidated.

True, with reactionary tendencies on the rise in Reza Khan’s policies in 1924-1925, the left-sectarian trends once more prevailed in the ICP’s activities. Following Reza Khan’s accession to the throne late in 1925, which led to cruel reprisals against democratic forces, the party leadership, having failed to foresee such a turn of events, was sharply divided on Reza Khan’s policies, so much so, in fact, that it found itself on the brink of a split. Whereas the right deviationists somewhat overestimated the objectively progressive features of the new regime, the “left” ignored them altogether. Friction within the ICP leadership produced a divergence of approach to the party’s work of propaganda and organisation. The reprisals, sharply intensified by the authorities, damaged the Communist Party’s organisations. The membership dwindled from 600 in 1924<sup>1</sup> to 500-400 by 1927.<sup>2</sup> At the Second Congress of the ICP, called to restore the party’s organisational and ideological unity, the views of the right deviationists came under fire from the leftist positions.

The Action Programme of the Iranian Communist Party,<sup>3</sup> adopted by the Congress, opened with this statement: “Persia is fast approaching a new revolution.” The argument behind this proposition was that Reza Khan’s dynastic revolution, which meant the institution of power of trade capital (semi-feudal landowners and the upper crust of the trading bourgeoisie), supposedly “did not affect any of the foundations of the power of feudal lords and the clergy and left their status totally intact”, and that the new Shah “per-

<sup>1</sup> See: *A Communist’s Calendar for 1925*, Moskovsky Rabochy Publishers, Moscow, 1924, p. 248 (in Russian).

<sup>2</sup> *Verbatim Report of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern*, Issue 4, p. 478.

<sup>3</sup> *The Press Bulletin of the Middle East*, No. 8, 1929, pp. 26-33 (in Russian).

sonifies a regime of feudal and clerical reaction". Nor did the Programme take into account the reduced political influence of Great Britain in Iran or the re-establishment of the country's national sovereignty. Along with calling for the destruction of the feudal and clerical regime, the expulsion of British imperialists, the attainment of full independence and the granting of democratic freedoms to the working people, the programme demanded the dismantling of the foundations of landlordism and the free distribution of all land among the peasants, the confiscation of factories and oilfields of the APOC. The ICP's tactics, worked out by its Second Congress, were characterised in the Comintern's documents as directed towards "the establishment of revolutionary, democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasants".<sup>1</sup> That line, theoretically justified to a certain extent, had the disadvantage, however, of leftist sectarianism because it did not take into account the need for painstaking work with the masses which required a relatively long time to accomplish.

The ICP once more began to deviate from united front tactics. Having proclaimed its determination to strive for an association of all revolutionary elements—from the peasantry up to the middle classes—the Communist Party at the same time put into its programme some planks that were unacceptable to its eventual allies, notably, the proposal for a Soviet system of government to be installed at once. The motive adduced to justify the proposal was that a parliamentary republic, although it would be a step forward compared with a monarchy, still represented an "instrument of deception of the working masses by the ruling classes". In a statement typical of the time, the General Secretary of the ICP Sharegi (Rezayev) came out at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern against cooperation with national-reformist organisations like Ejtemayun Amiyun. "For a long time we were working in a bloc with the Socialist Party," he said, "but in recent times it has developed into a typical opportunist party and has frequently come out openly against the C.P.... The Persian Socialist Party has never been a mass Party, and it never will be, and in the not

<sup>1</sup> *The Communist International Between the Fifth and the Sixth World Congresses 1924-28*, p. 410.

too distant future the C. P. will put an end to the political adventure of the leaders of this party.”<sup>1</sup> At the same time, the ICP Central Committee mouthpiece, the *Setare-ye-sorkh* magazine, admitted that this Socialist Party was followed by a mass of workers, peasants, intellectuals and petty urban bourgeoisie.<sup>2</sup> The ICP also opposed cooperation with a petty-bourgeois nationalist organisation, which called itself the Revolutionary Republican Party of Iran, on the sole ground that it demanded the establishment of “people’s republican rule”, i. e., as the ICP organ wrote, a “government of the capitalist class”, not a “revolutionary labour-peasant government, i. e. Soviet government”. At the same time, the Communist Party acknowledged its influence among the working people.<sup>3</sup>

The Iranian Communist Party appeared to present fertile ground for some elements of a “class versus class” tactic which was adopted by a number of West European Communist parties at the time. With that tactic to inspire it, the ICP Central Committee pointed out in its appeal of December 15, 1929 “To All Members of the Party” that “it is impossible for a Communist party to cooperate with any political party or organisation of the big or petty bourgeoisie”.<sup>4</sup> The appeal said: “The Party continues its activity independently and will organise and prepare revolutionary elements out of the class of workers and peasants for a proletarian revolution.” The Central Committee of the Communist Party declared that it “finds it necessary ... to discontinue all cooperation with the political parties and organisations of the class of the petty bourgeoisie (Socialists, etc.)”.<sup>5</sup>

While recalling these facts, one cannot fail to mention the circumstances which were behind the resurgence of left-sectarian trends in the party at the time. On the one hand, the relative success of the Communists in 1922-1924 led some sections of the ICP leadership to overestimate the strength and influence of the Communist Party. On the

<sup>1</sup> *International Press Correspondence*, 3 August 1928, Vol. 8, No. 48, p. 844.

<sup>2</sup> *Setare-ye-sorkh*, Nos. 7-8, 1930, p. 39.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

other, the fear of being diluted within the petty-bourgeois environment and the need to combat opportunism and petty-bourgeois influence within the party prompted Iranian Communists to drop the idea of using the opportunities they had of drawing closer to the masses, which, in point of fact, led to the bond with them being loosened. Nor can one discount the fact that the Iranian Communists knew of the betrayal by the bourgeoisie in a number of Eastern countries. At the same time, the unending harassment and persecution by the local authorities compelled the party to apply the strictest possible conspiratorial tactics and caution in contacting other democratic organisations. Nevertheless, the Communist Party's prestige among the Iranian working class rose considerably in the late 1920s and the early 1930s, as witnessed by numerous Communist-led strikes. The ICP's determination to gain hegemony in the liberation movement and to secure the immediate social emancipation of the working people arose not from any "insidious plans to implant communism", as bourgeois scholars are wont to claim, but from a sincere desire to achieve national sovereignty and economic independence.

It will be just to the point to quote some leaders of the Iranian communist and working-class movement in this context. A member of the Central Committee of the People's Party of Iran, Ardashir Ovanessian, writes in his reminiscences: "In those days we did not have the right idea of Iranian society.... Our Party was largely infected with dogmatism and sectarianism at the time.... We, the Party militants, had but insignificant experience, often thought in dogmatic terms and tried to apply some principles of Marxism to Iran quite mechanically, whereas there had to be a creative approach. But for that, we should have well known our society and considered the customs, mores and national traditions of the people, which we did not in actual fact. We did not attach proper importance to a united national anti-imperialist front, failed to create one, and did not look into the matter from every angle and from a scientific point of view."<sup>1</sup> A member of the Executive Bureau of the People's Party of Iran, Abdulsamad Kambakhsh, also pointed out that the ICP was "infected with

<sup>1</sup> *Donya*, No. 4, 1967, pp. 112-13.

sectarianism and doctrinairism”<sup>1</sup> from the early 1920s on.

While noting the slow-down of communist activities in Iran during the 1930s, bourgeois historians ignore not only left-sectarian moods which made for the erosion of the party ranks, but also the acts of terror by the Iranian authorities which crushed most of the Communist Party’s organisations in 1931. Bourgeois historiography claims, besides, that there were extreme nationalistic trends in evidence in Iranian society at the time. Ivar Spector, for instance, speaks of an upsurge of fascism. “In the thirties,” he writes, “communism had still another competitor in the Near and Middle East—namely, Nazism.... Whereas the Bolsheviks [!] had sought to disseminate communism in Iran, Nazi propagandists appealed to the people on the basis of their Aryan origins, that is, on the ground of racial superiority. This approach had greater appeal for the Iranian nationalists than did Soviet [!] propaganda, since nationalism was stronger in Iran than the *Klassenkampf*.”<sup>2</sup> Such assertions are baseless, to say the least, if applied to the period when the communist organisations had practically ceased to function in Iran and Iranian-Soviet relations (to mention them just because the author referred to the action of “Bolsheviks” and to “Soviet propaganda”) were reduced almost to naught by the Iranian authorities. Now, the argument that nazi ideas appealed to Iranians is just a piece of slander against the peoples of the East which is so peculiar to the advocates of colonialism.

Similar arguments have been produced by certain Iranian reactionary authors, Fatolla Bina first and foremost. By dint of a “psychological analysis”, he tries to prove that the mass of the people of Iran (he finds no other name for them except the “mob” and the “rabble”) felt pro-fascist on the eve and at the outbreak of the Second World War, and that they wanted Iran to join the nazi bloc in a war against the USSR.<sup>3</sup> What he does, in actual fact, is to ascribe to the mass of the people the feeling which was in

<sup>1</sup> See: *The 30th Anniversary of the Seventh Congress of the Comintern (Proceedings of an International Meeting in Prague)*, Svoboda, Prague, 1966, p. 69 (in Czech).

<sup>2</sup> Ivar Spector, *Op. cit.*, pp. 186-87.

<sup>3</sup> Fatolla Bina, *Andisheha-ye Reza-shah-e kabir*, Teheran, 1950, pp. 67-68, 72, 84, 87-88, 97.

reality typical of the most reactionary political quarters representing some sections of Iran's dominant classes. It is noteworthy that as soon as the ICP members were released from prison late in 1941, the communist and nationalist movements joined forces in a democratic anti-fascist struggle in Iran.

There is a significant confession by British historian Walter Laqueur, the author of the book *Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East*, who holds outspokenly anti-communist views. He writes: "Nationalism in the Middle East is not a force opposed to Communism. On the contrary, at the present time it has paved the way for and has collaborated with it. Communism, more often than not, had grown up together with nationalism, and for many years a conflict between the two was not even considered possible."<sup>1</sup>

**KUCHIK KHAN:**

**ANTI-IMPERIALIST NATIONALISM AND SOCIALIST IDEAL**

Much prominence in the system of conceptual constructs by bourgeois falsifiers has been given to an evaluation of the political activities of Kuchik Khan, the leader of the Gilan national liberation movement.

There were different views of the personality of Kuchik Khan in the Western press and literature in the early 1920s, many of them far from the truth. For instance, French observer Georges Ducrocq maintained that "the hands of Kuchik Khan the Persian revolutionary" operated at the instigation of the German government.<sup>2</sup>

British general L. C. Dunsterville, who met Kuchik Khan during the British occupation of Iran, could not help recognising him as "a high-minded enthusiast" whose overriding ambition was expressed in his cry "Persia for the Persians".<sup>3</sup> Recent bourgeois historiography has stuck to an

<sup>1</sup> Walter Z. Laqueur, *Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1957, p. 275.

<sup>2</sup> Georges Ducrocq, "La politique du gouvernement des Soviets en Perse", *Revue du Monde Musulman*, Paris, Vol. LII, December 1922, p. 87.

<sup>3</sup> L. C. Dunsterville, "Military Mission to North-West Persia, 1918", *Journal of the Central Asian Society*, Vol. VIII, 1921, p. 83.

assessment of Kuchik Khan as one of the most colourful exponents of Iranian nationalism. For example, Professor Richard W. Cottam, a former member of the staff of the US Embassy in Teheran, writes that it was a "moderately well-to-do landowner and a liberal intellectual—an ideal prospective leader for a local national movement".<sup>1</sup>

Yet, even such assessments are limited in a way. There is enough factual material to make it clear that Kuchik Khan's nationalism was militant, revolutionary and democratic, due to the radicalism of his political programme for the social organisation of Iran which he associated with a socialist ideal. That was behind his deep-seated sympathy for the communist doctrine and his active cooperation with the ICP. Even such a scholar as Sepehr, who is far from having any liking for communism, has indirectly acknowledged the undisputed influence of communism on Kuchik Khan's nationalism. He writes that during the First World War Kuchik Khan was extremely religious, with no clear goals for his movement; his political programme was to be defined only after he began to cooperate with Communists.<sup>2</sup>

It was his closer contact with Communists in May 1920 that produced the decisive influence on Kuchik Khan's political platform. The "Appeal of the Fedayees-Jangalees<sup>3</sup> of Gilan to the Oppressed People of Iran", published at Rasht on June 6, said: "The national forces of the Jangalees having turned to the humane people of the whole world for support and help and following the fair principles of socialism, have entered the stage of a red revolution."<sup>4</sup> It was by no means a mere tribute to the sign of the times and the prevalent moods that the Jangalees used the terms like "socialism", "red revolution" or "Soviet government". That reflected, in a way, the character of the new political platform of Kuchik Khan (the Jangalee movement's programme at the time called for state-owned land, minerals, forests, grazing grounds, transport and factories to belong to

<sup>1</sup> Richard W. Cottam, *Nationalism in Iran*, University of Pittsburg Press, Pittsburg, 1964, p. 103.

<sup>2</sup> See: Zabih Sepehr, *Op. cit.*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>3</sup> Fedayee (Persian: "self-sacrificing") and Jangalee (Persian: "forest people") were the local names of Gilan guerrillas.

<sup>4</sup> See: Ibrahim Fahrai, *Sardar-e jangal Mirza Kuchik-Khan*, Teheran, 1967, p. 250.

the people),<sup>1</sup> as well as the pattern of his earlier political activity. At the beginning of the century, Kuchik Khan lived for a while in the Caucasus—Baku and Tiflis—where he had come into close contact with exiled Iranian democrats who appreciably influenced his revolutionary outlook. Active in the Iranian revolution of 1905-1911, he took part in fighting the Shah's forces and was punished for it by being denied the right of residence in his home town of Rasht.<sup>2</sup> The Soviet Information Bureau chief in Iran, V. G. Tardov, pointed out in his report of September 1920 "Our Policy in Persia" that Kuchik Khan was a member of the Ejtemayun Amiyun organisation which had instructed him to organise a guerrilla detachment to fight Czarist forces and he carried out the assignment in 1912.<sup>3</sup> These circumstances could account, to some extent, for the fact that the Jangalees called themselves a party of Ejtemayun (Socialists), or a "Society of the Iranian Red Revolution", etc., in different periods.

Kuchik Khan appreciated the importance of close cooperation with the Communist Party in an effective struggle for Iran's national liberation. Having agreed to an ICP Central Committee man being coopted to the Revolutionary Military Council set up in Gilan, he promised to "offer every assistance" to the local party organisations.<sup>4</sup> A report by a member of the Iranian Bureau of Communist Organisations (Iran-Bureau) pointed out that Kuchik Khan held a position of "full tolerance" of the organisations of the Communist Party and their activities.<sup>5</sup> In an interview late in May 1920, Kuchik Khan said that he found the Communist Party's programme "acceptable" to himself, but "believed it necessary to carry out the minimum programme ... leaving the maximum programme to be carried out in the future".<sup>6</sup> While emphatically opposing the demand of the

<sup>1</sup> Ibraghim Fahrai, *Op. cit.*, pp. 56-58; Schapour Ravasani, *Op. cit.*, p. 289.

<sup>2</sup> Ibraghim Fahrai, *Op. cit.*, pp. 39-41.

<sup>3</sup> ORCSA, s. 5402, f. 510, p. 5. There is, besides, a widespread view in some publications that this assignment was given to Kuchik Khan by the pan-Islamic Fitchad-e-Islam Committee he had been in close contact with for a time.

<sup>4</sup> ORCSA, s. 5402, f. 513, pp. 2-3.

<sup>5</sup> CPA IML, s. 85, r. 8, f. 23, p. 125.

<sup>6</sup> *Kommunist*, Baku, May 30, 1920.

“left”-wing Communists for the immediate “introduction” of socialism in Iran, he claimed that “nationalist ambitions and religious factors are the most serious obstacle to the dissemination of communism in Iran”.<sup>1</sup>

Kuchik Khan emphasised that his position was based “on the major requirements of social and religious mentality of an extremely backward country [and] a departure from these outward conventions will give a fine means and tool for propaganda both to the clergy and to the agents of the English and the Shah against the idea of revolution in the East”.<sup>2</sup> Considering the specific aspects of the national revolutionary movement in Iran, Kuchik Khan, unlike the leftists who considered that the sweeping revolutionary tide in the East “was bound to pass from national ... to social, similar to that of Russia”,<sup>3</sup> believed that “since the conditions of economic life and traditions of the Persian people are quite different, the way of revolution followed in Russia was inconceivable for Persia”.<sup>4</sup> During the talks with Communists, Kuchik Khan declared that “the immediate reforms without the population being prepared for them in advance will provoke extremely stiff opposition from the sections whose cooperation and full support are indispensable for the successful implementation of the task of liberating Persia from the English”.<sup>5</sup>

There is every reason to presume Kuchik Khan to have been conversant with Lenin’s ideas about the ways of development of the revolutionary movement in the context of different levels of social and economic development and about the Communist Party’s policies in dealing with the bourgeoisie during the democratic stage of the revolution. In a cabled letter of July 21, 1920 to Lenin, he pointed out that “the revolution in different countries cannot be made in one way. It is necessary to take into account the conditions in which it develops as well as the overall political situation of the country depending on world politics.” Declaring the ideas of communism to be close to his outlook, Kuchik Khan stressed that to apply communist

<sup>1</sup> See: Ibraghim Fahrai, *Op. cit.*, p. 243.

<sup>2</sup> ORCSA, s. 5402, f. 518, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Zhizn natsionalnostei*, August 1, 1920.

<sup>4</sup> ORCSA, s. 5402, f. 518, p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 513, p. 1.

principles in the circumstances as they existed in Iran in a "quick and resolute" way was impossible. The ideas of communism had to be explained to the people and "brought home" to them gradually, with maximum caution and patience. Only when the working masses joined the revolution having clearly realised that to be the sole way of putting an end to inequality and exploitation, would it be possible to speak up for a socialist revolution. At the moment, however, the objectives of the revolutionary movement in Iran, he wrote, must be opposition to British imperialism and the government of the Shah. In that struggle it was necessary to rely on the bourgeoisie having a stake in the expulsion of foreign oppressors from the country. With Iran independent, monarchy overthrown and a nationally elected revolutionary government installed, the struggle was to be spearheaded against those who would be resisting fundamental change. While explaining his moderate policy in respect of the petty bourgeoisie, Kuchik Khan wrote that, "as you know, the preponderant class of the Persian urban population [is] petty merchants" whom "we need just as Russia needs working intellectuals. And, therefore, I must use them for the achievement of the common objective." "Some concessions have to be made provisionally" in order to win over the petty bourgeoisie. Kuchik Khan warned that the leftist policy of some Communists in Gilan could "erupt into a disaster" and "in that way kill the revolution". Concluding, he wrote: "Taking into account the importance of the revolution in the East for the world revolution ... I plead for adherence to the policy you have worked out in respect of the East, accepted by the entire Persian people.... I am doing all I have just spoken about not for the sake of supporting the propertied classes, but as a makeshift measure because a failure to respect their interests [that is the interests of the representatives of the bourgeoisie— *Auth.*] can now do irreparable damage to the revolution."<sup>1</sup>

As we see, Kuchik Khan certainly distinguished between the democratic and socialist stages of the revolution. Sincerely interested in its development and extension, Kuchik Khan wrote to Lenin, pointing to the ill-timed action of the

<sup>1</sup> CPA IML, s. 85, r. 8, f. 23, pp. 120-22.

“left”, in another letter of July 1920: “They are confusing the cause of the revolution with every passing day and, thereby, corner me in front of the people. Protest is coming from all parts of Iran against this action, which means robbing the people of a desire to help forward the cause of the revolution.” That makes it clear that Kuchik Khan made no attempt at indefinitely postponing the fundamental democratic change in the country. In the same letter he referred to the necessity of “working out a definite programme to respond to Iranian conditions and all of its distinguishing features as an oriental country” in case ICP action was found well-timed.<sup>1</sup>

An intransigent opponent of British influence in Iran, Kuchik Khan emphasised that differences of opinion among the revolutionaries were playing into the hands of imperialists. In his letter of January 17, 1921 to Haidar Khan Amougli, he pointed out that the aim of the English was, by setting Communists and the Jangalees against each other, to destroy all of them.<sup>2</sup> Rejecting the charges from the “left”, Kuchik Khan said: “Short-sighted fanatics and novices from among the Adalatists and their mates, without realising what they are doing and without going into the reasons behind the failure and destruction of the revolution, without realising their crimes in front of it and its objectives, are hurling absurd charges against us, the Jangalees, the haters of imperialism, accusing us of conciliation with English representatives and the government of the Shah.”<sup>3</sup>

Kuchik Khan did not find the mistakes of the “left” and their hostile attitude to the Jangalees to be an insurmountable obstacle to cooperation with the Communists. In a leaflet<sup>4</sup> addressed to the rank-and-file protagonists of the “left”-organised military coup of July 31, 1920 at Rasht, Kuchik Khan wrote: “My comrades and brothers! You have some agents provocateurs among you who want to make us enemies. You have to know that they are thinking of nothing but their own gain.... They are telling you that I

<sup>1</sup> ORCSA, s. 5402, f. 517, pp. 47-49; Ibraghim Fahrai, *Op. cit.*, pp. 279-83.

<sup>2</sup> ORCSA, s. 5402, f. 517, pp. 45-47.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 518, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Discovered by V. N. Plastun in the archive of the Tabriz Museum of the Revolution of 1905-1911.

am your enemy. Don't believe that lie! I am your friend. It is the English who are our common enemy. Don't believe the agents provocateurs! ... Your mates, those who are fooling you, have arrested my Mujahids ["fighters for the holy cause"—*Auth.*] who have been fighting side by side with you. Who is doing things like that?... You have been ordered, without any reason, to attack our Mujahids ... who had to defend themselves. On learning about it and having no wish to fight you, I ordered them to retreat because I wanted to keep our friendship alive." In his letter of November 9, 1920 to the "left" revolutionaries who had seized power at Rasht, Kuchik Khan wrote with bitterness that the word "socialist" had lost its true meaning for some people so that they do not want to hear it "even while asleep". At the same time, he accepted a reconciliation.<sup>1</sup>

It was the attitude to the importance of the military factor in the revolutionary movement that was an object of deep-going divergence between Kuchik Khan and the "left". In the above-mentioned letter of November 9, 1920 he wrote: "I have always been sure and I am still sure that success of any national movement depends on the people's level of consciousness, not on the use of armed force. Well-organised propaganda work among the people and respect for their way of thinking, national customs and traditions are a far more effective means than a whole army, thousands strong. The peoples of the East, and above all the Iranians who had always been thoroughly religious, will never share extremist and adventurous convictions. All movements pursue one of the two aims: resisting an enemy attack or implanting one's ideas and convictions. It takes courage and valour to resist an enemy attack, while it takes prudence and intelligence, considering the demand of the times, to get one's ideas established."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See: Ibraghim Fahrai, *Op. cit.*, pp. 322-24.

<sup>2</sup> ORCSA, s. 5402, f. 517, pp. 42-43; Ibraghim Fahrai, *Op. cit.*, pp. 319-20.

## SOVIET COMMUNISTS AND THE IRANIAN NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

Many Western and Iranian historians use the terms "communism" and "Bolshevism" to denote Soviet policies with regard to Iran as well as the activities of the Iranian Communist Party. In this confusion the questions of the communist movement in Iran are mixed up with those of Soviet-Iranian relations. It is significant that Ivar Spector, referring to the "Documents of the Programmes of the Communist Parties of the East", published in the USSR in 1934, as one of the sources he had drawn from, wrote: "These 'Programs' are a basic and indispensable text for any study of Soviet relations with the Muslim world."<sup>1</sup>

There have been more of unseemly tactics to make a travesty of the truth. "Iranian migrant workers, returning to Iran from Baku and Central Asia, where they had witnessed or even taken part in revolutionary activities," Spector writes, "played an important role in the spread of Soviet [!] ideas in their homeland."<sup>2</sup> The author seems to make a slip by substituting "Soviet" for "Communist"....

Bourgeois historians have been depicting the party of Iranian Communists as an instrument of Moscow's pursuit of its own ends in Iran. "The communist groups of Tabriz," Ducrocq claimed peremptorily back in 1922, "were Tatars (coming from Baku) or Armenians (coming from Yerevan and Baku), the so-called refugees who were, in fact, the emissaries of the Soviets."<sup>3</sup> Western historians are still trying to vilify Soviet policy in respect of Iran in the 1920s. Schapour Ravasani argues unequivocally that the "ICP virtually functioned as an RCP (B) subsidiary" and operated in the "world political and economic interests of Soviet Russia".<sup>4</sup> In conflict with himself, he admits that as the ICP voted to adopt its policy guidelines at its First Congress, it "did not follow

<sup>1</sup> Ivar Spector, *Op. cit.*, p. VIII.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>3</sup> Georges Ducrocq, *Op. cit.*, *Revue du Monde Musulman*, Paris, Vol. LII, December 1922, p. 145.

<sup>4</sup> Schapour Ravasani, *Op. cit.*, pp. 266-67.

Lenin in this question".<sup>1</sup>

So, what are, after all, in the judgement of bourgeois historiography, those "world political and economic interests of Soviet Russia" that Iranian Communists were expected to further? Modern-day historians are wont to content themselves with repeating the fabrications of imperialist propaganda of the first few years following the October Revolution when it claimed to discover Soviet "expansionist" plans everywhere and passed off the communist movement in all countries as the "handiwork of Moscow". Back in 1922 a Frenchman, Georges Ducrocq, asserted that the goal of Soviet policy in Iran was to "reach Seistan and go round Afghanistan so as to advance into India, if need be".<sup>2</sup> In 1967 an American, Ivar Spector, echoed him, when he alleged that in the 1920s "there was nothing new in the Soviet blueprint for Iran which had not been envisaged by Peter the Great, General Kuropatkin, and other Russian imperialists of the Tsarist era".<sup>3</sup> The only new thing about it, as Spector saw it, was ideological cover: the place of Czarist colonialism has been taken by "red colonialism (Sovietization)".<sup>4</sup> Similar arguments have been proffered by other authors.<sup>5</sup>

A wealth of factual material now at the disposal of scientific research and the findings of Soviet historiography furnish conclusive evidence to show that the Leninist foreign policy of the Soviet state was aimed at establishing friendly and equal relations with Iran and safeguarding its national independence and territorial

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 278. It should be noted in this context that the resolution of the Baku RCP(B) Committee dated August 2, 1919 referred to the organisational independence of Iranian communist groups in the territory of Azerbaijan (see: J. B. Guliyev, *The Struggle of the Communist Party for Leninist Nationalities Policy in Azerbaijan*, Gosizdat, Baku, 1970, p. 412 (in Russian)).

<sup>2</sup> Georges Ducrocq, *Op. cit.*, *Revue du Monde Musulman*, p. 93.

<sup>3</sup> Ivar Spector, *Op. cit.*, p. 85.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 267.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example: Nasrollah Saifpour Fatemi, *Diplomatic History of Persia 1917-1923. Anglo-Russian Power Politics in Iran*, Russel F. Moore Company, Inc., New York, 1952, pp. 121-34; Rouhollah K. Ramazani, *The Foreign Policy of Iran. A Developing Nation in World Affairs 1500-1941*, University of Virginia Press, Charlottesville, 1966, pp. 139-45, 217; Purandocht Pirayesh, *Persisch-russische Beziehungen zwischen den beiden Weltkriegen*, Munich, 1964, p. 68.

integrity.<sup>1</sup> Here is one document to cite. As early as November 27, 1920 Lenin wrote in a draft decision of the Political Bureau of the RCP(B) Central Committee that it was necessary for "a policy of utmost conciliation to be adopted towards ... Persia, i. e., one directed most of all towards avoiding war".<sup>2</sup>

Let us have a look at some of the new elements which have appeared in bourgeois historiography on Iran. At one time Georges Ducrocq claimed, without bothering to produce any arguments to support his allegation, that the immediate concern of Iranian Communists was to detach Iran's northern provinces and establish a "Soviet regime" there right away,<sup>3</sup> while ascribing to the Bolsheviks the attempts at introducing a communist regime by the leftists.<sup>4</sup> Now bourgeois writers find themselves compelled to resort to all kinds of tricks to try and justify such theories. For example, Zabih Sepehr has gone even as far as to concede that "the Persian Communists, in effect, gave a far narrower interpretation to the concept of temporary alliance with the bourgeoisie" than the Soviets called on them to.<sup>5</sup> Other authors have reversed the argument by alleging that the Kremlin was hostile to those Iranian Communists who, like Haidar Khan, attempted to "adjust Communism" to the specific national conditions of Iran.<sup>6</sup> They have, however, no credible facts to support such an argument; all they do, as a rule, is to quote Lenin's words, without rhyme or reason, about the need to fight against "narrow-minded nationalism".<sup>7</sup>

Challenging the reactionary aspects of bourgeois nation-

<sup>1</sup> See, for example: A. N. Kheifets, *Soviet Russia and Adjacent Countries of the East During the Civil War (1918-1920)*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1964; *Idem, Soviet Diplomacy and the Peoples of the East, 1921-1927*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1968 (both in Russian).

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Draft Decision of the Politbureau of the C.C., R.C.P.(B.)", *Collected Works*, Vol. 42, p. 228.

<sup>3</sup> See: Georges Ducrocq, *Op. cit.*, *Revue du Monde Musulman*, p. 89.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 89-92, 106, 143.

<sup>5</sup> Zabih Sepehr, *Op. cit.*, p. 28.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example: Nasrollah Saifpour Fatemi, *Op. cit.*, pp. 172, 242; Schapour Ravasani, *Op. cit.*, pp. 353-54.

<sup>7</sup> Nasrollah Saifpour Fatemi, *Op. cit.*, p. 172.

alism is not a means of "proletarianising" a national revolution, but only a condition for the full and consistent solution of the problems of that very revolution. While opposing "narrow-minded nationalism" in general, Lenin called on the communist organisations of the peoples of the East to base themselves "on the bourgeois nationalism which is awakening, and must awaken, among those peoples, and which has its historical justification".<sup>1</sup>

One of the fundamental principles of the Soviet Communists' activities in Iran from the very outset was to take into account the specific national environment and the particular requirements of Iran's national development. The first Soviet ambassador in Tcheran, I. O. Kolomiytsev, savagely murdered by the Whiteguards with British connivance in 1919, wrote in a message to G. V. Chicherin, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the RSFSR: "Persia must, first of all, live through the stage of national regeneration ... the slogan of 'independent Persia' or that of 'Persia for the Persians' will initially unite all the classes and social groups of Persia, as even the trading bourgeoisie clearly realises that without the national regeneration and the overthrow of British rule, the English will nip [in] the bud whatever is left of national trade and industry."<sup>2</sup>

Right after the proclamation of the republic in Gilan, the Soviet Communists did what they could to direct the budding Iranian Communists towards a well-justified application of communist principles to the liberation movement operating under the banner of nationalism. For example, the *Kommunist* newspaper of Baku wrote in a leading article in June 1920 on the First Congress of the Iranian Communist Party: "To find the right line of behaviour in an extremely complex situation, to work out a programme and a tactic, which, while being communist, would not hold up the development of the national liberation revolution but would help [it] forward, to modify and adjust to the local conditions the methods of struggle learned in an entirely different setting, to achieve hegemony over the revolutionary sections of the Persian people, to

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Address to the Second All-Russia Congress of Communist Organisations of the Peoples of the East, November 22, 1919", *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, p. 162.

<sup>2</sup> CPA IML, s. 17, r. 65, f. 176, p. 10.

bring out and crystallise a social class that would be the vehicle of the revolutionary struggle and insurrection—these are the tasks before the Congress of the Persian Communists, which have never yet been solved or even considered anywhere.”<sup>1</sup>

A very important position was taken up, for example, by G. K. Orjonikidze, a prominent Soviet statesman, who was delegated by the RSFSR Government in May 1920 to assist Kuchik Khan in his struggle against British imperialists.<sup>2</sup> Well conversant with the specific aspects of the revolutionary movement in Iran and, besides, according to some sources, personally familiar with Kuchik Khan ever since the Iranian Revolution of 1905-1911,<sup>3</sup> G. K. Orjonikidze declared during the negotiations between ICP leaders and the Jangalees: “I support without any question everything that this honest and trustworthy man proposes, and I declare my consent to his opinion and tactic because he has the experience of the revolutionary movement in his own country and takes into account the prospect ahead for this revolution.”<sup>4</sup>

So, the only reason behind the publication of any material by bourgeois authors proving the Soviet Communists to have been right in their assessment of the requirements of the national development of Iran has been to try and “justify” their own argument about the Soviet Government’s intention to exploit the Iranian national liberation movement for its own political ends. It was Ducrocq who back in his day asserted that Soviet leaders had given up their “support for Persian nationalism” as soon as they saw that “Persia, having no industry, is not ripe for Soviet propaganda” and that “the undisguised attempt of the Communists [to detach Iran’s northern provinces and instal a communist regime there—*Auth.*] did not bring good results”, etc.<sup>5</sup> From October 1920, he claims, the Soviet Government directed its effort “towards the re-establishment of normal relations between Russia and Persia”. That led Ducrocq to associate the vigorous drive, started at the time

<sup>1</sup> *Kommunist*, Baku, June 23, 1920.

<sup>2</sup> CPA IML, s. 64, r. 2, f. 5, p. 89.

<sup>3</sup> Ibraghim Fahrai, *Op. cit.*, p. 244.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 243.

<sup>5</sup> Georges Ducrocq, *Op. cit.*, *Revue du Monde Musulman*, pp. 106, 143.

by a group of Iranian Communists led by Haidar Khan for reorganising ICP work in Gilan, with a "radical change in political relations between Persia and the Soviets".<sup>1</sup>

A certain turn in Soviet-Iranian relations did begin in the autumn of 1920. However, it was not due to any change in the policy of the Soviet state, which had sought ever since its founding to establish friendly relations with Iran, as one can see from numerous documents and other material, but to the Iranian Government's refusal—under pressure from the national liberation movement—to keep the country politically committed to the interests of the British imperialists. It was at that time that the Iranian Government actually got down to negotiating a Soviet-Iranian treaty.

Foreign historians interpret these facts each in his own way. Schapour Ravasani, for instance, contends that the Soviet Government, while advertising, both through its own media and, more particularly, through the Third International, its stand in favour of opposition to British imperialism, was, in fact, doing everything to conclude a treaty not only with Iran, but also with Britain, because it had to do something about Russia's industrialisation, and at the same time went out of its way to safeguard the Caucasus from the northern provinces of Iran. The Communists and the Jangalec movement in Gilan were said to be used as a deterrent against the Persian central government and Britain.<sup>2</sup> Having secured the treaties with Iran (February 1921) and Britain (March 1921), "the Soviet Government achieved its ends and needed no more of the revolutionary elements in Gilan".<sup>3</sup>

With that kind of allegations as their base of support, foreign historians have been trying to discover some contradiction between the Soviet political leaders and the Iranian Communists where there was none in reality. "It

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>2</sup> Schapour Ravasani, *Op. cit.*, pp. 351-52.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 354. In an attempt to justify the argument that the Soviet Government had a stake in friendship with Britain and the pro-British community in Iran, Schapour Ravasani refers to the fact that the Iranian Government which signed the Soviet-Iranian Treaty was the one that had come to power following the British-organised coup of February 21, 1921 (*Ibid.*, pp. 351-52).

is certain," Zabih Sepchr writes, "that the subordination of the revolutionary aspirations of the indigenous Persian radicals to the requirements of Soviet diplomacy served to disillusion the majority of participants in the Gilan adventure."<sup>1</sup> Authors of this type have never bothered to produce honest arguments in referring to the opposition of the ICP leaders to the Soviet policy in Iran. When A. Sultan-Zadeh declared at the Second Comintern Congress that the support of bourgeois nationalists would mean to drive the working masses into the arms of counterrevolution, "this position obviously constituted a protest on the part of Sultan-Zadeh against the Soviets' negotiations with the Teheran Government",<sup>2</sup> one of such authors alleged as if "forgetting" that the Soviet-Iranian negotiations got under way as late as November 1920, not in July when the Second Comintern Congress was in session.

Nor is there any ground to support the arguments of certain bourgeois historians in trying to present Kuchik Khan as an Iranian nationalist leader who had to avail himself of Soviet support just because of the particular circumstances shaping up in Gilan.<sup>3</sup> However, Kuchik Khan had repeatedly expressed his rather high appreciation of the fraternal aid of Russia's working people to the revolutionary movement in Iran.<sup>4</sup> Schapour Ravasani, for instance, admitted: "Mirza Kuchik Khan had limitless confidence in the leaders of Soviet Russia and was firmly convinced that the leaders of the RCP(B) would help correct the mistakes of the Adalat Party in Gilan and will go on supporting the Persian national revolutionary movement."<sup>5</sup>

Western historians see no other reason behind the failure of the national liberation movement in Gilan beyond the cut-off of its support by the Soviet Government. The very pattern of bourgeois historiographic treatment of this question is designed to make an unprepared reader accept as Gospel the idea that communism has no principles and that it exploits nationalism to further its own self-seeking

<sup>1</sup> Zabih Sepchr, *Op. cit.*, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> See: Demetrio Boersner, *Op. cit.*, p. 89.

<sup>3</sup> See: Nasrollah Saifpour Fatemi, *Op. cit.*, p. 220.

<sup>4</sup> Ibraghim Fahrai, *Op. cit.*, pp. 246-50.

<sup>5</sup> Schapour Ravasani, *Op. cit.*, p. 304.

ambitions.<sup>1</sup> In his anti-Soviet fabrications, Zabih Sepelr goes as far as to claim that "Soviet diplomatic representatives in Teheran had become impatient with the delay in the total destruction of the Jangalee rebellion and had urged Lenin to take action",<sup>2</sup> that the movement was destroyed "with the support and active encouragement of the Soviet diplomatic mission in Teheran".<sup>3</sup>

The actual course of events was quite different, however, from what bourgeois historians make it out. That was a period when the national liberation movement in Gilan had developed some trends arising from a split of the revolutionary force and from attempts by British imperialists to reverse the revolutionary and democratic character of anti-government actions so as to keep them confined to separatist opposition to the central authorities. The Soviet ambassador in Teheran F. A. Rothstein, in agreement with the parties concerned, undertook to mediate in ending the civil war in northern Iran which the British sought to stoke up so as to increase their influence in the country. He acted on the decision of the RCP(B) Central Committee's Plenum of January 26, 1921 which was taken under Lenin's direction. The plenum approved the political line of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs in lending Soviet assistance to stop the armed struggle in Gilan as it was no longer a democratic movement. In an effort to facilitate the self-dissolution of the Gilan government, the Soviet embassy secured an amnesty to the participants in the Gilan movement. The Soviet Government's policy with regard to the civil war in Gilan was instrumental in consolidating Iran's unity and territorial integrity and its achievement of national independence.<sup>4</sup> That was clear to Kuchik Khan, too, who, in a letter to F. A. Rothstein, admitted that "the

<sup>1</sup> See, for example: Harish Kapur, *Soviet Russia and Asia 1917-1927. A Study of Soviet Policy Towards Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan*, Michael Joseph, Ltd., Geneva, 1966, p. 52; Louis Fischer, *The Soviets in World Affairs. A History of the Relations Between the Soviet Union and the Rest of the World 1917-1929*, Vol. I, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1951, p. 412; Schapour Ravasani, *Op. cit.*, pp. 348-51; Ivar Spector, *Op. cit.*, p. 93.

<sup>2</sup> Zabih Sepelr, *Op. cit.*, p. 42.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>4</sup> For details see: A. N. Kheifets, *Soviet Diplomacy and the Peoples of the East, 1921-1927*, pp. 57-60, 64-66, 224-28.

continuation of the revolution is doing damage to Iran's political and economic independence and enhancing the influence of British imperialism and the separatist tendencies of the khans and feudal lords".<sup>1</sup> He totally relied on the guarantees communicated to him by the Soviet ambassador and assured him that the goal of the Jangalees was to consolidate the central government and that they had never wanted Gilan detached from the rest of Iran.

Bourgeois historians ignore these facts because they aim to denigrate the foreign policy of the Soviet state at any cost.

In subsequent years, the Soviet Government invariably supported the centralising activities of Reza Khan and his steps towards reducing the strength of imperialist positions of Britain in Iran. The Soviet Government's political line of supporting the struggle of the "leader of the new, renascent Persia, Reza Khan, against the feudal lords, tribal chiefs, the Shah's intrigues and the English,"<sup>2</sup> found reflection in numerous statements by the USSR People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, G. V. Chicherin, in 1923-1925: in the report at the Third Session of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR, the speech at the Third Congress of Soviets of the USSR, and in articles.<sup>3</sup> The purpose behind the Soviet Government's support for Reza Khan was to protect the nationhood he was creating from encroachments by imperialist powers. Shortly before the 1925 dynastic revolution, with a view to frustrating imperialist scheming in Iran, the Telegraphic Agency of the Soviet Union was authorised to declare that "the Soviet Government continues to maintain its position of total non-intervention in the internal Persian affairs and quite friendly relations with the national government of Persia headed by Prime Minister Reza Khan".<sup>4</sup>

Aiming to discredit Soviet policy towards Iran, bourgeois scholars have been trying to exploit the debates among Soviet Iranists in the latter half of the 1920s, concerning

<sup>1</sup> See: Ibraghim Fahrai, *Op. cit.*, pp. 361-62.

<sup>2</sup> G. V. Chicherin, *Articles and Speeches on International Politics*, Sotsegiz, Moscow, 1961, p. 333 (in Russian).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 239-40, 365, 390-91, 466-70.

<sup>4</sup> *Documents of Soviet Foreign Policy*, Vol. VIII, Gospolitizdat, Moscow, 1963, pp. 634-35 (in Russian).

the social essence of the change of regime in Iran, which were initiated by members of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite opposition. There have been very characteristic attempts by Max Beloff and George Lenczowski to prove that those debates had influenced the attitude of the Soviet state to Iran.<sup>1</sup>

Bourgeois historians omit to mention that Soviet scholars dealing with Iranian studies, having been unanimous in opposing the slogans of "agrarian" and "socialist" revolution in Iran, which were proclaimed by members of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite opposition, were generally right in identifying the sum and substance of the revolutionary movement in that country through a proper scientific analysis of the level and nature of the development of Iranian society. There were, for instance, most noteworthy contributions to that debate by the Chief of the First Eastern Department of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs S. K. Pastukhov (in the debate he was known as S. Iransky) and the former Soviet ambassador to Iran (in 1921-1922), the Director of the Institute of World Economics and Politics under the Communist Academy F. A. Rothstein (who used the pen-name of Mirza). They pointed out that since the process of the struggle in Iran to liberate it from British imperialist domination was not yet over and the national reformist forces with Reza Khan at their head were holding the leading positions in that process, the major task for Iran was to strengthen the united national front of struggle against British imperialism.<sup>2</sup>

Another Soviet Iranologist, V. P. Ostrov (whose pen-name was Irandust), dissected the mistakes made by the Iranian "left" in Gilan: "It was no more than saying leftist phrases to forsake cooperation with the revolutionary bourgeoisie of backward oppressed countries just because it is the bourgeoisie, and to call for a socialist revolution against that bourgeoisie at a time when there is nothing but a bourgeois-democratic programme of the movement under

<sup>1</sup> Max Beloff, *The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia, 1929-1941*, Vol. II, Oxford University Press, London, 1952, p. 202; George Lenczowski, *Op. cit.*, pp. 86-91.

<sup>2</sup> See: *The Problems of Modern Persia*, Book 5, Scientific Association of Oriental Studies under the USSR Academy of Sciences, Moscow, 1927, pp. 77-78, 80, 81, 84-85, 91-93, 100 (in Russian).

way.”<sup>1</sup> With regard to the national reformist forces, led by Reza Khan, which had come to power in Iran, V. P. Osetrov wrote: “In spite of its half-hearted character, the Pahlevi regime is being driven by the forces of the internal development of Persia towards carrying through a series of reforms to ensure Persia’s bourgeois development and towards the policy of defending Persian national interests against the encroachments by the imperialist powers.”<sup>2</sup>

Vigorous action against leftist-adventurous theories was taken in the late 1920s and the early 1930s by scholars doing research in the allied fields of Soviet orientology. In particular, a book by U. Roslavlev criticised the views of some of the members of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite opposition with regard to the problems of Iran and other Eastern countries. He pointed out, among other things, that they had “skipped the bourgeois-democratic stage of the revolution which, far from being over, had not so much as started in many of the major countries”, and that the agrarian programme of the bourgeois-democratic stage of the revolution was omitted and replaced by a “slogan calling for the bourgeois-democratic revolution to develop into a socialist one”.<sup>3</sup>

Soviet Marxist scholars carried on vigorous and consistent action against the leftist misrepresentations of the Leninist strategy and tactics in the national liberation movement. The analysis of the problems involved in the development of Iranian society, given by Soviet scholars in their research studies, provided the scientific groundwork on which to shape the specific guidelines for the Soviet state to follow in its foreign policy directed towards strengthening and extending friendly and equal relations with Iran, and protecting its national independence from encroachments by imperialist powers. Although some points of that analysis did not always have the understanding of Iranian Communists,<sup>4</sup> Soviet Marxist scholars did their bit towards

<sup>1</sup> Irandust, “Issues of the Gilan Revolution”. In: *Marxist Historian*, Book 5, 1927, p. 146 (in Russian).

<sup>2</sup> Irandust, *Persia*, Moskovsky Rabochy Publishers, Moscow, Leningrad, 1928, p. 160 (in Russian).

<sup>3</sup> U. Roslavlev, *Agrarian Crisis in India*, Partizdat, Moscow, 1932, p. 71 (in Russian).

<sup>4</sup> See: *Verbatim Report of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern*, Issue 4, p. 479 (in Russian).

the scientific elaboration of the objectives and development prospects for the revolutionary processes in Iran by the Communist International.

*THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL  
AND THE PROBLEM OF THE UNITED NATIONAL FRONT  
IN IRAN*

One of the aims of bourgeois historiography has been to misrepresent the policy of the Communist International and other international revolutionary organisations with regard to Iran in general and the national liberation movement in Gilan in particular.

In a bid to justify the allegation that it was the Comintern that had inspired the left-sectarian activities of certain members of the ICP Central Committee in the summer of 1920, bourgeois historians resort to "traditional" techniques. For example, Ivar Spector has quoted the statement by A. Sultan-Zadeh at the Second Comintern Congress when he argued that the experience of the Russian revolution in Kirghizia and Turkestan, which had no industrial proletariat, could be used in Eastern countries, including Iran.<sup>1</sup> There is, however, one "little thing" that Spector "forgets" to mention: Sultan-Zadeh's views on this issue and on other questions were emphatically rejected by the Comintern Congress. A few pages further on, however, he peremptorily alleges that the Third International attempted to use Kuchik Khan "only as a tool to effect the ultimate Bolshevization of Iran".<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Zabih Sepehr, having quoted the statement of A. Sultan-Zadeh at the Second Comintern Congress about the need to organise "new movements, purely communist in nature" in the countries of the East and to shift the revolutionary struggle from a national to a social level, maintains that the Iranian Communists received an ideological authorisation to apply communist principles in Iran.<sup>3</sup> According to Fatemi, the first duty of the Comintern was world propaganda against nationalism.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See: Ivar Spector, *Op. cit.*, p. 88.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>3</sup> Zabih Sepehr, *Op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> See: Nasrollah Saifpour Fatemi, *Op. cit.*, p. 172.

Soviet historical publications have provided all-round coverage on Lenin's active and consistent struggle at the Second Congress of the Comintern for appropriate strategy and tactics to be established for the communist movement in the Eastern countries.<sup>1</sup> The Communist International did its best to direct Iranian Communists towards effective cooperation with the democratic and national forces of Iran. This chapter had earlier quoted some factual material attesting to the vigorous attempts of the new make-up of the ICP Central Committee to remedy the situation in Gilan. Late in 1921, that is after the defeat of the national liberation movement in Iran, the Executive Committee of the Comintern, following a thorough scientific analysis of the lessons to be learned from the Gilan events and of the political situation in Iran, worked out the guidelines to follow in the struggle for national liberation and the democratisation of the country. The relevant document—"The Theses of the Comintern Executive Committee on Work in Persia"—altogether refuted the bourgeois falsehoods about the policy of the Communist International in Iran.

The "Theses" pointed out that "one particular feature of the present political situation in Persia is, on the one hand, the sweeping rise of resentment against British rule and the Shah's officialdom in the country and, on the other, the reversal of the tactics of British imperialists who have given up their outright intervention in Persian affairs and are exercising their influence prudently and stealthily through the pro-British sections of the officialdom and the landlords". The basic shortcoming of the Iranian national movement, it admitted, was the dispersal of the national revolutionary forces which made it easier for imperialism and its agents to organise acts of provocation. "The provocateurs are using the bitter lesson of the Gilan events when ill-conceived slogans about the immediate installation of a Soviet regime in Persia led to a number of [such] useless and harmful acts as the closure of bazaars, open anti-

<sup>1</sup> See, for example: *The Comintern and the East. The Struggle for the Leninist Strategy and Tactics in National Liberation Movements*, Ed. by R. A. Ulyanovsky, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1979; A. B. Reznikov, "Some Background to V. I. Lenin's Work in Drafting the Resolutions of the Second Comintern Congress on the National and Colonial Question", *Narody Azii i Afriki*, No. 2, 1971.

religious propaganda, unruly requisitions, etc., which discredited the very idea of Soviet government....

"From their past experience, the Communists of Persia must see that revolutionary adventurism poses the major danger for the national democratic revolution in Persia.

"Any neglect of the local national peculiarities, misunderstanding or inability to give a sober-minded appraisal of the real forces in the field, and the desire to achieve a direct outward success at any cost, all that is nothing short of an outright crime against the revolution in the circumstances Persia is finding herself in."<sup>1</sup> The propositions put forward by the Executive Committee of the Comintern reflected the sum and substance to be derived from the lessons of the Gilan events. It should be pointed out, however, that this document said that the action of Kuchik Khan "was a product of anarchy rather than a case of national revolutionary endeavour". Conclusions of this kind were largely due to a limited supply of information and, what is even more important, its one-sided character. For example, the report to the Executive Committee of the Comintern delivered by the participants in the Gilan events adhering to the policy of the first make-up of the ICP Central Committee maintained, in particular, that "as the experience of Gilan and Tabriz has shown, the patriotic democrats cannot be allies with international imperialism even for a limited space of time".<sup>2</sup> But the very fact that the Communist International, even without the necessary information at its disposal, succeeded in making an objective analysis of the reasons behind the failure in Gilan and in producing a comprehensively substantiated programme for the subsequent development of the Iranian liberation movement is conclusive evidence of the consistent policy of this revolutionary headquarters of the world communist movement.

The "Theses" pointed out that the Iranian Communist Party could accomplish the tasks before it by concentrating on "systematic, persistent, planned and organised struggle against British imperialism and the government of the Shah, and the big landowners supporting him, to free the country

<sup>1</sup> ORCSA, s. 5402, f. 522, pp. 126-30.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 514, pp. 1-5.

from colonial plunder and feudal oppression, and instal true people's rule. A victory of the national revolutionary movement is impossible without an alliance between the proletarian and semi-proletarian elements, on the one hand, and the bourgeois-democratic elements, on the other. The former elements will be all the surer of their leading role in the movement if the ICP takes a firmer line of principle in fulfilling its mission of political education and organisation of the masses.

"At the same time, the Communist Party must act everywhere as an independent organisation, exposing for the masses to see the half-hearted approach and waverings of bourgeois ward politicians and the anti-popular nature of feudal and reactionary factions. It must rally the proletarian elements into trade unions, drawing in handicraft apprentices, and promote cultural, political and educational work among all proletarian and semi-proletarian sections by making wide use of all legal opportunities.

"No less attention has to be paid to organising landless and land-poor peasants, farm labourers and tenant farmers to rise against the feudal and landlord system of land ownership and enslaving forms of leasehold tenure and exploitation of labour....

"Therefore, it is necessary for the ICP to decidedly dissociate itself both from any adventurous flare-ups of passion and from pseudo-radicalism disregarding the social and cultural conditions of a backward country just setting off for capitalism.

"A class organisation of the proletarian and semi-proletarian elements, political enlightenment of the broad masses—these are the requirements arising from the present political situation in Persia."<sup>1</sup>

In the subsequent year, the Communist International reverted to the lessons of the Gilan events. "The mistakes made by them [members of the first Central Committee—*Auth.*] in the Gilan Revolution," said the Bulletin of the Executive Committee of the Comintern in 1922, "generally boiled down to inadequate consideration of the national situation at the time, and to ill-conceived and rash experiments in the social and economic fields, unwarranted

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 522, pp. 126-30.

by the existing economic preconditions.... It should be pointed out that rebellious moods, which were so typical of the ICP of 1920 have been overcome. The experience of the Gilan revolution has been appreciated by Communists and it has been quite clearly realised that a social revolution requires a sustained period of preparation and that in the context of a backward economy the way to it is through a succession of intermediary stages.... These views are now commonly recognised both in the northern and southern party organisations of Persia. To extend the scope of work, maintain a bond with the masses, create trained and disciplined contingents of leaders and organisers, extend revolutionary work far and wide--these are the great and challenging requirements which will alone assure the ICP a victory in the forthcoming clashes with the bourgeois-feudal aftermath of the past."<sup>1</sup>

Subsequently, too, the Comintern lent the Iranian Communists assistance of every kind in overcoming left-sectarian moods. In 1931, faced by a resurgence of leftist tendencies in the Iranian Communist Party, the Executive Committee of the Comintern made a special point of considering the situation in the ICP. Following its 11th Plenum, the Executive Committee addressed an open letter to all the members of the Iranian Communist Party, analysing the basic requirements and objectives of that stage of the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal struggle of the Iranian working people.

The Communist International offered all-round assistance to the ICP during a period of exacerbation of an inner-party crisis in 1920-1921. A veteran member of the Iranian Communist Party, M. Akhundov (Bahram Sirius), who participated in a meeting of the delegation of the First Congress of the Peoples of the East with Lenin late in 1920, writes in his reminiscences: "With assistance from the Comintern and considering V. I. Lenin's friendly advice upright Iranian Communists could remedy the situation in the party leadership."<sup>2</sup>

Bourgeois falsifiers have been trying to interpret even this kind of aid as if it showed the Executive Committee of the

<sup>1</sup> ORCSA, s. 5402, f. 522, pp. 120-25.

<sup>2</sup> *Mardom*, No. 57, February-March 1969, pp. 3, 5.

Comintern to be a kind of authoritarian body which was, as Zabih Sepehr alleged, in control of the ICP and its local organisations in Iran. On that account, the writer reasoned, Iranian "Communists held themselves responsible solely to the Executive Committee of the Third International",<sup>1</sup> rather than to their own people. Fatemi also maintains that "active propagandist centres" which were "directly controlled by the Third International, under the leadership of the Kremlin" were established by the Bolsheviki, and that a condition for being admitted to the Gilan revolutionary government was a recognition of the Comintern's "complete authority and supremacy".<sup>2</sup>

Such arguments are easily disproved by hard facts. There has been a most indicative communication from A. Sultan-Zadeh who "on instructions from the Central Committee of the ICP asked Lenin (in the summer of 1920) to give us the necessary directive regarding our further work". However, Lenin, limiting himself to a statement of his personal opinion, invited Sultan-Zadeh to draw up the necessary theses concerning the appropriate questions "as applied to the Persian conditions".<sup>3</sup> At the Third Congress of the Communist International, an ICP spokesman, J. Javad-Zadeh, even complained that "no close contact has been established between the Executive of the Communist International and the Communist Party".<sup>4</sup>

Some leaders of the Iranian Communist Party saw the Comintern as an agency engaged in working out specific plans for a revolution to be made in any particular country. At the Sixth Comintern Congress, which debated the draft theses, Sultan-Zadeh, who was a member of the Presidium of the ICP Central Committee, said: "How does it stand with Persia in reality? Can Persia skip over the capitalist development? Is it possible to establish immediately the Soviet regime in Persia, or must one proclaim there on the day after the Revolution the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry? Can we develop in Persia the

<sup>1</sup> Zabih Sepehr, *Op. cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Nasrollah Saifpour Fatemi, *Op. cit.*, pp. 178, 234.

<sup>3</sup> A. Sultan-Zadeh, *Persia*, Gosizdat, Moscow, 1924, p. 86 (in Russian); ORCSA, s. 5402, f. 28, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Bulletin of the III Congress of the Communist International*, Moscow, July 3, 1921, p. 147.

agrarian revolution, or should we abstain from this there also? Unfortunately, I have received no answer to these questions which are of such great interest to us.”<sup>1</sup> The General Secretary of the ICP Central Committee, Sharegi, also demanded that the Executive Committee of the Comintern should outline a clear line of approach for the ICP and give precise instructions.<sup>2</sup>

Speaking at the Congress, O. W. Kuusinen, a prominent leader of the international and Finnish working-class movement, had to pronounce himself against such an approach to the Comintern. He described it as a body giving, subsequent to collective discussion, nothing but general, basic instructions which the Communist Party of each particular country had to proceed from in building its tactics with due regard for the local conditions and particularities.<sup>3</sup>

There were similar developments in the Red International of Labour Unions. At the Sixth Congress of that organisation (March 17-April 3, 1928), a member of the ICP Central Committee, Abdullah-Zadeh (Sefi), having admitted that, because of the Communist Party’s inadequate work, the Iranian Trade Unions “in their present shape, far from being able to defend the workers’ interests, do not know a way of approach to them and a way of organising them”, appealed to the Red International of Labour Unions “to pay proper attention and provide good instructors and good management”.<sup>4</sup> The theses adopted by the Congress of the Red International of Labour Unions, “The Trade Union Movement in the Colonial and Semi-Colonial Countries”, manifestly revealed the mistakes and shortcomings of trade union work of the Iranian Communist Party, which, hoping for a proletarian revolution to be made soon, contributed to an excessive politisation of trade union organisations without giving enough attention to the struggle for economic demands and for meeting the everyday

<sup>1</sup> *International Press Correspondence*, 25 October 1928, Vol. 8, No. 74, p. 1359.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 August 1928, Vol. 8, No. 48, p. 844.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 21 November 1928, Vol. 8, No. 81, p. 1520.

<sup>4</sup> See: *The Fourth Congress of the Red International of Labour Unions. Verbatim Report. Resolutions and Decisions*, Profintern Publishers, Moscow, 1928, p. 488 (in Russian).

needs of the working people.<sup>1</sup>

The Executive Committee of the Communist International of Youth also provided a good deal of assistance to the Iranian Communist Party. In particular, in a letter to the members of the Iranian Young Communist League, it called attention to the fact that "the Young Communist League of Iran was far removed from the masses and constituted a closed-shop organisation". The letter recommended involvement in the work of various social organisations, clubs and community centres, and the best of effort to draw closer to young workers, to study their moods and aid them in their action to improve the economic situation.<sup>2</sup>

This time, too, the assistance from the Comintern, the Red International of Labour Unions and the Communist International of Youth produced decisive influence on setting right the political line of the Iranian Communist Party. The plenum of the ICP Central Committee in February 1930, having indicated the mistakes and omissions in the work of the Central Committee's Political Bureau and local party organisations, pointed to the inadequate attention to activities inside the trade unions and among the peasantry, the absence of regular contact between the Central Committee and local party organisations, a low standard of work involving political education and theoretical grounding of party executives, as well as an inadequate supply of party literature to the organisations.<sup>3</sup> Following the Plenum of May 1931, the ICP Central Committee called on other democratic organisations of Iran "to organise common clandestine committees for action against the Pahlevi regime, for the freedom of speech, the press, association and assembly". The Communist Party proposed a programme for joint action to organise the working masses and advocate an amnesty of political prisoners, the nationalisation of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, and the abrogation of foreign concessions.<sup>4</sup>

However, the right moment for the creation of a united front with other democratic organisations based on an

<sup>1</sup> See: *Report of the Fourth Congress of the R.I.L.U.*, London, July 1928, p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> *Setare-ye-sorkh*, No. 9, 1931, p. 60.

<sup>3</sup> *Setare-ye-sorkh*, Nos. 7-8, 1930, pp. 6, 67-68.

<sup>4</sup> *Peykar*, No. 15, October 15, 1931.

anti-imperialist programme was missed. In the course of 1931 the weak Communist Party organisations, detached from the masses and numerically small, were destroyed by the authorities and suspended their activities. An attempt to recreate the ICP, made Taghi Erani and his companions in 1934, was cut short by the Shah's secret service. The new stage of the communist movement in Iran began in 1941 with the founding of the People's Party of Iran which had drawn upon the more than a decade-long experience of the ICP.

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The concepts of bourgeois historiography are designed to provide ideological support for imperialism's desperate effort to keep the peoples of emergent nations within the system of world capitalism, detach the national democratic forces of those countries from their natural allies--the socialist community and the world communist movement. It is not accidental that Western Iranologists should be pressing for the Iranian people to accept "liberal nationalism" which they oppose to "negative nationalism".<sup>1</sup> The pragmatic thrust and utilitarian objectives of bourgeois historiography strike the eye of whoever would read the writings of Amin Banani, an American professor (of Iranian extraction) who cautioned the peoples of the East, including the people of Iran, against the extremes of "nationalistic egoism" turning them against the West and making them "receptive to Communism". The ideas of modernisation, regarded by Amin Banani as adequate to Westernisation, which was claimed to be much more appropriate to the national spirit of the Iranian people than the destructive ideas of "Marxist socialism",<sup>2</sup> could best contribute towards resolving the problems of contemporary Iran, in his opinion. Calling on Iran to carry through "social reforms inspired by the example of the West", an Englishman John

<sup>1</sup> See, for example: Richard W. Cottam, *Nationalism in Iran*, University of Pittsburg Press, Pittsburg, 1964, pp. 3, 186, 312; Donald N. Wilber, *Contemporary Iran*, Praeger Publishers, New York, 1963, pp. 114, 151.

<sup>2</sup> Amin Banani, *The Modernisation of Iran 1921-1941*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1961, p. 158.

Marlowe, the author of a "political guide" to Iran, did not, in fact, conceal his hostility towards nationalism. Suggesting his own recipes to "cover all the various aspects of Western influence", he proceeds from a recognition of the need to divide the two most popular left forces—nationalism and communism—capable, in his view, of combining only in "a common anti-Western attack".<sup>1</sup>

At that stage of development, which the semi-feudal Iranian society found itself in during the first third of the 20th century, the theoretically better trained Iranian Communists, following Lenin's advice and availing themselves of Comintern aid, did their best, relying on general communist principles and on the awakening Iranian nationalism, to reflect the national aspirations and democratic ambitions of the broad masses of the Iranian people. The Soviet state, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and the international communist movement as represented by the Comintern were the most consistent force in the international arena acting in defence of the national sovereignty and independence of the Iranian people against the encroachments of world imperialism.

<sup>1</sup> John Marlowe, *Iran. A Short Political Guide*, Pall Mall Press, London, Dunmow, 1963, pp. 127, 128, 131.

## THE COMINTERN AND THE COMMUNIST PARTIES OF ARAB COUNTRIES IN THE 1920s AND 1930s

G. G. KOSACH

Many bourgeois and social-reformist writers have been trying to present a distorted picture of the relationship between the Communist International and its sections in the Arab countries. They have been doing so in an effort to prove the "failure" of the Comintern's strategy and tactics in the Middle East and in North Africa. This has to be countered not only by exposing the falsity of the bourgeois interpretation of the history of the Arab communist movement and its relationship with the Comintern, but also by an unbiased, scientific account of the real achievements and real shortcomings of the Arab Communist parties.

### *THE ORGANISATION OF ARAB COMMUNIST PARTIES AND THE WAY BOURGEOIS HISTORIANS MISREPRESENT THIS PROCESS*

In spite of certain differences of approach by Western historians to the process of emergence of the early Arab communist groups and parties, bourgeois historiography has been generally advocating a more or less common concept designed to prove that the communist movement in the Arab countries represented a "superficial development" from its very inception, having no local roots. Bourgeois writers have been stressing, as a rule, the genetic linkage between the early communist organisations and the radical wing of the national liberation movement. For example, the

Indian historian, Mohammed Shafi Agwani, writes that the early Marxist groups in Arab countries, which sprang up under the direct impact of the October Revolution, were created by people involved in the nationalist anti-colonial movement, "middle-class intellectuals who were mesmerised by the Bolshevik Revolution". Moreover, he points out, the very emergence of the Arab communist movement coincided with an "intellectually productive phase in the evolution of pan-Arabism"<sup>1</sup> as a certain form of a radicalised national liberation movement with which the Arab Communists had quite a few common points of convergence, above all, a sharply accentuated anti-Westernism.

The reason why the process of the emergence of the communist movement in the Arab countries, as presented in Agwani's work, looks "superficial and unexpected" is because this scholar deliberately overlooks the link between the Communist parties and the working-class movement which was in its infancy at the time. It is the disregard for such a real historical fact as the rise of the local proletariat and the emphasis on nothing but the genetic linkage between the Communist parties and the national liberation movement, with the proletariat deliberately left out, that constitute the sum and substance of the misrepresentation of the sources of the Arab communist movement in the works of Agwani and other bourgeois historians. As M. S. Agwani reasons, "a few modern industries had appeared in Egypt and in the Levant, but a class-conscious industrial proletariat was still practically non-existent. Agriculture labour, though numerically strong, was weak, unorganised, and politically inarticulate. In short, political and economic conditions in the Arab East were not conducive to the growth of an indigenous Communist movement." Therefore, it is viewed by the writer as a "political reflex" of the events *external* to the Arab East "rather than a reality" of the Arab countries themselves.<sup>2</sup>

Beyond doubt, the origin of the communist movement in the Arab countries, just like that of other colonial and

<sup>1</sup> Mohammed Shafi Agwani, *Communism in the Arab East*, Asia Publishing House, London, 1969, pp. 3, 177, 163.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

semi-colonial countries, was closely linked with the mounting national liberation movement. Under the direct impact of the ideas of the Great October Revolution the Arab peoples rose to play their full part in political life. Thus a major anti-imperialist insurrection swept through Egypt as early as 1919, anti-British uprisings occurred in Iraq in 1917-1920, and armed resistance to the French colonialists was spreading in Syria and the Lebanon. There was a heroic struggle of the Riff tribes in Morocco in 1921-1926 against the combined forces of France and Spain. Nor was there any let-up in the resistance by the Libyan people to the Italian colonialists. The uprising of the Druses, which erupted in Syria in 1925, quickly escalated into a general national struggle against the French occupying forces. Under pressure from a mass movement in Egypt, the British colonial authorities had to introduce a constitution there in 1923.

The mounting anti-imperialist struggle, with the fledgling working class coming to play a role of no mean importance in it, was creating a favourable environment for the rise of the communist movement. The Egyptian Communist Party sprang up in 1920 and joined the Comintern in 1922. The Communist Party of Syria and the Lebanon was formed in 1924 and subsequently entered the Comintern. It provided the groundwork for the formation of separate Communist parties in each of these countries in 1944. The Algerian and Tunisian sections of the French Communist Party were created in 1920.

The "budding" of the early Arab communist organisations from the national patriotic forces was a natural sequel to the process of radicalisation of the national liberation movement and the massive anti-imperialist struggle under the influence of the revolutionary events in Russia. However, the fact that many of the distinguished personalities of the emergent Communist parties had come to Marxism from the ranks of national revolutionaries disappointed with the policies of the bourgeois leaders of the local liberation movement does not suggest at all that the communist movement was nothing but a follow-up to the anti-imperialist movement. The formation of the early communist organisations in the countries of the Arab region, inseparably connected with the mounting class

actions of workers and peasants, attested to important *qualitative* changes in the development of the liberation movement in Arab countries and to their advanced exponents adopting the principles of Marxism-Leninism, thereby making it a turning point in the history of the anti-imperialist struggle of the Arab peoples.

As stated in the Programme of the Lebanese Communist Party, adopted by its Second Congress in 1968, "the creation of the Communist Party was an important turning point in the life of the working class and the rest of the working masses. For the first time in the Lebanon's history the mass of the people rose under the leadership of a vanguard political party with a scientific theory of Marxism-Leninism as its guide. The emergence of the Lebanese Communist Party translated the political activity, earlier confined to a restricted group of representatives of the exploiter classes and a handful of patriotically-minded intellectuals, into a cause of the people at large, and produced new forms of organisation and methods of struggle which had not been known until then to the patriotic movement and had not been used in domestic political life."<sup>1</sup>

An acknowledged Western "authority" on the Arab communist movement, Walter Z. Laqueur, points in his work, *Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East*, to a number of factors which, in his opinion, could account for the emergence of the Arab communist parties. These include maladministration, full official neglect of the interests of the intellectuals who found no means of self-expression, the inability of the middle classes to produce worthy political leaders, and the weakness of all the earlier organisations which could never have rallied the "mutually antagonistic social forces" together in Syria, nor put an end to the glaring imbalance between luxury and poverty in Iraq. One rather important factor, which, in Laqueur's opinion, contributed to the rise of the communist movement in Arab countries, was the existence of active and numerous non-Muslim, above all Christian, minorities, conducive to the process of Westernisation of their respective

<sup>1</sup> *The Struggle of the Lebanese Communist Party as Seen from Its Documents*, Part I, Beirut, 1971, p. 57 (in Arabic).

countries by extending trade and other contacts with the countries of the West.<sup>1</sup>

One more factor behind the origin and development of the Arab Communist parties, as Laqueur sees it, was Islam with its "collectivist doctrine" alleged to have anticipated the ideals of communism, and subsequently the "omnivoracity" of the ever dissatisfied students "lacking roots, and thus ready to adopt any ersatz religion that comes their way". Laqueur, therefore, draws a parallel between the role of students in the Arab East and in pre-revolutionary Russia where, as he maintains, students were "in the forefront of the revolutionary movement".<sup>2</sup>

Laqueur's concept, just as Agwani's, is disproved by the actual social movement as it developed in the Arab countries. Laqueur has no mention whatsoever of the major reason of a social and economic order behind the origin and propagation of the ideas of communism on Arab soil—the beginning of capitalist development in the Arab countries in the late 19th century and the early 20th century which led to the emergence and growth of a local proletariat. That is who he sees the formative process of the Arab communist movement, which, according to Walter Z. Laqueur's concept, had no adequate material base, as totally confined to the intellectual realm with intellectuals and students trained in missionary schools or universities having been "infected with ideas imported from the West". Just like Agwani, Laqueur argues that the Arab communist movement was a "superficial development" from the very outset, which was supposedly unable to penetrate broad sections of the population and, therefore, could be "wiped out with relative ease".

It should be pointed out, first and foremost, that Laqueur's inference about Islam having been one of the decisive factors behind the spread of communist ideas was out of keeping with the real situation as it had shaped up in Muslim, including Arab, countries. If one were to proceed from Laqueur's concept whereby Islam, with its "collectivist doctrine", had laid the ground for the rise of the

<sup>1</sup> See: Walter Z. Laqueur, *Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East*, pp. 137-40.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5, 14.

communist movement in the Arab East, one would have to assume that the existence of Islam as a near monopoly in the ideological field ought to have been constantly creating favourable conditions for a sweeping development of this movement. That is not so, however. Moreover, Muslim religion, with its dogmas strictly regulating the believers' mode of life and thinking, makes difficult the work of the Communists in Muslim countries and greatly complicates the process of conversion of the Communist parties into a massive political force. Reactionary forces, appealing to the dogmas of religion, more than once brought cruel reprisals down on the Communists and all true patriots fighting for independence and social progress. This "special difficulty" in the activities of the Communists of the Muslim countries was more than once underlined by Lenin who regarded the national and religious features of public life in the East as traditional creeds breeding mistrust of the oppressor nations in general, and of the working people of these nations in particular, and requiring the Communists to be cautious, tolerant, flexible and responsive in dealing with the working people of oppressed societies.<sup>1</sup>

Bourgeois historians exploit, in their respective interpretation, the specific difficulties which faced the communist movement in the Arab East in the early 1920s. The biggest of these was that the working class in many countries of the Arab region, in spite of its numerical growth and certain rise of its class consciousness, had not yet become the leading force of social development by the time. The communist movement in the Arab countries, as that of the East in general, had arisen against the background of a preponderance of pre-capitalist, primarily feudal and semi-feudal, relations. In these countries, the appropriate base for the communist movement—an advanced struggle of the working class—was still in its opening stages. There had, therefore, to be some mistakes and misconceptions of the early Arab Communists as they started from purely nationalist positions and had nothing to rely on in their activities except a really existing working class which was in embryo at the time.

<sup>1</sup> For details see: Rostislav Ulyanovsky, *National Liberation. Essays on Theory and Practice*, pp. 77-78.

Misrepresenting the actual state of things within the Arab communist movement in the early 1920s, Agwani presents it as "a movement of romantic visionaries who viewed the Bolshevik Revolution not as a forerunner of the world proletarian revolution but as a summation of the humanistic and egalitarian ideals of the French Revolution".<sup>1</sup>

Concepts similar to Agwani's ideas have been propounded by the Lebanese historian S. Ayub, who maintains that "the major aspect of the incipient communist movement was its indistinct objectives and unclear approach to defining the methods and means of struggle. The early Communists were not altogether Marxists in the sense the Marxist idea was formulated by Marx. Their major attention was directed towards considering the general questions of the equality of classes and the abolition of the oppression of the workers and the disinherited segments of the people. The communist movement in its early stage was one of romantically-minded utopianists."<sup>2</sup>

It appears to be obvious that the "indistinct" theoretical concepts of the early Arab Communists were due not only and not so much to their subjective ideological immaturity. They were due to quite objective causes—the weakness of the working class and its recent break from bourgeois nationalists. In their historical context, the Arab Communist parties could not do away at once with the shortcomings of their theoretical outlook and tactical line. That required time and experience.

Laqueur writes that at a time of a general confusion which reigned in the early 1920s in the Middle East, where the liberation movement was on the rise, as was the rivalry of the colonial powers, the Soviet Government exploited "doctrines rationalising the struggle against the 'domination and exploitation' of the West" for a penetration of the Middle East.<sup>3</sup> He was echoed by British historian Jaan Pennar who declared that "communism in the Middle East

<sup>1</sup> Mohammed Shafi Agwani, *Op. cit.*, p. 177.

<sup>2</sup> S. Ayub, *The Communist Party of Syria and Lebanon: 1922-1958*, Beirut, 1959, pp. 14-16 (in Arabic).

<sup>3</sup> Walter Z. Laqueur, *The Soviet Union and the Middle East*, Praeger Publishers, New York, 1959, p. 11.

was introduced at the Comintern's initiative.... The Comintern showed considerable interest in establishing Arab-based parties."<sup>1</sup> Just like Agwani, Pennar asserted that the Arab communist movement was not a result of internal development, but a reflection of political events external to the Arab East.

Naturally, the working class, small in numbers, illiterate and imprisoned by religious prejudice, economically and ideologically closely connected with the peasantry, could not provide a fairly solid and broad base for the propagation of communist ideas. The ignorant, downtrodden, poor peasantry, mercilessly exploited by feudal lords and moneylenders, was even less prepared to accept the communist watchwords. At the same time, there was a certain emergent tendency for change in a number of important areas of the Arab East which, because of their particular geographic position and the availability of mineral deposits, etc., saw industry on the rise, international commerce in the making, and a proletariat—the backbone of the social base of Communist parties—growing in terms of quantity and quality.

It was not by chance, therefore, that the early communist groups and parties of the Arab East should have sprung up precisely in the areas with the highest level of capitalist development—in Egypt, Syria, the Lebanon and the Maghreb countries. The Comintern was linking up with those parties. But in doing so, it not only refrained from urging the immediate creation of Communist parties in all the countries of the East in the early 1920s, but emphatically opposed any "attempts to give a communist colouring to bourgeois-democratic liberation trends in the backward countries".<sup>2</sup> Considering the existence of a certain proletarian mass, a core capable of assuring its proletarian policy, as an indispensable condition for any Communist party to emerge and to operate effectively in the East, the Comintern treated the process of party building in colonial countries as a gradual, painstaking and specific one. The principle put forward by Lenin in 1920, "*work wherever*

<sup>1</sup> Jaan Pennar, *The USSR and the Arabs. The Ideological Dimension*, C. Hurst and Company, London, 1973, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Preliminary Draft Theses on the National and the Colonial Questions", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 149.

the masses are to be found",<sup>1</sup> was the most general, all-embracing guideline for the Eastern Communists to follow in the tactical field. Lenin's appeal for non-party mass organisations of the working people to be created in the countries of the East meant urging the Communists to strive to win the masses and to accomplish a difficult, yet indispensable, job of progressively creating communist groups and parties in colonial and dependent countries.

That particular way of approach was entirely in accord with the requirements of the emergent communist movement in those years. Having sprung up as a natural consequence of social and economic development in their respective countries, distancing themselves from the bourgeois nationalists and assimilating a communist outlook, the early communist organisations established contact with the Communist International, which was a perfectly natural thing for them to do.

A long and steadfast effort by Syrian and Lebanese Communists in creating workers' trade unions independent from bourgeois parties had preceded the formation of the Communist Party of these two countries. The rising standards of organisation and class consciousness of the local working class went on parallel with a process of final separation between the Communists and the bourgeois nationalists. It was not before an independent trade union—the General Union of Tobacco Industry Workers of the Lebanon—which became the rallying point of early Communists, was created in the summer of 1924, that the Communists of Syria and the Lebanon could form their party.<sup>2</sup>

Right from the opening days of the existence of that party, which realised that its subsequent lot depended on the development of the local working class, its forces were directed mostly towards the political education of the proletariat and the organisation of its independent trade union movement. The Programme of the Communist Party of Syria, published in 1931, stressed that it was of paramount importance for the Communists to work within working-class ranks and to organise an independent trade

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Left-Wing' Communism—an Infantile Disorder", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 53.

<sup>2</sup> See: Jacques Couland, *Le Mouvement syndical au Liban (1919-1946)*, Editions Sociales, Paris, 1970, pp. 98, 100, 103.

union movement.<sup>1</sup> Still predominantly intellectual, both in membership and leadership, the Communist Party relied on the working class of Syria and the Lebanon and the international working class as the social force basic to the future of both countries.

So, it was not as “romantic visionaries” or “a foreign element introduced from without”, but rather as a force that had objectively arisen out of the socio-economic and political context of their own countries, based on the local working class whose subsequent development contributed to the consolidation and growth of the Arab communist movement, that the emergent Communist parties of the Arab region should be seen.

*THE COMINTERN AND CERTAIN QUESTIONS  
OF THE CREATION OF THE ANTI-IMPERIALIST FRONT  
IN THE ARAB COUNTRIES*

Finding a way of approach to the various questions involved in the creation of a united national anti-imperialist front in the countries of the Arab East, as well as to providing actual aid to the emergent Communist parties in resolving the most complicated theoretical and tactical problem of combining the national and class elements of the revolutionary movement, was one of the important aspects of Comintern activities. Guided by Lenin's instructions, the Communist International did a lot to overcome the leftist tendencies within the ranks of the Arab communist movement and, by its practical activity, advice and recommendations, directed the Communist parties towards establishing contact and promoting cooperation between the Communists and all forces within the Arab liberation movement which expressed the interests of anti-colonial and anti-feudal groups, comprising the national bourgeoisie.

In its criticism of the Comintern's practical activities in the Arab East, bourgeois historiography proceeds from assumptions based on its own interpretations, rather than the actual facts of reality. For example, Laqueur suggests

<sup>1</sup> See: *Pages from the History of the Communist Party of Syria. Policy Documents and Some Research Studies*, 1974, p. 14 (in Arabic).

that the Communist International, facing as it did a situation in the Eastern countries drastically different from that of the advanced countries of Europe and North America but essentially reconstituting the stage of society's social and economic development, which had been investigated in classic Marxist works, found it possible to extend the basic provisions of the Marxist doctrine to it. Arab Communist parties, created, in Laqueur's opinion, as obedient tools of the Comintern, ought to have been striving right from their inception for an immediate socialist revolution. The Comintern, as Laqueur argues, neglected the specific quality of the socio-economic development of the Arab countries for the sake of a rigid pattern of Marxism, having mechanically applied it to analysing the situation in the Arab East, and departed from dialectics which could not but adversely affect the performance not only of the Communist International itself but of its Arab sections as well.<sup>1</sup>

Agwani followed him in asserting that the Comintern's "ignorance" of the local conditions and its general line of approach which was alleged to require the Communist parties to fight, first and foremost, for a social revolution and for the capture of leadership of the national liberation movement, were behind the Arab Communists' "ignorance" of the real conditions in their respective countries and, consequently, of the problems which agitated the minds of broad sections of the Arab population. Agwani claimed that the Comintern wanted the Communist parties to abstain point-blank from any alliance with the leadership of the liberation movement and to keep up "doctrinaire bigotry when the proletarian character of the movement was stressed".<sup>2</sup> Now, that being the situation, as an American scholar, Hisham Sharabi, writes, the Communists could not but have been hostile to the national aspirations of their peoples because for the nationalists communism is an anti-nationalist doctrine, an instrument of a foreign power.<sup>3</sup> In his turn, the Lebanese anti-communist S. Ayub self-

<sup>1</sup> See: Walter Z. Laqueur, *The Middle East in Transition*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1958, p. 297.

<sup>2</sup> See: Mohammed Shafi Agwani, *Op. cit.*, p. 178.

<sup>3</sup> See: Hisham Sharabi, *Nationalism and Revolution in the Arab World (The Middle East and North Africa)*, D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., Princeton, 1966, pp. 99, 100.

righteously dismisses the steadfast struggle of the Communists of Syria and the Lebanon for ending the French mandate and for their countries' genuine independence as an expression of the interests of the communist movement foreign and even hostile to the people.

One thing that is typical of all the above-quoted pronouncements of the bourgeois critics of the Comintern's theoretical and practical activities has been first of all an intention to prove the "incompatibility" of the class character of the Communists' struggle and anti-imperialist aspirations of the broad mass of the working people in the Eastern countries. It is from this premise that Western historians proceed when they enlarge on the Comintern's "ignorance" of the actual state of things in the East, alleging, among other things, that it urged the emergent Communist parties of the Arab countries to undertake an "immediate socialist revolution", and on the "trial and error" method they supposedly used in analysing the potentialities of the national liberation movement. They contend that, since the Arab Communist parties had been implanted by the Comintern, they "assimilated" its "mistaken" course. In so doing, they ignore altogether the obvious fact that certain leftist misconceptions of some Arab Communists in the 1920s and 1930s were a natural outgrowth of their persistent urge to "break away" from bourgeois nationalism.

Bourgeois historians have been making an utterly unprovable claim that the Communists cannot be the spokesmen for the immediate aspirations and interests of their peoples, for this means ignoring the history of the Arab national liberation movement in which the Communists have always been the selfless champions of the independence of their respective countries.

The creation of a united national anti-imperialist front was part and parcel of the Communist International's strategy and tactics in the Eastern countries, including the Arab countries. That a practical solution of the matter should have run into a good many difficulties over and over again is an entirely different matter. In those years, the efforts of Communist parties to break resolutely from the nationalist forces alternated sometimes with flare-ups of nationalism; their appeal direct to the working masses quite

often went together with their insufficient skill in taking account of the moods of the masses; expectations on getting support from the peasantry gave way to some attempts to do without it. Many communist leaders joined the party having emerged straight from the ranks of national revolutionaries when they found the policies of the bourgeois leaders of the liberation movement to be inconsistent and inconclusive. It was they, in particular, that often took up a leftist stance when they called for a socialist revolution and insisted that the communist ideals must get mass support as soon as they were proclaimed, etc.

Out of the full wealth of Marxist-Leninist ideas, the Arab Communist parties in their formative stages grasped first of all the idea of the ultimate objective--that of the abolition of the exploitation of man by man in every shape or form, including, naturally, the eradication of national oppression.<sup>1</sup>

The process of grasping the general problems of the national liberation movement, the strategy and tactics of the Communist parties in the stage of a bourgeois-democratic revolution was far more difficult for the Communists of the Arab East in the early years of the existence of their Communist parties. The General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Syria, Khalid Bagdash, pointed out subsequently that the party's major shortcoming at the early stages of its organisation consisted in certain "leftist deviations which found expression, above all, in an underestimation of the role of other parties and movements, especially of the national bourgeoisie, whose positive role in the course of the anti-colonial struggle was denied, while its policy was proclaimed, wholly and entirely, to be demagogic and designed to deceive the masses". Both in Syria and in other Arab countries, as Bagdash notes, "the primary concern of the pioneers of the communist movement was a desire to

<sup>1</sup> This was typical of other countries of the East as well. See, for example: A. B. Reznikov, "From the History of the Communist Party of India: Early Years", *Narody Azii i Afriki*, No. 5, 1975, p. 53; *Idem*, "The Comintern and Strategy Problems of the Communist Party of Indonesia. 1920-1926", *Narody Azii i Afriki*, No. 6, 1976, pp. 62-63.

stress that the surest way to achieve their goal was to be more to the left than anybody else".<sup>1</sup>

*THE SYRIAN UPRISING OF 1925-1927  
AND THE POSITION OF THE COMINTERN  
AND THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF SYRIA*

The Arab Communists, guided by the Comintern's recommendations in their practical activities, also did a lot at the time for establishing their first contact with the broad mass of the people of their countries involved in the anti-imperialist struggle. Agwani and other bourgeois writers, trying to prove that the Communists could not be seen as the most consistent champions of national interests, argued that the way to an alliance between the communist movement and the liberation struggle of the masses lay through an ideological convergence between bourgeois nationalists and Communists. They detest the ideological and organisational independence of the Communist parties and their independent role in the national liberation movement. The hard facts of the development of the Arab national liberation movement, the tactics of the Comintern and its Arab sections with regard to the anti-imperialist struggle of the peoples of the Arab East disprove the fabrications of bourgeois historians. It is a point of considerable interest in this context to refer to the developments of 1925-1927 in Syria and those of 1921-1926 in Morocco, where there was an armed struggle against the French colonialists, which had broken out right after the establishment of the Communist Party of Syria and the first communist organisations in the countries of North Africa.

The Syrian uprising of 1925-1927 was one of the brightest chapters in the history of the Arab national liberation movement. Having started as a local uprising of the Druses in June 1925, it quickly outran the original framework to turn into a nation-wide liberation war against the French occupying forces. The uprising of the Druses under the leadership of Sultan Amir Hasan Atrash in Hauran and Jabalu' d-Duruz was the spark which inflamed broad masses

<sup>1</sup> Khalid Bagdash, *The National Liberation Movement and the Struggle for Socialism*, p. 7 (in Arabic).

of Syria and the Lebanon and roused them to a struggle against imperialist oppression. Armed clashes went on unabated for two years between French forces and the patriots fighting for the complete and unconditional lifting of the French mandate. The heroic resistance of the insurgents had the enthusiastic support and solidarity of the Communist International, the French Communist Party and other sections of the Comintern.

The Comintern stuck to its consistent position of principle in its policy towards the courageous struggle of the Syrian patriots. An appeal of the Executive Committee of the Comintern in defence of the Syrian people, published on May 16, 1924, was one of the Comintern's early documents giving an analysis, a year before the outbreak of the uprising, of the situation that had shaped up in Syria because of her occupation by France.

The appeal pointed out, notably: "The Communist International is not satisfied with merely denouncing the action of French imperialism in Syria as contrary to the 'right of self-determination'.... The Communist International, including its French section, is on the side of the Syrians who are fighting for their national freedom against the encroachments of French capitalism.... The struggle of the rebellious Syrians is identical with the struggle now conducted in France by the metal workers, miners and textile workers for six francs, the eight-hour day and the workers' government. The Syrian peasants and French workers unconsciously are establishing an anti-imperialist united front. The task of the Communist International and its French Section is to make clear to everyone this unity of the Syrian and French fronts."<sup>1</sup>

It is particularly important to emphasise that the ECCI called for an alliance of the international working class with the *entire Syrian people*, thereby practically enforcing a major principle of Lenin's regarding the need for a solid alliance of the proletariat with all the classes and social sections involved in the liberation movement, with the independence of the communist movement preserved completely intact, considering this alliance to be a major

<sup>1</sup> *International Press Correspondence*, Vol. 4, No. 29, 1924, pp. 300-02.

condition for the colonial and dependent countries to win their national independence.

The French Communists took up a stand in defence of the Syrian people right from the opening days of the uprising in Syria. The central organ of the French Communist Party *L'Humanité* printed resolutions and appeals of Syrian patriots involved in the insurrection, regardless of their party affiliation. *L'Humanité* conducted an active propaganda campaign against the massacre engineered by French imperialists in Syria. In September 1925 the Communists staged anti-war congresses of French workers throughout the nation in token of solidarity with the insurgents. The paper wrote in those days: "It is for the proletariat of this country, the Communist Party, the vanguard of this proletariat, to have the honour of coming out against this new crime being prepared by Western civilisation.

"Just as it is for imperialism to be defeated in Morocco, the proletariat is wholeheartedly at one with the Druses in the struggle it is waging against the colonial system.

"This is a legitimate and sacred uprising! The proletarians of all countries, directly interested in the defeat of imperialism, will support by every means at their disposal the movement for the liberation of the colonial peoples from the Western 'civilisers'."<sup>1</sup>

The position of the genuine proletarian internationalism of the French Communist Party once more confirmed the full justice of Lenin's words that "in 'advanced' Europe, the sole advanced class is the proletariat."<sup>2</sup>

A whole series of articles appearing in the columns of *The Communist International*, the ECCI's central organ, in 1925-1927 contained a clear-cut Marxist analysis of the anti-imperialist movement in Syria, its character and motive forces. Considering Syria as the most advanced country of the Arab East from the standpoint of its industrial development and class differentiation, *The Communist International* pointed out, notably, that the Syrian events were a national democratic revolution with the Syrian bourgeois

<sup>1</sup> *L'Humanité*, September 15, 1925.

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Backward Europe and Advanced Asia", *Collected Works*, Vol. 19, p. 99.

as its organising and inspiring force.<sup>1</sup> The uprising of 1925-1927, which had escalated into a sweeping movement of the masses, the magazine pointed out, contained "great opportunities", being fraught with "serious consequences for imperialist rulers".<sup>2</sup>

Proceeding from a detailed analysis of the class background to the events of 1925-1927, the Comintern imperatively advised the Communist Party of Syria, which had joined the Third International shortly before the uprising, to pursue a policy of alliance with the national revolutionary leadership of the insurgents. The Comintern warned the Syrian Communists that any attempt at ignoring the policy aimed at an alliance with the leadership of the uprising, which went on under the direction of "moderate sections of the big bourgeoisie", or "any leftist excesses (an overestimation of the role of the proletariat, the slogan of the Soviets, etc.) would, undoubtedly, isolate the Syrian Communists from the main stream of the national movement".<sup>3</sup>

In analysing the course of the uprising in Syria, the ECCI pointed out that it involved a wide range of people belonging to different groups. The Comintern stressed that the logic behind the evolution of the uprising prompted its participants to be differentiated into "big landowners and tradesmen who see armed struggle as the extreme means of bringing pressure to bear on the French", ready to rest content with half-hearted concessions from the colonial authorities on the one hand, and the "broad mass of the working people ... factory workers, handicraftsmen and small tradesmen, as well as peasants, on the other, who are indeed anxious for political independence. The interests of these sections are reflected by the leaders of the left nationalists."<sup>4</sup>

The course of events in Syria bore out the ECCI's conclusions. The mass anti-imperialist movement acquired a manifestly anti-feudal dimension. The Supreme Council of the Revolution, set up to lead the uprising, authorised the

<sup>1</sup> See: *The Communist International*, No. 11, 1925, pp. 116-22 (in Russian).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 12, 1925, pp. 34-35.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 11, 1925, p. 120.

establishment of local organs of national revolutionary power in the liberated areas, which imposed a levy on feudal lords. There were quite a few cases of feudal lords and village elders being sentenced to death by the revolutionary tribunals for having collaborated with the colonial authorities and betrayed the cause of the revolution.

Syrian merchants and landlords, frightened as they were not so much by French guns as by the rising popular movement, sought to come to terms with the colonial authorities. Contact between representatives of the French Government and leading organisations of the Syrian national bourgeoisie was established as early as the autumn of 1926.

The Comintern and the Communist Party of Syria planned their action guided by the well-known principle of Lenin's that the Communists of the East would have to base themselves "on the bourgeois nationalism which is awakening, and must awaken, among those peoples, and which has its historical justification".<sup>1</sup> At the same time, mindful of the interests of the mass of the working people, the Comintern urged the Syrian Communists to work in every practical way towards strengthening the position of left nationalists within the leadership of the 1925-1927 uprising for they expressed the interests of the peasantry and the urban petty bourgeoisie as the most numerous and radical classes and social groups. The ECCI's recommendations stated that the way to further radicalising the anti-imperialist uprising was through "working out the political and social programmes of the uprising, above all the one on the peasant question, and greater involvement of peasant and proletarian elements in the movement"<sup>2</sup> and through resolving the problem of compelling "the bourgeois nationalist parties to the greatest extent possible to adopt this revolutionary agrarian programme"<sup>3</sup> which had been worked out by the Communists, proceeding from the demands of millions of peasants.

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Address to the Second All-Russia Congress of Communist Organisations of the Peoples of the East, November 22, 1919", *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, p. 162.

<sup>2</sup> *The Communist International*, No. 12, 1925, pp. 34-35 (in Russian).

<sup>3</sup> *Resolutions and Theses of the Fourth Congress of the Communist International, Held in Moscow Nov. 7 to Dec. 3, 1922*, The Communist Party of Great Britain, London, 1922, p. 56.

In offering its recommendations to the Communist Party of Syria the Comintern based itself on the resolutions of its Fourth Congress, which underlined that the Communists of backward countries were confronted by a twofold task: "on the one hand, to fight for the most radical solutions of the problems of bourgeois-democratic revolution, directed to the conquest of political independence, and, on the other, to organise the workers and peasants to fight for their special class interest, during which they must take advantage of the antagonism existing in the nationalist bourgeois-democratic camp".<sup>1</sup>

The position held by the Communist International implied that the Syrian Communists should strive for an alliance with the national liberation movement. The Communist Party of Syria—still a numerically small group by the mid-1920s—succeeded in establishing a definite relationship with the national patriotic forces. A certain measure of "leftism" of the emergent Communist Party in respect of the national bourgeoisie did not, however, stop it from putting forward a specific programme of cooperation with the nationalistically-minded sections of the national bourgeoisie in one of its early policy statements. The party's first legal mouthpiece, *Al-Insaniya*, in its issue of May 25, 1925, published the "Principles of the Party" which, in particular, stressed that the Communists found it necessary at the given stage of national development to "contribute towards the development of industry, agriculture and trade; towards the spread of the spirit of universal brotherhood, the destruction of microbes of religious and confessionalist fanaticism, the prohibition of the interference of religious leaders in political life; towards the promotion of national education and the passage to universal primary schooling; towards the introduction of income taxes being imposed on well-to-do members of the community; towards the conversion of the *wakfs* into national property under government control; and towards emancipation of women". The "Principles of the Party" pointed out that the party "relies on the oppressed, whether at home or in exile, on free peoples, seeks a union with the parties which pursue identical aims, and uses all the possible methods to win the

<sup>1</sup> *Resolutions and Theses...*, p. 58.

demands it has put forward".<sup>1</sup> Stressing that the struggle in defence of the interests of the workers was the party's fundamental concern and simultaneously advancing a wide-ranging programme of general democratic demands, the Syrian Communists demonstrated in actual practice that the struggle for the objectives of the democratic stage of the revolution was inseparable from that for the class goals of the Communists. On June 22, 1925, immediately after the Drusian uprising began, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Syria issued a statement urging full support by the Communists of Syria and the Lebanon for the incipient liberation movement. Commenting on the position of Syrian Communists, the Communist International's magazine, *International Press Correspondence*, said in an article on the uprising: "The Communist Party of Syria comes on the scene.... It accomplished much towards the fraternisation of the quiet city population with the tempestuous and insurgent rural population. It has been eminently successful in bridging over the eternal religious antagonisms."<sup>2</sup> Ever since the revolution broke out the party has been its true defender.

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Syria contacted the leaders of the uprising through a patriotic journalist, Ali Nasreddin. One of the founders and leaders of the emergent party, Fuad Shimali, wrote that its Central Committee had adopted a number of decisions as early as 1925 containing explicit instructions as to the forms and methods of aid to the insurgents from the Communists. These comprised: the continuous liaison with the Comintern to keep its leadership informed of the events in the country and to coordinate the actions for promoting the movement of solidarity of the working people of the whole world with the Syrian insurgents; the constant exchange of information on the progress of the uprising with the French Communist Party (this information, communicated by the Syrian Communists to the leadership of the Comintern and the French Communists, reached the Central Committee

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from: M. Dacroub, *The Red Oak Roots. A Story of the Formation of the Lebanese Communist Party (1924-1931)*, Beirut, 1974, pp. 315-16 (in Arabic).

<sup>2</sup> *International Press Correspondence*, September 9, 1926, No. 61, p. 1041.

members from the leaders of the uprising through Ali Nasreddin); arms supplies into the Jabalu'd-Duruz mountains; assistance in the dissemination of insurgent appeals among the population of Syria and the Lebanon as well as the French army soldiers.<sup>1</sup>

The first conference of the Communists of Syria and the Lebanon met on December 9, 1925. It heard the Central Committee's report on the domestic scene, the development of the liberation revolution and the position of the Communists. The delegates to the conference expressed their full support for the position of the party which was extending its bond and contact with the leaders of the national uprising. While speaking out in support of the left nationalists in the leadership of the liberation movement and against the right-wingers and the moderates, the delegates demanded the confiscation of the land and the property of all big landlords in the liberated territories, except the property of the landowners participating in the revolution.<sup>2</sup>

In January 1926 the colonial authorities arrested a number of leaders of the Communist Party of Syria as well as of the trade unions which were under its influence. The activities of all patriotic parties and organisations, including the Communist Party and the trade unions it led, were banned in Syria and the Lebanon under a decree issued by the French High Commissioner on May 25, 1926. Right until 1928 the Syrian Communists had to work underground. However, the reprisals did not break their determination to fight on, together with everybody else involved in the national uprising, for the country's full independence.

Large-scale propaganda work to promote the solidarity of the world's progressive forces with the participants in the national liberation movement of 1925-1927 was an important area of their activities. On August 6, 1926 the *International Press Correspondence* published a joint appeal by the Communist parties of Syria and Palestine, which said in part: "Proletarians of Europe! With your hands you are making the bombs, grenades and aeroplanes which are spreading death and destruction over our country and turning our peasant fields, gardens, villages and towns into

<sup>1</sup> See: M. Dacroub, *Op. cit.*, pp. 356-57.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 373-74.

graveyards. Through your labour and sweat these plunderers and executioners are being maintained. Hundreds of thousands of widows and orphans in Syria turn to you with their cry: Stop your bourgeoisie from further bloodshed! The oppressed, enslaved Syrian fellahs and workers appeal to you and expect your fraternal aid in the fight against their and your oppressors.

"To you, honest proletarians, to you upright friends of freedom, we turn with the cry: Make a fighting alliance with revolutionary Syria! United we are strong. We, the oppressed millions in the colonies and you, the European wageslaves, we have a common enemy—European imperialism."<sup>1</sup>

The Communists of Syria and the Lebanon worked hard within the French colonial forces, widely circulating anti-imperialist leaflets and appeals among them. Several Communist cells were created in some of the native contingents of the French army in the Lebanon. This led to whole groups of Lebanese policemen and two battalions of Christian Lebanese units joining the insurgents (outside Rashayya in December 1926).

The Communists of Syria and the Lebanon were active also among Christian minorities, opposing the efforts of the colonial administration to split the insurgents, stir up religious strife and inveigle young Christians into the French army supposedly to defend the Christians. This campaign served to expose the vicious fabrications about Maronite and Armenian pogroms which were spread not only by colonial authorities but also by their accomplices from among the right-wing bourgeois Maronite parties and Dashnaks.<sup>2</sup>

While acting underground, the Communists of Syria and the Lebanon did much to bring into contact the emergent working class and the millions of peasants involved in the national uprising. The workers' strike movement culminated in a general strike in all of the Lebanon's major cities from July 23 to 27, 1926, demanding an end to the reign of terror and reprisals by the colonial authorities and the full backing of the insurgents.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *International Press Correspondence*, September 9, 1926, No. 61, p. 1041.

<sup>2</sup> See: A. Shami, "From the Experience of the Syrian Uprising", *Revolutsionny Vostok*, No. 3, 1928, pp. 278-90.

<sup>3</sup> See: M. Dacroub, *Op. cit.*, pp. 386-87.

Contrary to the assertions of bourgeois historians the Syrian Communists played an active part in the mass-scale anti-imperialist movement while their party was still being organised. This was entirely in keeping with the Comintern's instruction to "stimulate and release revolutionary energy which finds no outlet in bourgeois liberal demands".<sup>1</sup>

The failure of the 1925-1927 uprising demonstrated the weakness of the local working class. It was not united front tactics that led to the defeat of the uprising, but the absence of objective and subjective conditions indispensable for this front to be consolidated and developed.

#### *THE RIFF UPRISING OF 1921-1926 AND THE COMINTERN'S POSITION*

An analysis of the position taken up by the Communist International in 1921-1926 with respect to the uprising of the Moroccan Riffs (just as its tactics in the national anti-imperialist uprising of 1925-1927 in Syria) incontrovertibly proves the falsity of the contentions by the bourgeois historians that the Comintern "pursued and imposed a sectarian course".

Morocco's history after the signing of the Fez Treaty of 1912 establishing a French protectorate over the country's central and southern regions and transferring its northern region to Spain was one of the heroic struggle of its people against French and Spanish colonialism. That struggle attained its highest point in 1921-1926, under the direct impact of the ideas of the Great October Revolution, when the Moroccan insurgents, led by Emir Abd-El-Krim, having routed the Spanish army, established a Riff Republic in the country's north. A combined armed force of France and Spain was thrown into action against Abd-El-Krim's followers in the very opening days of its existence. The heroic resistance of the Riff tribes lasted until 1926.

The Comintern's position with regard to the Riff uprising was set out in the resolutions of the Sixth Enlarged Plenum

<sup>1</sup> *Resolutions and Theses of the Fourth Congress of the Communist International...*, pp. 55, 59.

of the ECCI (1926) which underlined: "When the warlike tribes rise up against the imperialism of the Metropolis and are warring for their independence, we should combat not their leaders, imbued though they may be with certain prejudices, but the imperialism which attempts to subject them."<sup>1</sup> That meant giving a determined rebuff to certain dogmatic moods, notably those in the French Communist Party, and setting forth the objective of consistent and uncompromising struggle for the achievement of the national aspirations of the Moroccan people and for united action by the proletariat of France and the peoples oppressed by French imperialism. A Committee of Action Against the War of Morocco, led by Maurice Thorez, was set up in France. On October 12, 1925, 900,000 French workers staged a 24-hour political strike against the dirty war engineered by the imperialists of France and Spain against the Moroccan people.<sup>2</sup>

In the context of a general upsurge of the liberation movement in the Arab countries and the Riff uprising, the ECCI emphasised that the Communist parties of North African countries must proceed in their work from the assumption that "the Moroccan war has sharpened and deepened the process of national self-determination".<sup>3</sup> In connection with the revolutionary upsurge in France's North African colonies the Comintern advised the Algerian Communist Party, with Europeans numerically predominant in it, to break the shell of isolation from the liberation movement which was spreading in the country. The attention of Algerian Communists was attracted to the specific objectives. The Comintern stressed that "the party will have to determine accurately its programme as to the national and agrarian questions. Without this, the party would be isolated from the national liberation movement", which is "now, under the influence of Syria and Morocco, coming onto the path of the national-revolutionary struggle". The Comintern pointed to the "internal re-grouping of the party" as a major precondition for the party's intensified

<sup>1</sup> *International Press Correspondence*, May 3, 1926, No. 40, p. 640.

<sup>2</sup> See: Albert Ayache, *Le Maroc*, Editions Sociales, Paris, 1956, p. 333.

<sup>3</sup> *The Communist International*, No. 18-19, 1925, p. 110.

action.<sup>1</sup> That was how the Comintern actually formulated the task of Arabianisation of the party to meet the Algerian conditions. These measures were to bring about a solid and close alliance between the Communists and broad masses of the people to attain the supreme goal of the Communists and the national revolutionaries in the given stage of the struggle—that of national liberation.

Following the Comintern's recommendations, the Algerian Communists launched a large-scale campaign of solidarity with the embattled Riffs. Meetings of solidarity with the insurgents were organised throughout the country, and leaflets containing appeals from the French Communist Party were widely circulated. The Algerian communist press, including the newspapers *Caserne* and *Avant-garde*, urged the French troops to fraternise with the Riff insurgents and called for the Riff Republic to be recognised. The French authorities made numerous arrests among Algerian workers known as communist sympathisers.<sup>2</sup>

Reviewing the events in Tunisia, the ECCI emphasised that "the national movement is becoming radicalised with exceptional rapidity" in that country. The main party of the national Tunisian bourgeoisie, the Destour, was quickly coming over, in the ECCI's opinion, to the position of national revolutionary struggle following an abortive attempt to win concessions from the French Government by peaceful means. The ECCI once more advised the Tunisian Communists to make more advantage of the reorientation of the Destour leaders and to press for a united front to be established with the leadership of the nationalist movement, pointing out, at the same time, that the appeal for a united front, launched by the Tunisian Communists under the impact of the Moroccan events, "has met with a warm response in the left wing of the Destour Party". The Tunisian Communists, the ECCI pointed out, "despite acute persecution, have been able to establish sound contacts with the Labour movements". That means that the new situation which had arisen within the ranks of

<sup>1</sup> *The Communist International*, No. 18-19, 1925, p. 111.

<sup>2</sup> See: N. S. Lutskaya, *Outlines of the Recent History of Morocco*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1973, pp. 186-87 (in Russian).

the Tunisian national liberation movement opened up a way for the Communists to united action between the working class and broad peasant masses, a way to further radicalising and deepening the social content of the liberation struggle.<sup>1</sup>

The Communists of Tunisia were also active in the struggle to bring to an end the imperialist massacre in Morocco, and in support of the Abd-El-Krim movement. They spent much of their time explaining the position of the French Communist Party on the Riff question, through various media, including the party's French-language newspaper *Combat social*. The Tunisian Communists fully supported the demand for the complete independence of Tunisia which had been advanced by the Destour Party, as well as for the creation of a united revolutionary front with Morocco and Syria. Such a front was seen as an important precondition for the establishment of a united anti-imperialist and national front of Tunisia to be made up of the Destour Party and the Tunisian Communists.<sup>2</sup>

So, a concrete analysis demonstrates that the Comintern, far from being "ignorant", had a very good knowledge of the true state of things in the countries of the Arab East in the 1920s. It is after a close scrutiny of the situation that the Comintern recommended the only correct line for its sections to follow under the circumstances of the time in pursuit of an alliance with all forces involved in the anti-imperialist movement of the Arab peoples. It is far from the facts of reality to maintain that the Comintern pushed its sections into "capturing" the leadership of the national liberation struggle. Such a policy could not but be suicidal for the emergent Arab Communist parties. That is just why the Comintern strongly recommended an alliance between the Communists and the national revolutionaries, eventually directed towards amplifying the social message of the national liberation movement and the gradual promotion of representatives from the working masses to positions of leadership.

<sup>1</sup> *The Communist International*, No. 18-19, 1925, p. 112.

<sup>2</sup> See: N. S. Lutsкая, *Op. cit.*, p. 187.

COMINTERN POLICY,  
DECISIONS OF ITS SIXTH CONGRESS,  
AND THE EGYPTIAN COMMUNIST PARTY  
IN THE INTERPRETATION OF BOURGEOIS HISTORIANS

The history of the Egyptian Communist Party (ECP) and its relationship with the Comintern occupies a special place in the works of bourgeois historians. Their interpretation of the ECP's history has a familiar objective behind it: to prove that communist ideas are "no good" for the Arab East and, in consequence, the Arab Communist parties are "not viable". This has also been the objective behind a peculiar analysis of the difficulties that handicapped the development of the communist movement in Egypt. Western scholars have been exploiting it as a cause for an outright distortion of the problem of relationship between the Communist International and the Arab Communist parties as well as of the general course of the Comintern and its Arab sections towards promoting and extending the alliance with the national liberation movement in the countries of the Middle East and North Africa. In particular, they have been making a great deal of efforts to discredit the decisions of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern dealing with the situation in Egypt and the tasks before the ECP.

For example, Mohammed Shafi Agwani writes that "the manifestoes of the Egyptian Communist Party between 1921 and 1923 were indicative of the rapid reappraisal of the colonial question by the international Communist movement. While the earlier programme called for a united struggle against the alien imperialism and the native capitalism, the latter broadly conformed to the modest reformist programme of the Wafd Party. After the Sixth Comintern Congress (1928) the pendulum once again swung in the direction of revolutionary militancy.... The manifesto of the Egyptian Communist Party designated the Wafd 'the party of bourgeois, landowning, counterrevolutionary national reformism'."<sup>1</sup>

According to Walter Z. Laqueur, the Sixth Congress devoted much attention to review the Egyptian scene,

<sup>1</sup> Mohammed Shafi Agwani, *Op. cit.*, p. 179.

setting "ambitious schemes" for the ECP to carry out. However, as the author argues, the lack of information about the true state of things in Egypt as well as the general guideline of the Sixth Congress for the Communists of the East to break with the bourgeois-reformist nationalist parties which were leading the national liberation movement, did what it was expected to do: by the middle of the 1930s "the Egyptian Communist Party, which was to carry out all those ambitious schemes, did not even exist. There were several individual Communists in Cairo and Alexandria, but there was no party." Laqueur goes on to say that the development of contacts with the revolutionary masses was possible only by forging an alliance with the biggest party of the Egyptian bourgeoisie, the Wafd, which was leading the revolutionary movement. But, in Laqueur's judgement, that alliance was impossible in the light of the resolutions of the Sixth Comintern Congress which was alleged to have condemned the Wafd as a party consisting "of a gang of traitors who had sold out to British imperialism".<sup>1</sup>

In other words, Laqueur, in company of other bourgeois historians, holds that his reading and interpretation of the documents of the international communist movement allow him to single out at least two stages in the activities of the Comintern as well as "all Arab parties obedient to it": first, a policy of alliance with bourgeois nationalists (witness the first Programme of the Egyptian Communists) and then one of giving up that alliance after 1928, that is after the Sixth Congress of the Comintern which was alleged to have directed the practical activities of the communist movement in the countries of the Arab region towards breaking with the national reformist parties leading the liberation struggle in those years. This prompted Laqueur to arrive at the conclusion about the "duality" of Comintern policy he claimed to have been determined by its "ignorance" of the situation in the countries of the Asian continent and by its application of the "trial and error method". It is the differences of opinion at the Second Comintern Congress over the subsequent revolutionary process in the East that served

<sup>1</sup> Walter Z. Laqueur, *The Soviet Union and the Middle East*, pp. 97, 99.

as the starting point of that "dual policy", as he saw it. Using as his excuse the fact that M. N. Roy at the Second Congress had put forward an anti-Leninist concept opposing Communists to the national liberation movement, Laqueur argued that there was a dispute going on with varying success between the supporters of Lenin and M. N. Roy inside the Comintern leadership from 1920. As a result, the policy that was actually being carried out in the Arab East was alleged to illustrate perfectly well the gains and losses of "any particular alignment inside the leadership" of the Comintern,<sup>1</sup> i. e., to follow Laqueur's line of reasoning, it was not the precepts of Lenin's that prevailed. In actual fact, however, as stated earlier on, the Second Congress emphatically rejected the left-sectarian doctrinaire approach and accepted Lenin's standpoint on the national and colonial questions, which found reflection in all the documents the Congress adopted on those questions. The Communists of oppressed nations received a powerful ideological weapon to hammer out the proper strategy and tactics to apply in the national liberation movement.

The Third Congress of the Comintern (June-July 1921) stated in its "Theses on the International Situation and the Problems of the Communist International": "The revolutionary national movement in India and in other colonies, is today an essential component part of the world revolution to the same extent as the uprising of the proletariat in the capitalist countries of the old and the new world."<sup>2</sup> The decisions of the Third Congress were taken as the underlying principles for the united front tactics pursued by the international communist movement both in the advanced capitalist countries and in the oppressed nations.

The Fourth Congress of the Comintern (November-December 1922) adopted a document of great importance which spelled out the Communist International's tactics in the national and colonial question and carried forward Lenin's ideas advanced at the Second Congress in his theses on the Eastern question. Pointing out the rapid growth of the revolutionary movement in a number of countries of the

<sup>1</sup> Walter Z. Laqueur, *The Middle East in Transition*, p. 294.

<sup>2</sup> *Theses and Resolutions Adopted at the III World Congress of the Communist International, June 22nd-July 12th, 1921*, The Press Bureau of the Communist International, Moscow, 1921, p. 10.

East, including Iraq, Egypt, Morocco, the congress emphasised in that document that "the Communist International supports all national revolutionary movements against imperialism. At the same time, it does not lose sight of the fact that only a consistent revolutionary line of policy based on the active support of the masses, and the unreserved break with all advocates of compromise with imperialism in the interests of maintaining class domination, can lead the oppressed masses to victory."<sup>1</sup>

The national and colonial question occupied an important place also in the proceedings of the Fifth Congress of the Comintern (June-July 1924) which once more resisted all attempts at substituting a leftist doctrinaire philosophy for the Leninist principles.

How, after all, did the Sixth Congress of the Comintern treat the national and colonial question in actual reality, as against Laqueur's contention that it was M. N. Roy's viewpoint that had "won out" there?

The latter half of the 1920s, which saw capitalism achieve partial stability, made it imperative for the Comintern and its sections in the countries of the East to specify in concrete terms the strategy and tactics to apply to the changed conditions of the class struggle. In particular, there had to be a further elaboration on the question of the attitude of the proletarian parties to an alliance with the national bourgeoisie. As applied to the specific conditions of Egypt the concrete recommendation on this question had been worked out during the Fifth Enlarged Plenum of the ECCI (March-April 1925) and the Sixth Congress of the Comintern.

A study of the situation which shaped up in Egypt in those years made it possible for the ECCI to draw an important conclusion at its Fifth Enlarged Plenum that the Wafd movement was living through a period of profound crisis of its hopes for a "gentlemen's agreement" with the ruling circles of Great Britain. At a time when the revolutionary movement in Egypt pressed for the full independence of Egypt and Sudan carrying millions of peasants away with it, the ECCI urged the Egyptian Communists to take as

<sup>1</sup> *Resolutions and Theses of the Fourth Congress of the Communist International...*, p. 55.

much advantage as they could of the contradictions between British imperialism and the Egyptian bourgeoisie in order to consolidate still more the national revolutionary forces fighting for the overthrow of imperialist oppression and for the full independence of Egypt. The ECCI pointed out that the Communists must provide "active support of all forms of the national liberation movement and every possible assistance in widening its base and deepening its struggle".<sup>1</sup> In the subsequent situation when the masses were following the Wafd, the Communist Party, the ECCI emphasised, had to do its utmost to "bring itself closer to the general liberation movement in the country with a view to creating a united anti-imperialist bloc" with the Wafdists.<sup>2</sup>

The decisions of the Fifth Enlarged Plenum of the ECCI were of tremendous importance for communist activities in Egypt. In point of fact, the plenum, while examining the situation in a number of countries of the Asian continent, notably in Egypt, India and Indonesia, worked out in a new historical setting the specific tactical line for the international communist movement to follow in the colonial and dependent countries.

In the course of preparations for the Sixth Congress, *The Communist International* magazine published an article by L. Magyar entitled "The Limits of the Revolutionary Role of the Colonial Bourgeoisie in Colonial Revolutions", which emphasised the existence of some essential differences of position of the national bourgeoisie in the revolutionary process of various countries. It is not only the industrial bourgeoisie of the colonies, but even the tradesmen that find themselves in opposition to, or even in revolutionary action against, imperialism at certain stages because of special circumstances, and that largely explains the emergence of the revolutionary movement in a number of Arab countries, as the "Ibn Saud movement and the rebellion in Syria". Every Communist party must not only "use the anti-imperialist sentiments of the bourgeoisie to the utmost" [emphasis added—*Auth.*] but also "realise in good

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from: *Outline History of the Communist International*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1971, p. 231.

<sup>2</sup> *The Communist International*, No. 4, 1925, p. 68 (in Russian).

time” when these would be “giving way to counter-revolutionary tendencies”. Although, the article stressed, the national bourgeoisie of a number of countries, frightened by the mounting revolutionary movement of the masses, did accept a measure of collusion with the colonial authorities, that did not mean removing the “possibility of conflict between the camp of national reformism and imperialism, nor does it free the proletarian party from an obligation to use, extend and stir up these conflicts, draw the masses in them, and turn them into a mass struggle so as to bring on a revolutionary crisis”.<sup>1</sup>

The Sixth Comintern Congress passed a whole series of important decisions which had a positive effect on the development of the revolutionary struggle in the colonies. On the other hand, the Sixth Congress produced some erroneous concepts of certain aspects of the national liberation struggle. A touch of sectarianism in some of the decisions of the Congress had been due to the overall situation which had shaped up within the international communist movement in those years. There were leftist trends afloat in some Communist parties in the context of a partial stabilisation of capitalism and a certain recession of the revolutionary movement both in the West and in the East, notably the failure of the 1925-1927 revolution in China and the switch-over of a number of bourgeois parties in the East from a policy of staunch resistance to imperialism to conciliation with the colonial authorities. At a time when the Communist parties of the East had no gains to speak of as yet in their action to win over the masses, there were some widespread ideas within their ranks about an early conversion of a weak proletariat, which had not yet shaped up as a class “for itself”, into the hegemon of the national democratic revolution. Naturally, such a standpoint, which found certain reflection in the decisions of the Sixth Congress, drastically obstructed the Comintern’s general policy of promoting the creation of a united anti-imperialist front in the colonies.

Yet, in spite of the actual touch of sectarianism, the decisions of the Sixth Congress, contrary to the allegations

<sup>1</sup> *The Communist International*, No. 33/34, 1928, pp. 56, 61 (in Russian).

of bourgeois historians, did not bar the Communists from cooperation with the nationalist leadership of the liberation movement. The Comintern's overall stand on the national and colonial question at the Sixth Congress sprang, in broad outline, from the guiding principles issued by the Second Congress. The theses adopted at the Sixth Congress with respect to the revolutionary movement in the colonial and dependent countries opened as follows: "The Sixth Congress of the Communist International declares that the 'Theses on the National and Colonial Questions' drawn up by Lenin and adopted at the Second Congress are still valid, and should serve as a guiding line for the further work of the Communist parties." Pointing out the incontestably growing significance of the struggle of colonial and dependent nations against imperialism as a factor of crisis in the imperialist world system, the Theses indicated that it was important for the Communists to take into account the native characteristics of the social, economic and political development of any particular country in defining the tasks before them in the national liberation movement.<sup>1</sup>

The decisions of the Sixth Congress unequivocally referred to "a certain accelerating influence" of the position of the bourgeoisie in its conflict with imperialism and the local feudal upper crust on the process of the development of the revolutionary movement and said that open conflicts of the national bourgeoisie with imperialism might "serve as the cause of the unleashing of even greater revolutionary mass actions".<sup>2</sup> The task before the Communists in the colonies and semi-colonies was, therefore, to "learn how to utilise each and every conflict, to develop such conflicts and to broaden their significance, to connect them with the agitation for revolutionary slogans, to spread the news of these conflicts among the wide masses, to awaken these masses to independent, open manifestations in support of their own demands".<sup>3</sup> This objective was impossible to

<sup>1</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies. Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semi-Colonies, Adopted by the Sixth World Congress of the Communist International, 1928*, Modern Books, Ltd., London, 1929, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *International Press Correspondence*, 12 December 1928, Vol. 8, No. 88, p. 1667.

<sup>3</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies...*, pp. 31-32.

attain without concluding "interim agreements" and coordinating the actions of the Communists and the leaders of the national liberation movement. The Sixth Congress pointed out the tremendous damage done to the communist and mass national liberation movement by the "noisy phrases, however radical they may sound superficially, about the absence of any distinction between the oppositional national-reformists (Swarajists, Wafdists, etc.) and the British imperialists or their feudal counterrevolutionary allies", because "*the masses see the chief immediate enemy of national emancipation in the form of the imperialist feudal bloc, which in itself is correct at this stage of the movement in India, Egypt and Indonesia*" [emphasis added—Auth.].<sup>1</sup>

The conclusions of the Sixth Congress responded in many ways to the accomplishment of the overriding task before the Communists of Egypt—that of achieving a solid and close alliance with the broad mass of the working people in town and countryside who were involved in the revolutionary movement. It was impossible to carry through that task while totally ignoring the revolutionary role of the national bourgeoisie, which was leading that movement, and pursuing a policy of rejecting the coordination of action between the Communist Party and the bourgeois parties, still less so since, as underlined in the decisions of the Sixth Congress, the ECP had extremely weak positions in the countryside where the bulk of the population supported the Wafd Party.<sup>2</sup> This is to say that the decisions of the Sixth Congress directed the Egyptian Communists to developing their work among the masses and promoting a nation-wide anti-imperialist movement.

In the subsequent period, too, the Comintern gave much attention to the problem of the ECP's tactics with respect to the revolutionary movement and its leader—the bourgeois Wafd Party. Learning from the lessons of the Chinese Revolution of 1925-1927, the Comintern pointed out that the Wafd, although it had passed over to a policy of conciliatory constitutional opposition, still wielded considerable influence among the mass of workers and peasants

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

as was conclusively evidenced by the outcome of the 1926 parliamentary election. In those circumstances, as *The Communist International* pointed out, "all the attempts of the weak Communist Party to set up a left Wafd in some form or other before they have forged strong links with the working class" and skip the objective stages of the revolutionary process "must inevitably end in ... more or less serious opportunist errors".<sup>1</sup>

The decisions of the Sixth Comintern Congress oriented the Egyptian Communists, first and foremost, to extending their influence in the trade unions and among the peasantry. The ECP had to work hard in pursuit of that objective to expose the Wafd's conciliatory policy and its concessions to the British imperialists and to the ruling feudal-monarchic bloc. By following that course, the Communists of Egypt could not only restore the party, but considerably increase its influence, for they acted as the most consistent champions of the national liberation and the interests of the working people. So, the "negative task" of the Communists of Egypt, as *The Communist International* emphasised in its commentaries, had to be logically combined with the "positive task of discovering those forms of organisation which would enable the mass of the workers, peasants, intellectuals and urban petty bourgeoisie to be consolidated for independent revolutionary struggle against imperialism and against internal reaction welded closely with it". But for them to rally together, the ECP was advised to work towards creating a large-scale anti-imperialist front comprising the left wing of the Wafd as well.<sup>2</sup>

Contrary to the allegations of bourgeois historians, the Comintern had thoroughly analysed the problems of development of the revolutionary movement in Egypt and found that the way for the Egyptian Communists to follow to win over the masses was by vigorous action for the national and social liberation of the Egyptian people. The Comintern's aid to the Egyptian Communists was not limited, however, to giving them recommendations regarding strategy and tactics. The Comintern played a prominent role in staging mass-scale campaigns against the reprisals by local reac-

<sup>1</sup> *The Communist International*, July 15, 1928, No. 14, p. 339.

<sup>2</sup> *The Communist International*, No. 13, 1928, p. 9 (in Russian).

tionaries and the colonial authorities against the Communists of Egypt, for solidarity with their arrested comrades as well as in training leading ECP functionaries.

Yet, for all that, the ECP never became a mass political force because of a wide range of objective and subjective factors which largely influenced the process of formation and growth of the Egyptian Communist Party. Here are some facts worth recalling.

The first few revolutionary Marxist circles were formed in the biggest cities of Egypt—Cairo, Alexandria and Port Said—early in 1918. A Congress in Alexandria within two years, in 1920, announced the establishment of a Socialist Party of Egypt whose representative attended the Third Comintern Congress. In 1922 the Socialist Party of Egypt was admitted to the Comintern and changed its name to the Egyptian Communist Party.

The ECP's policy guidelines included a number of important provisions which were put forward in national political life for the first time. The Egyptian communist programme, published in the Cairo *Al-Ahram* newspaper on February 14, 1921, and in the *Al-Khisab* newspaper, the organ of the Communist Party, called for the abolition of monarchy and the ending of British domination as well as for the democratising of political life. That was the first programme of a democratic anti-imperialist and anti-feudal revolution. The Wafd had never produced anything like it.

An important point in the programme was the call for action against imperialist preponderance, for the freedom and independence of Egypt, and for the abrogation of the fettering treaties concluded by a corrupt royalist clique with the British imperialists, behind the back, and contrary to the will, of the Egyptian people. It was the first document of that kind ever to refer to the need to "make the Suez Canal national property". The ECP did not view action against imperialism in isolation from that against the local reactionary and royalist bosses whose interests closely intertwined with those of the British colonial authorities.

The ECP programme gave much attention to the condition of the working class. It called for an eight-hour working day, labour legislation, equal pay for Egyptian and foreign workers. To a certain extent, the programme of the Egyptian Communists reflected the interests of the peas-

antry, calling for "unions of poor peasants" and for the development of relations between these peasant unions and trade unions.

In the early 1920s the ECP had a membership of just a few hundred. But it did win some important achievements in the very first years of its existence. These comprised, first and foremost, the organisation of big strikes at industrial enterprises and the formation of the first few trade union federations. Communist activity in the strike committees was the first ever experiment in combining Marxist-Leninist theory with the practice of the working-class movement in Egypt.

Beyond all doubt, the establishment of the ECP was an important qualitative advance in the country's political history, reflecting as it did the influence of the Great October Revolution on the national liberation movement of the Egyptian people. It will be no exaggeration to say that all the subsequent policy documents of radical national liberation and social movements in Egypt were genetically traceable to that first ECP programme.

At the same time, the latter half of the 1920s found the Egyptian communist movement entering a period of recession which followed the ECP defeat in 1924 by the Wafdist government of Saad Zaghlul, which had decided to cut short the mounting Communist-led strike movement in the country. All members of the ECP Central Committee were repressed, and the first General Secretary Antun Marun died in prison.

Scattered communist groups which remained at work in Cairo and Alexandria after the ECP had been smashed proved to be the sources of the "pluralism" of the communist movement of Egypt. For all the efforts of the Comintern, the Egyptian Communists never went beyond the limits of study circles and never restored the party's unity and its position among the working class.

A major reason behind the Egyptian Communists' failures was the mistaken position they had taken up with regard to the Wafd. Contrary to Comintern recommendations, the ECP stuck after 1924 to a policy which, far from broadening the class base of the national liberation movement by taking advantage of the contradictions between the national bourgeoisie and British imperialism, was one of opposing

the Wafd, qualifying that party as an “agent of imperialism” and calling for the immediate establishment of workers’ and peasants’ government. The sectarian mistakes of the infant ECP, still lacking experience, made themselves quite manifest during the national uprising in July 1930, when thousands of poor urban and rural residents rose under Wafd leadership against the British imperialists and the local feudal and royalist authorities. The only leaflet circulated by Egyptian Communists during that July uprising urged, in effect, self-isolation of, rather than action by, the masses. “Let these men [Wafdists—*Auth.*],” it said, “participate in the demonstrations themselves and themselves fight and die because they are defending their own interests.”<sup>1</sup> In spite of the recommendations from the Fourth Congress of the Comintern reminding it that any abstention of Eastern Communists from the national liberation struggle by claiming they wanted to defend the class interests of workers was the worst kind of opportunism, the ECP never grasped the potent revolutionary significance of the uprising, went along with the Wafdist feeling that all the masses were fighting for was a “constitution”, and failed to mobilise those small forces it had in order to join the action by the working class and peasantry and lead it. The same situation occurred during the mass actions by the working people of Egypt in May 1931.<sup>2</sup>

There was a clear case of leftism in the view the Egyptian Communists held of the united anti-imperialist front which they saw as a restricted association of left forces directed, first and foremost, against the Egyptian national bourgeoisie and its main party—the Wafd. The ECP’s left-sectarian mistakes involving the united front arose from an underestimation of the struggle for the national demands—the abolition of the colonial oppression and feudal survivals in the countryside. Although such a tactic could be explained by the hard blow which was struck at the party by the country’s first ever “national” government, formed by the Wafdists, it could not, however, assure the Communists the

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from: Avigdor, “Basic Stages of Development of the Egyptian Communist Party”, *Revolutsionny Vostok*, No. 6, 1936, pp. 76-80.

<sup>2</sup> See: Avigdor, “The Crisis and the Revolutionary Upsurge in Egypt”, *Revolutsionny Vostok*, No. 1-2, 1932, p. 132.

support of broad masses of the working people. That was, to all intents and purposes, a leftist tactic, preached by petty-bourgeois elements who had penetrated the leading bodies of the ECP, both centrally and locally, after the defeat of 1924.

These were the reasons behind the weakness of the ECP. In the long run, the success or failure of any particular Communist party in its efforts to link up with the mass movement in action against imperialism turned on its ability to analyse the situation and the real possibilities of the class forces involved in that movement and on its ability to devise the correct tactics and strategy to follow.

#### *THE COMINTERN AND THE QUESTION OF CREATING AN ARAB COMMUNIST PARTY*

Western "experts" on the Arab communist movement have been giving much prominence to the resolution entitled "Tasks of the Communists in the All-Arab Movement" adopted by a conference of the Communist parties of Syria and Palestine in 1931.

Quoting from that document, bourgeois scholars have been focussing their attention on the "spirit of radicalism" which was peculiar to those who compiled it (Walter Z. Laqueur). In the opinion of the American historian, the "radicalism" of the resolution consisted, first of all, in that the Communists were groping their way towards an alliance with the anti-imperialist movement by urging the creation of an all-Arab Communist party. "The Communists understood very well the great emotional appeal of the 'Arab Union' slogan, the lively response and sympathy it evoked all over the Arab East, from Palestine to Morocco." However, that way to unity with the mass anti-colonial movement, a happy one from Laqueur's point of view, which had been independently chosen by Arab Communists, is alleged to have been disavowed by the Comintern.<sup>1</sup> Since then, as Mohammed Shafi Agwani writes in full agreement with Laqueur's standpoint, "the history of Arab Communism

<sup>1</sup> Walter Z. Laqueur, *The Soviet Union and the Middle East*, pp. 95, 96.

affords little evidence of sustained creative interaction between abstract theory and concrete reality".<sup>1</sup>

Laqueur's and Agwani's standpoint regarding the document of the conference of the Communist parties of Syria and Palestine is a cut-and-dried formula. For the umpteenth time, the Comintern is claimed to have been imposing on Arab Communists a tactical line which met none of their authentic requirements. The authors have been invoking that resolution (each in his own way) to create the impression that the policy which the Arab Communists intended to pursue with respect to the anti-imperialist movement in their countries was "spontaneously correct", but it was the Comintern that "prevented" them from acting correctly because it "did not know" the problems agitating the minds of the broad masses of the Arab East as well as the forces actively involved in the national liberation movement.

What is, however, the true message of the document Laqueur and Agwani referred to?

The position of the Communists with regard to the national bourgeoisie and its role in the national liberation movement was central to that resolution. It said in part: "The top segment of the rural feudals and the feudal nobility in all the areas of the Arab world which have a settled population has sided with imperialism in one way or another. National reformism reigns supreme within the ranks of the Arab bourgeoisie and the landowners connected with it. The Arab bourgeoisie is becoming increasingly counterrevolutionary and defeatist. The bourgeoisie and bourgeois elements in the countryside are unable to wage a revolutionary anti-imperialist struggle; they are gravitating towards counterrevolutionary conciliation with imperialism within the bounds of false and limited half-constitutional concessions which can only disguise imperialist domination."<sup>2</sup>

That document clearly revealed some features of a "left" deviation which was subsequently redressed by Arab Communists. The emphatically negative attitude of the Communists to the national bourgeoisie was largely a reaction to the latter's conciliatory policies in dealing with colonialists

<sup>1</sup> Mohammed Shafi Agwani, *Op. cit.*, p. 220.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from: M. Dacroub, *Op. cit.*, pp. 530-44.

and close connections with the landowning class. The world economic crisis of 1929-1933 which sharply intensified revolutionary activity of the masses affected the political line of the Communist parties as well. The revolutionary ferment within their ranks, which rose to a higher pitch during the crisis, along with the growing poverty of the masses, generated more revolutionary impatience and a tendency to speed up the course of events in the Eastern countries. This view was current among the Communists in certain Arab countries, too.

The authors of the resolution, taking into account the new revolutionary upsurge which had begun in many countries of the Arab region in the 1930s, called for the mass movement to be enlarged and deepened by erasing the national boundaries, drawn by colonialists, and creating a federated Arab state. Their idea was that it would be possible to gain more by fighting in such a state against the national bourgeoisie and that within the limits of a united Arab state the national bourgeoisie would certainly be swept away by a powerful revolutionary thrust of the working people. The paramount slogan for the Arab Communists to fight for should be that of an all-Arab anti-imperialist revolutionary front with a view to setting up workers' and peasants' governments in the more advanced Arab countries (Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Algeria) so as to launch an all-out offensive against the national reformist bourgeoisie as the principal enemy of the working masses of the Arab East. So, it was an "all-Arab Communist party" that should be the major vehicle of such an offensive.<sup>1</sup>

The leftist excesses of the authors of the above-quoted resolution were not a chance occurrence. The ambition to be "more to the left than anybody else" and the denial of any positive role of the national bourgeoisie in the opening stages of the national liberation revolution arose, above all, from the failure of Arab Communists to jettison their earlier petty-bourgeois load. It is for this reason that they left out of account the simple fact that what they had got rid of still actuated the mass of the working people. The experience of the revolutionary movement in the East, including that of the Arab countries, patently disproved the infer-

<sup>1</sup> See: M. Dacroub, *Op. cit.*, pp. 538-41.

ences of the "left": in the context of a concrete situation and the hard facts of reality, their "revolutionary" position turned out to be totally unrealistic.

That irreality showed itself, above all, in urging backward nations to seek the immediate installation of a workers' and peasants' dictatorship, which would have meant trying to jump the yet incomplete phase of the revolutionary process in the Eastern countries. The policy of breaking with the national bourgeois parties adversely told on the performance of the working masses in their struggle.

What the bourgeois authors have declared to be a "true creative effort" was, as a matter of fact, the formulation of a mistaken policy. For the Communist parties of the Arab countries to have followed such a policy would have meant isolating them from the national liberation movement led by the national bourgeoisie.

On February 28, 1936 the ECCI Secretariat passed a resolution "On Links and Relations Between the Communist Parties of the Arab Countries", permeated with the spirit of the decisions of the Seventh Congress of the Comintern. It stressed that the historical community, the community of language, the solidarity of Arab peoples in the struggle against imperialism, for national independence and for the unification of the Arab countries made it imperative for the Arab Communist parties to establish well-organised contacts between the parties for an exchange of experience and information, mutual assistance, joint organisation of campaigns, publication of political literature and periodicals, etc.

At the same time, the ECCI strongly opposed the idea of a united Arab republic and pointed out that the Arab peoples were by no means ripe to unite. "I would not say that we can logically raise today the question of forming one Arab party organisation. We object to this, to setting up such a permanent single organ, and Arab comrades have agreed with that," Otto Kuusinen said at a meeting of the ECCI Secretariat.<sup>1</sup>

The same idea was expressed in Wang Ming's report at the

<sup>1</sup> *The Communist Parties of the Developing Countries in Action for United Front*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1976, pp. 22-23 (in Russian).

Seventh Comintern Congress where he also emphasised that "the Arabian Communists, while working to establish a people's anti-imperialist front in each of these countries, must at the same time join forces and strive to achieve the coordination of the anti-imperialist struggle in all these countries."<sup>1</sup>

The Communist International's resolutions on Arab unity and an "Arab Communist party" arose from the practical application of Lenin's principles of dealing with the national question in the age of imperialism to the particular conditions of the Arab East. In point of fact, the Comintern rejected the argument that there was a single Arab nation already in existence, with nothing to divide it beyond the demarcation lines which were to be obliterated in a more or less near future. That theory was quite rightly viewed as derived from the ideology of the national bourgeoisie of the Arab countries. The Comintern underscored that the emergence of different Arab nations was an objective process, determined, above all, by the economic base of each of the Arab countries. It neither belittled, nor overplayed the significance of the community of language, religion, history and culture that links the people of Arab countries together. The trend towards Arab unity was to be seen in every particular Arab country through the combination within it of the Palestinian, Syrian, Lebanese, Iraqi, Egyptian, Libyan and other Arab nations which had an ultimate historical prospect open before them to a unification and merger on a socialist and democratic, rather than feudal, semi-feudal or authoritarian bourgeois, basis.

It is quite natural that this kind of approach to Arab unity should have offered a wide prospect for action before the Communist parties of Arab countries. That was so, above all, because such a position took into account the specific features of a particular historical situation in each of these countries and allowed any of the Communist parties concerned to work out certain forms and methods of struggle best suited to the social and political circumstances of their respective countries.

<sup>1</sup> *VII Congress of the Communist International. Abridged Stenographic Report of Proceedings*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1939, p. 300.

The Comintern, as some bourgeois historians have tried to make it out, never denied the importance of the movement for Arab unity within the framework of the general anti-imperialist struggle of Arab peoples. On the contrary, as stated in the "Theses on Eastern Question" of the Fourth Comintern Congress, the main task common to all national liberation movements was "to bring about national unity and achieve political independence". Its real and consistent solution would be possible only if "the national movement in any particular country is capable of attracting to itself the toiling masses and breaking off all connection with the reactionary feudal elements, and including in its programme the social demands of the masses".<sup>1</sup> The Comintern always took into account the existence of two trends in any national movement—a reactionary trend expressing the interests of the "higher-ups" of society, and a democratic one concentrating on action to bring about such a solution of the national question as would best correspond to the interests of the working people. It is the latter trend that the Comintern supported, wholly and entirely.

The Comintern's decisions are of perpetual importance, contrary to the arguments of bourgeois writers. Many of its recommendations have more than a historical value even today. One can see that from the great role the Comintern's recommendations played in the early 1970s, when the Communist Party of Syria (CPS) fought hard to rally its ranks behind the principles of Marxism-Leninism and opposed the leftist views circulated by opportunists within its ranks at that time, including those on Arab unity and the creation of an "Arab Communist party". The General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Syria, Khalid Bagdash, pointed out at the party's National Council meeting in November 1971 that the view associating the victory of workers and peasants with Arab unity alone was a nationalistic one. "Experience is there to prove that it is virtually possible for one small Arab country not only to win freedom from imperialism but to set out for social progress and for creating the material base of socialism, that is, the socio-economic and political precondi-

<sup>1</sup> *Resolutions and Theses of the Fourth Congress of the Communist International...*, p. 55.

tions for the advance to socialism ... without unity and before it has been achieved." While stressing that the aspiration for Arab national unity was, above all, nothing but a *trend* in the development of the Arab national liberation movement, Bagdash pointed out that the Arab Communists, including those of Syria, were behind that trend just because they proceeded from the supreme social interests of the struggle for the liberation of workers and peasants and for socialism. "It must be clear that Arab nationalism is not our slogan, not the slogan of Communists. But we have always supported its anti-imperialist thrust, just as we support the progressive social trend increasingly evident in the Arab nationalist movements."

The historical record of the struggle under Comintern leadership underlay the objections of the Syrian Communists to those who insisted on creating an "Arab Communist party". At a CPS National Council meeting Bagdash said that the idea of an "Arab Communist party comes ahead of its time as there had to be a united Arab state for such a party to be created". The slogan of an "Arab Communist party", supposed to become an instrument of "remaking Arab society", amounts to dismissing the tremendous role which is actually played by the existing Communist parties of Arab countries actively fighting for the national and social liberation of their peoples. Both then and now the issue is one of promoting "broad cooperation and coordination of the actions of the fraternal Communist parties in different Arab countries, this being the only correct and realistic slogan", rather than that of creating a single all-Arab Communist party.<sup>1</sup>

*THE SEVENTH CONGRESS OF THE COMINTERN  
AND A TURN IN THE ACTIVITIES  
OF ARAB COMMUNIST PARTIES*

In the first half of 1934 there was a general turn in the world communist movement towards eradicating left-sectarian trends and a forceful application of the principle

<sup>1</sup> *The National Council of the Communist Party of Syria, Damascus, 1971, pp. 30-37 (in Arabic).*

of a united anti-fascist front in the West as well as a united anti-imperialist front in the colonial and dependent countries of the East.

The intervening years (from the early 1920s to the early 1930s) offered a good many lessons for the Communist parties of the Arab countries to learn. They were gaining the experience they needed to achieve their political maturity in the course of the great historic battles of their peoples for national liberation. The correctness of the tactical slogans they launched was to be tried out in the course of the liberation movement and practical activities of the Communists themselves. That offered an opportunity of overcoming tactical and theoretical mistakes and working out the strategy and tactics to meet the specific conditions of each particular country. The gains and reversals of the previous years added much to the experience both of the Communist parties and the Comintern. The lessons thus learned were summed up and reviewed to provide the groundwork for the subsequent elaboration of the strategy and tactics of the communist movement, above all the tactics of a united anti-imperialist front.<sup>1</sup>

To the bourgeois interpreters of the history of the Communist International's relations with the Arab Communist parties the major turn in the activities of the international communist movement looks like yet another piece of evidence to attest to the failure the Arab Communist parties were alleged to have suffered when they tried "to relate the Marxian doctrine to the specific conditions and requirements of the Arab East". Without achieving success, and relying on the proletariat, Agwani writes, the Comintern forced the Arab Communists into an alliance with the nationalists, yet that new course of the Communist International did not lead, nor could it have led, to an alliance between the leaders of the liberation movement and the Communists in virtue of their antagonistic interests. The Arab Communist parties, in Agwani's opinion, once more found themselves in opposition to the national liberation movement which, naturally, could not seek a reconciliation

<sup>1</sup> For an account of that turn in the tactics of the Comintern and the Communist parties of the East see: *The Awakening of the Oppressed*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1967, pp. 323-38 (in Russian).

with the rule of the metropolitan countries, as was alleged to have been required by the new policy of the Communists. Moreover, because of the logic behind the application of the slogan of a united anti-imperialist front, the Arab Communist parties, Agwani maintains, were becoming not proletarian, but authentically nationalist, open to representatives of all classes.<sup>1</sup> Although the Comintern, Laqueur argues, reverted to Lenin's view on the national and colonial question nominally after 1936, in so doing it, however, sacrificed the proletarian character of the Communist Party and departed from Lenin's instruction—to preserve in any way the self-determination and the ideological independence of the working-class movement so as to suit the policy of union with the bourgeois-nationalistic top leadership of the anti-colonial movement.<sup>2</sup>

To sum up, prominent bourgeois historians of the Arab communist movement and its relationship with the Comintern argue that the pursuit of alliance with the national liberation movement, alleged once more to have been imposed on the Arab Communists from above, far from strengthening the Arab Communist parties, robbed them of their proletarian character, as it were. Once more, claims the British historian Seton-Watson, the Comintern, supposedly because of its own policy, "lost the confidence of many revolutionaries, without gaining the confidence of many nationalists".<sup>3</sup>

Let us have a look at how things were in reality. The actual experience of the emergent Communist parties had a tremendous part to play in the Comintern's fundamental switch-over to action against sectarianism. The lessons learned in the course of the day-to-day struggle of the Communists and the situation which had shaped up before the Seventh Congress within the communist movement of the Arab region made it imperative for a united front to be created to resist colonial oppression, war and fascism.

By the mid-1930s the Egyptian Communist Party had virtually broken up. Small, isolated groups of Communists

<sup>1</sup> See: Mohammed Shafi Agwani, *Op. cit.*, pp. 220, 181-82.

<sup>2</sup> See: Walter Z. Laqueur, *The Soviet Union and the Middle East*, p. 114.

<sup>3</sup> Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Pattern of Communist Revolution. A Historical Analysis*, Methuen and Co., Ltd., London, 1960, p. 128.

in Cairo and Alexandria were hounded down by the authorities. Much of the reason behind the party's loss of its influence among the masses and its inability to become a real national force was the refusal of the Egyptian Communists to strive for creating an anti-imperialist front and their sectarian stand at the time of massive anti-British actions in the 1930s, which was altogether contrary to the Comintern's recommendations. The communist organisation of Tunisia, which remained an amalgamation of a few study circles of workers of European origin, was still making no moves either towards creating a united front with the national revolutionary elements.

On the other hand, the prestige of the Algerian Communists, who were among the first Communists in the Arab East to work towards a united front, rose considerably among the Arab working people for that very reason. Notable headway was made also by the Communist Party of Syria which started a vigorous campaign in 1933 to win the masses, advancing in the forefront of the working people's strike struggle, strengthening its position in the trade unions, working towards an alliance with the national revolutionary parties with the aim of creating a broad anti-imperialist front, and openly opposing the danger of war and fascism, thereby taking important steps to develop into an influential party.

The Syrian Communists' line of action in pursuit of an alliance with the national patriotic forces involved in the liberation struggle was worked out at the Fourth Enlarged Plenum of the Communist Party's Central Committee in June 1933. The plenum underlined the imperative necessity of implementing the Comintern's recommendations, notably those about the achievement of a still closer union of Communists and the national liberation movement and extension of the Communist Party's links with the mass of the working people of Syria and the Lebanon.<sup>1</sup>

The ECCI reviewed and summarised the past experience and the latest tendencies, and the orientation it was urging on the Communist parties was vitally necessary as it responded to the immediate requirements of the

<sup>1</sup> See: Ramzi, "The Working-Class Movement in Syria at the Present Juncture", *Revolutsionny Vostok*, No. 3, 1935, p. 107.

communist movement.

It is a matter of record that in the mid-1930s the ECCI gave much attention to the development of the communist movement in the Arab East in the context of intensified anti-imperialist struggle in the Arab countries.

The clarion call for independence was growing louder and louder in those years in the Maghreb countries, especially in Tunisia, where a democratic Neo-Destour Party was being formed, and in Algeria where a national revolutionary organisation, known as the "North African Star", was in operation. A strike movement and anti-British actions rose to considerable proportions in Egypt as well. There was a mounting anti-imperialist struggle in Syria involving large sections of the population, including workers, peasants, students and middle classes. A mass strike of workers, supported by peasant uprisings, swept through Damascus in January and February 1936.

At its session on February 29, 1936 the ECCI Secretariat adopted a wide-ranging resolution, entitled "The Tasks of the Communist Parties of the Arab Countries in the Struggle for Popular Anti-Imperialist Front". That was an important step consolidating and building on the decisions of the Seventh Congress.<sup>1</sup> In the light of the mounting anti-imperialist movement in the Arab East, the resolution stated that the Communist parties of the Arab countries had for a long time remained secluded and divorced from the masses, as well as unconnected with the growing Arab national liberation and working-class movements. That was due mostly to the fact that the Arab Communist parties "stood by what were manifestly sectarian positions" in choosing their tactics, and that they were virtually divorced from the national liberation movement. "The masses," the ECCI Secretariat pointed out, "did not see our parties as organisations fighting, first and foremost, for the national independence of the Arab peoples. They saw them as organisations striving for remote ends connected with a socialist revolution and expressed in abstract slogans unintelligible for the masses. Our parties were doing their best trying to

<sup>1</sup> For the first time in historical literature the substance and significance of this document were shown in the book *The Communist Parties of the Developing Countries in Action for United Front*, pp. 20-21.

impose communist slogans on national revolutionaries and, roundly attacking the national reformists, denying their influence on the masses and ruling out the possibility of any joint action with them to oppose the imperialist offensive, lumped them together with imperialists.”

The ECCI strongly recommended the Arab Communist parties to follow Lenin’s instructions about supporting the national liberation and national revolutionary movements, since “the struggle against imperialist oppression and for national independence is the dominant issue in the whole of their activities and an indication of their political weight in the nation”. It pointed out that “the lot of the Communist parties themselves in the Arab countries depends on the right approach to this issue and the intensity of their struggle for national independence” and so did the “consolidation of their positions within the ranks of the Arab working class”.

The resolution of the ECCI Secretariat offered specific recommendations for each of the Arab Communist parties (those of Syria, Palestine, Iraq, Algeria and Tunisia), concerning the tactical line for the Communists to follow in the spreading liberation movement. That implied that the Communist parties were to use all the means at their disposal to work for the establishment of the popular front in their respective countries, proceeding from a study of their particular situation. The ECCI called on the Communist parties to make radical changes in their tactics and approach to the national-reformists so as to assure close cooperation and joint action with them and support the anti-imperialist demands of these organisations along with launching a large-scale ideological struggle against “national reformism as the ideology and practice of cooperation with imperialism” and against “every manifestation of opportunist distortion of the popular front tactics in the sense of collaboration and conciliation with imperialism”.<sup>1</sup>

Guided by the decisions of the Seventh Comintern Congress and the ECCI Secretariat’s resolution of February 29, 1936, the Communists of Syria and the Lebanon found a way to end the underestimation within their ranks of the

<sup>1</sup> *The Communist Parties of the Developing Countries in Action for United Front*, pp. 21-22.

importance of their effort to create an anti-imperialist front and extensively advertised that slogan from the columns of the open and underground party press. Pointing out the great importance of the creation of a broad front of the forces striving for the independence of Syria and the Lebanon and of the withdrawal of foreign troops out of the two countries, Khalid Bagdash emphasised at the time: "In Syria, which has won certain freedom thanks to the heroic struggle of her people, with the help of the people of France and the Popular Front government, the Communists are in battle to rally the entire Syrian people within an organised national front. This front will make it possible to retain the democratic freedoms which have been won and achieve national independence, and will help ease the burden of poverty and create a humane form of government that will enable the people to advance towards full independence and freedom."<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, the Communists of Syria and the Lebanon were conducting a consistent struggle to eradicate bourgeois influence on the working masses. In the context of Syria, Communists noted, where imperialist domination was slowing down the process of dissociation of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat from each other, where the working people saw French imperialism as their main enemy, that problem was one of paramount importance. It could not be solved unless the party took into account the level of class consciousness of the working people and put forward appropriate slogans in the day-to-day struggle for the interests of workers and peasants.<sup>2</sup>

In assessing that important stage in their party's life, the Syrian Communists pointed out in the documents of their Third Congress in 1969 that "the national front slogan signified a call for rallying the widest gamut of forces to secure the complete and unconditional withdrawal of foreign troops along with neutralising that section of the

<sup>1</sup> Khalid Bagdash, "Fascism—the Enemy of the Peoples" (Preface to the Arabic translation of Georgi Dimitrov's speech "Working-Class Unity in the Struggle Against Fascism", Damascus, 1937). Quoted from: *Pages from the History of the Struggle Against Fascism in Syria*, Damascus, 1975, p. 18 (in Arabic).

<sup>2</sup> See: Ramzi, "The Working-Class Movement in Syria at the Present Juncture", *Revolutsionny Vostok*, No. 3, 1935, p. 109.

national bourgeoisie which was prepared to yield ground" to the imperialists. To retain the ideological and organisational independence in the context of a broad alliance with all those involved in the anti-imperialist struggle, including the national bourgeoisie, for resolving the task of national liberation as a top priority objective at the stage of a bourgeois-democratic revolution was "a great turn in the party's history" which the decisions of the Seventh Comintern Congress had done a great deal to bring about. Calling for the unity of all the patriotic forces in the struggle against imperialist domination, the Communist Party of Syria became a genuinely people's party. "Our support for any move or action, which was urged or accepted by the national bourgeoisie (represented by the National Bloc Party in those years), provided these actions weakened the positions of imperialism or helped the particular patriotic class or social group get the concessions that would meet their interests- that policy, along with our active involvement in all anti-imperialist activities, gave our party an opportunity of openly joining in the very thick of the patriotic movement."<sup>1</sup>

United front tactics implied, just as in earlier times, that the Communist parties were to retain their ideological and organisational independence and to take advantage of the contradictions between the colonial powers and the local bourgeoisie in order to extend and deepen the struggle of the working masses of the Arab East for national independence and social demands of the working people. That tactic implied, besides, determined struggle against the ideological influence of the bourgeoisie on the masses and for promoting their class consciousness and initiative. The principle of creating the united anti-imperialist front in the countries where the Communists had but a minority of the proletariat following them and where the mass of the working people was under the influence of the bourgeois parties meant, above all, that the Communist parties were to keep enhancing their role and importance as the most consistent national force. All attempts to prove that an alliance with the leaders of the national liberation movement

<sup>1</sup> *Documents of the Third Congress of the Communist Party of Syria*, June 1969, pp. 52-54 (in Arabic).

signified the loss of communist hegemony have no ground to stand on: first, because that hegemony in the national liberation movement had not yet been won by the proletariat and its party; second, because with the Communists unflinchingly preserving their ideological, political and organisational independence the interim agreements with the nationalists did not mean that Communist parties were to find themselves diluted within their ranks and, at the same time, helped the Communist parties increase their influence among the masses.

Now, since the united front tactic was directed, first and foremost, towards winning national independence, it cannot be qualified as a policy of teaming up with imperialist metropolitan countries, whatever the contentions of bourgeois historians. On the contrary, that tactic signified the closest ever alliance with those forces of progress and democracy inside the metropolitan countries which fought actively and consistently against the colonial regime and against the plunder of the national resources of the colonies, and for them to be granted full independence. In a pamphlet "The Arabs and the Civil War in Spain", published in 1937, Khalid Bagdash wrote that it was necessary to draw a clear line of distinction between the Popular Front in France and the Government of Léon Blum which had come to power with its support. The establishment of the Popular Front could not, naturally, have brought about the independence of colonies, but the very fact of its existence and the steadfast struggle of the French Communist Party for the independence of Syria, the Lebanon and the French colonies in North Africa, to mention just a few factors, all combined to "create better conditions for our liberation struggle and to open up more favourable prospects for the improvement of the material well-being of our people and for a struggle to achieve democratic liberties". It is for that reason, Bagdash wrote, that "the best way to win the rest of our demands is by reinforcing the bonds of friendship between us, the French people, and the Popular Front, and by cooperating with them so as to compel the Government of Léon Blum to grant our legitimate and immediate demands".<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Khalid Bagdash, *The Arabs and the Civil War in Spain*, Damascus, 1937. Quoted from: *Pages from the History of the Struggle Against Fascism in Syria*, pp. 47-48 (in Arabic).

So, a review of the real facts of history is totally inconsistent with the inferences of bourgeois historians. The Comintern's policy of bringing the Communists into alliance with all the forces involved in the national liberation movement laid the ground for the subsequent success that was achieved by the Communist parties in their effort to extend their influence among the masses. Its creative application in the countries of the Arab East enabled the Communist parties to become a considerable political force actively engaged in the development of the revolutionary process.

The years which have passed since the Communist International was founded have furnished abundant evidence to prove the importance and the tremendous historic significance of its activities for the communist movement in the Arab countries.

The October Revolution in Russia, the Soviet people's victory over German fascism and Japanese militarism, the triumph of socialism in a number of countries of Europe, Asia, Latin America, and the unprecedented intensity of the class battles of the world proletariat have all combined to bring about the downfall of the world colonial system and victories of the national liberation movement, notably in the Arab East. The Communists of the Arab countries, guiding themselves by the Leninist principles of approach to the national and colonial questions, have made an inestimable contribution towards the struggle of their respective peoples for national liberation.

The Arab Communist parties have to be credited with a tremendous share of the great success the Arab national liberation movement has gained to date in its struggle against imperialism and reaction. In a number of Arab countries positive changes in the alignment of the social and political forces have taken place and are still going on, and notable headway has been made in the sense of progressive social and economic change. This proves that the potentialities of the Arab national liberation movement are far from being exhausted.

## RELATIONS BETWEEN THE COMINTERN AND THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDONESIA

A. Yu. DRUGOV

The hard, drama-laden path of the communist movement in Indonesia, particularly during the period when that country's Communist Party was a section of the Comintern, has been an object of tremendous interest in the works of historians dealing with Indonesian problems. The approach of bourgeois specialists to the mutual relationship between the Indonesian contingent of the international communist movement and its international centre distinctly reveals an intention to tailor the analysis of this relationship, particularly the conclusions to be drawn from such an analysis, to the requirements of the struggle against the ideology of communism, against the principles of proletarian internationalism, against the unity of the communist movement and against the policy of the Communists in the developing countries, notably in Indonesia. The distortions of the historical truth with regard to any particular issue and the wishful thinking in the interpretation of facts and events—whatever affected objectivistic form these may take—invariably carry a quite definite political load which can be always, or nearly always, brought out through a critical scrutiny of the appropriate issue against the background of the problems of present-day class warfare, the activities of the proletarian parties and relations between them nowadays.

Consequently, it appears to be most advisable in this article to trace the approach of Western historiography to the assessment of the landmarks in the history of the

Communist Party of Indonesia (CPI) and its relations with the world communist movement in the 1920s and 1930s, as well as the system of arguments used in covering and interpreting any events and trends. Adherence—within the bounds of possibility—to a chronological principle of narration will enable us to draw a full picture of the assistance which the Communist International lent to the CPI after it was founded in May 1920. The method we suggest may serve to bring to light rather serious contradictions between Western historians over certain specific problems. A look into these contradictions, taken together, will help disclose the fundamental inconsistency of the starting points of these authors in their approach to the assessment of the Comintern's activities and the development of the communist movement of Indonesia.

It is most characteristic and preponderant for nearly all bourgeois writers on the history of the Communist Party of Indonesia in the 1920s and 1930s to try, first, to oppose Marxism-Leninism as an international doctrine to the particular situation in the East, and notably in Indonesia, and to prove that Marxist concepts are inapplicable to an analysis of that situation and to working out the strategy and tactics of a political party in a colonial or dependent country, and, second, with that as the vantage point, to oppose an international executive agency to the national Communist Party of Indonesia. The concomitant argument is that this international agency misunderstood the situation in Indonesia, knew little about it, and showed no interest in it, and that the decisions it took stemmed either from a certain "dogma" or from the interests unrelated to the needs of the CPI. The natural and constructive discussion at the congresses of the Comintern and the plenums of its Executive Committee, usually attended by CPI representatives, has been presented as a manifestation of irreconcilable contradictions, a clash of antagonistic views on the Communist Party's strategy and tactics in the context of a colonial Indonesia, which were held by the local "practical workers" and the "European" leaders of the communist movement claimed to have been divorced from the realities of the East.

It is an American scholar, Jeanne S. Mintz, a student of the problems of Southeast Asia, who has produced the

most outspoken formulation of this idea. In her book *Mohammed, Marx and Marhaen. The Roots of Indonesian Socialism*, she writes: "Its history [the history of the Communist Party of Indonesia—*Auth.*] is filled with problems arising primarily from the dichotomy between Marxist ideology as represented by the Comintern on one side and the realities of Indonesian life on the other....

"From the outset, the Communists faced difficult problems in trying to adhere to Comintern line regardless of its relevance to the domestic situation."<sup>1</sup>

Such a subjectivist approach cannot, naturally, be fruitful. As I am going to show, the line which the Comintern urged on the Communist Party of Indonesia was, as a rule, the only possible one in the prevailing circumstances. This has been admitted by Western authors as well, including Jeanne Mintz herself, but it has been usually done in passing, while dealing with particular issues, against the background of what are generally negative conclusions.

Bourgeois historiography has been rather extensively debating the importance to the Communist Party of Indonesia of the stand on Pan-Islamism taken up by the Comintern at its Second Congress and reaffirmed at the subsequent congresses. The Theses of the Second Congress on the National and Colonial Questions stated: "It is necessary to struggle against the Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asiatic movements and similar tendencies, which are trying to combine the liberation struggle against European and American imperialism with the strengthening of the power of Turkish and Japanese imperialism and of the nobility, the large landlords, the priests, etc."<sup>2</sup> In their treatment of this issue, Western scholars tend to present the particular stand taken up by the Comintern on Pan-Islamism as the Communists' general attitude to the national movements having a religious colouring. In so doing, they are making the most of the fact that in 1920 and later on this stand of the Third International was misunderstood by certain leaders of the Communist Party of Indonesia.

<sup>1</sup> Jeanne S. Mintz, *Mohammed, Marx and Marhaen. The Roots of Indonesian Socialism*, Praeger Publishers, New York, 1965, pp. 25, 26.

<sup>2</sup> *The Communist International 1919-1943. Documents*, Vol. 1, Oxford University Press, London, 1965, p. 143.

Mintz, for instance, quoted from the statement by the CPI representative at the Fourth Congress of the Comintern, Tan Malaka (who subsequently strayed from the CPI), in which he sought to prove that "Pan-Islamism now means the fraternity of all Mohammedian peoples" "and just as we [Comintern—*Auth.*] are willing to support the national war, we shall also support the liberation struggle of the very active and energetic 250 million Mohammedians".<sup>1</sup>

American scholar Justus M. van der Kroef, who has been the most outspoken in opposing the "national" interest of the CPI to the tasks which stem from its international links, maintains that by its resolutions directed against Pan-Islamism, the Comintern left the CPI "in an extremely difficult position, because in Indonesia Pan-Islamic sentiments had been propagated for some time and were generally appreciated as part of the Islamic modernist revival by those reform-minded Indonesian Muslims who looked towards the SI for leadership".<sup>2</sup>

However, it follows from the very wording of the Second Congress thesis on Pan-Islamism that the Comintern was by no means opposed to Muslim movements or the Mohammedans, but to the policy of exploiting the dogmas of Islam and religious bigotry in order to replace foreign "infidel" oppression by "co-religionist" and to conserve social backwardness and social oppression under the mantle of one religion. That is why Lenin, who back in 1913 welcomed the news that "a nationalist movement has arisen under the banner of Islam"<sup>3</sup> in Java, in 1920, without changing his standpoint, put before the Comintern his draft theses on the national and colonial questions in which he set his face against Pan-Islamism. It was already during the drafting and discussion of the theses on the national and colonial questions that Lenin pointed out that there had to be some caution in criticising Pan-Islamism and that this problem ought to be separated from the religious

<sup>1</sup> Jeanne S. Mintz, *Op. cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Justus M. van der Kroef, *The Communist Party of Indonesia*, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, 1965, p. 10. Sarekat Islam (SI)—a Muslim Union or the Union of Islam, a national religious organisation advocating the independence of Indonesia.

<sup>3</sup> V. I. Lenin, "The Awakening of Asia", *Collected Works*, Vol. 19, p. 85.

issue and the question of uniting a number of Eastern nations for the struggle against imperialism.<sup>1</sup>

This approach found its practical embodiment in the subsequent activities of the Comintern and its agencies. The Fourth Congress stated that in the national liberation movement "the religio-political watchwords of Pan-Islamism are substituted by concrete political demands".<sup>2</sup> In Indonesia, in particular, the criticism of Pan-Islamism did not by itself create any appreciable difficulties for the communist movement, contrary to the assertions of certain Western historians. The Comintern and its Executive Committee imperatively urged the leadership of the Communist Party of Indonesia to cooperate with the national revolutionary mass organisations, including the Sarekat Islam. In early 1923 the ECCI sent a letter to the leader of that union, Omar Said Tjokroaminoto, setting out the Communists' policy with regard to the national liberation movements everywhere, including the Muslim countries. "We know that our cause does not fully coincide with the cause of Sarekat Islam," the ECCI frankly pointed out in its letter. But this circumstance should not stand in the way of a joint anti-imperialist struggle, the Comintern leaders underlined, for "the unity of the capitalists of the world should be countered by the unity of the nationalists and revolutionary Muslims of the whole world". The ECCI spoke up for unity of action between Sarekat Islam and the Third International.<sup>3</sup>

In that period the apprehension of some Indonesian Communists that the Comintern's stand on Pan-Islamism could push Muslim masses away from the Communist Party turned out to be groundless: witness, in particular, the pronouncements of a prominent right-wing Muslim leader of modern Indonesia, Mohammad Natsir, who has but recently conceded that quite a few Muslim preachers and clergymen had taken part in the Communist-led uprising of 1926.<sup>4</sup> The flexibility and validity of the line of

<sup>1</sup> See: Rostislav Ulyanovsky, *National Liberation. Essays on Theory and Practice*, pp. 75-77.

<sup>2</sup> *Resolutions and Theses of the Fourth Congress of the Communist International...*, p. 55.

<sup>3</sup> See: *The Comintern and the East*, Moscow, 1979, p. 159.

<sup>4</sup> *Antara*, Jakarta, October 1, 1976.

conduct by the Communist International in that extremely important and complicated matter have been acknowledged by American researcher Ruth T. McVey who combined in her works a clear bias against the ideology and practice of scientific socialism with a relatively realistic view on the role and place of the communist movement in Indonesian society. She writes that the reaffirmation by the Fourth Comintern Congress of its objection to the policy of Pan-Islamism "did not mean that the International disapproved of the PKI alliance with the Sarekat Islam. Quite the contrary, the Indonesian bloc within was pointed out at the congress as an example of the strategy that should be employed throughout the East."<sup>1</sup>

Properly speaking, the efforts to distort the position of the Third International and Lenin on the problem of Pan-Islamism represent some of the general attacks on Comintern policies on the question of a united front of national revolutionary forces in Eastern countries, Indonesia in particular. It is once more Justus M. van der Kroef who has been more outspoken in this sense than anybody else dealing with Indonesia: "Behind the Pan-Islam issue really loomed the basic question of Communist collaboration with the budding bourgeois-entrepreneurial class." The Fourth Comintern Congress, according to Kroef, "not only reiterated its opposition to Pan-Islamism but also declined to indicate where and how collaboration with the non-proletarian elements of the native society was to be effected".<sup>2</sup>

Another American specialist, J. H. Brimmell, has gone even further in his conclusions and generalisations: "The Communist panacea [the struggle against imperialism—*Auth.*] came into conflict with important traditions. Its dogmatic narrowness, its uncompromising hostility to values dear to the Asian mind, made it unacceptable as it presented itself in this early stage....

"In Indonesia ... the Communists were unable to grasp the significance of the Hindu-Islamic tradition, in which framework the anti-imperialist revolution was firmly fixed. Although the Comintern had indeed insisted that the Indo-

<sup>1</sup> Ruth T. McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1965, p. 162.

<sup>2</sup> Justus M. van der Kroef, *Op. cit.*, p. 11.

nesian Communist Party should cooperate with the nationalist forces, *its own basic teachings* [emphasis added—*Auth.*] made such a manoeuvre impossible.”<sup>1</sup> It is not difficult to see that the question here is no longer one of the politics of one Communist party, but of the fundamental incompatibility of the idea of a united anti-imperialist front with the ideology of Marxism-Leninism which the Comintern took as its guide.

The problem of a united anti-imperialist front, i. e., the problem of cooperation of the proletariat and its party with non-proletarian strata and organisations, was and in a number of cases still remains the most important and the most difficult of all in the strategy and tactics of the Communist and Workers’ parties in the developing countries. It is not by accident, therefore, that bourgeois scholars should be giving so close and ill-disposed attention to it.

The advocacy of a united anti-imperialist front and of action to end sectarianism and seclusion is known to have been typical of the Comintern’s entire work with the Communist Party of Indonesia. The resolution which, with Lenin’s participation, was adopted by the Second Comintern Congress said, in particular, that it was possible for the Communist International to conclude temporary agreements and even enter into alliances with the bourgeois democracy but “it must unconditionally maintain the independence of the proletarian movement, even if it is only in an embryonic stage”.<sup>2</sup>

The Comintern-proposed tactic was in a number of cases reluctantly accepted by the communist movement of Indonesia (as, indeed, by that of some other Eastern countries). The CPI leadership saw no point in working with the Sarekat Islam mass organisation. Early in 1923, the ECCI sent a letter to the Communist Party of Indonesia, saying: “You are well aware what great importance we attach to the Sarekat Islam movement. There is no need to dwell upon it, for our party wanted to cooperate with Sarekat Islam from the very beginning. The Third International is very much interested in this movement....

<sup>1</sup> J. H. Brimmell, *Communism in South East Asia*, Oxford University Press, London, 1959, p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> *The Communist International 1919-1943. Documents*, Vol. 1, p. 144.

The difficulties which two or three leaders of Sarekat Islam will create will be insignificant compared with what we stand to gain by winning over the masses of Sarekat Islam.”<sup>1</sup>

That recommendation remained unfulfilled. The final rupture between the Communist Party and Sarekat Islam came about in February 1923. A considerable number of sections followed the Communist Party in withdrawing from the latter to form subsequently the Red Sarekat Islam which was shortly renamed as Sarekat Rakjat (the Union of the People) made up predominantly of peasants. Sarekat Rakjat had a membership of 31,000. However, at a conference in Kutageda (near Jogjakarta) at the end of 1924, the party leadership called for Sarekat Rakjat to be dissolved and for all work to be concentrated in the midst of the working class on the grounds that the peasantry was not a revolutionary force. That sprang from a policy of preparing for an armed uprising to seize power and overthrow Dutch rule which the party leadership had already put on the agenda. Within days of the conference the *API* newspaper of the Communist Party of Indonesia wrote: “It is the desire to come to power ... that must be brought home as close as possible to the mass of workers and peasants.... Every workman must have an undying burning desire for power.”<sup>2</sup>

The idea of liquidating Sarekat Rakjat enlisted no support at the conference which rose with a compromise decision to wind up the party's work in Sarekat Rakjat which continued in existence for some time so that its most revolutionary members could join the Communist Party.

That position of the Indonesian Communists could not but alert the Comintern Executive Committee. It was typical of all the Comintern documents dealing with the CPI to combine a highly exacting attitude and an approach of principle with a friendly understanding of the entire complexity of the situation the budding Communist Party of Indonesia operated in. The Comintern leaders realised that many of the predominantly leftist difficulties and

<sup>1</sup> *The Comintern and the East*, Moscow, 1979, p. 159.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from: Y. P. Zakaznikova, *The Working Class and the National Liberation Movement in Indonesia*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1971, pp. 148-49 (in Russian).

deviations in CPI activities had been engendered by the specific social climate of colonial Indonesia which obstructed the propagation of genuinely proletarian views and kept the Communists surrounded by all-penetrating petty-bourgeois elements. The enormous amount of inflammable material, built up in the country during the centuries of Dutch colonial rule, and the strong sense of indignation against the colonialists could not fail to produce a very strong effect even on the most self-possessed revolutionaries. Finally, the difficulties of communication between the Communist Party of Indonesia and the Comintern did not allow the Indonesian comrades to avail themselves of the experience of the international communist movement in full measure and in good time in order to establish their own political line. In spite of all the intricacies the communist movement in Indonesia had to go through, the Comintern saw it as the main revolutionising force of Indonesian society and did its best to help the Indonesian Communists chart the right and unerring political course.

On April 6, 1925 the Colonial Commission of the Enlarged ECCI Plenum adopted a resolution "On the Work of the Communist Party in Java". The commission called for Sarekat Rakjat to be developed into a mass national revolutionary party operating under the Communist Party's leadership but not amalgamating with it. The commission pointed out that the two basic objectives before the CPI were to strengthen the party's mass proletarian base and to work out a proper attitude towards the national revolutionary movement. After indicating that the situation was not propitious for the development of a straightforward armed struggle to establish worker-peasant government, the Comintern insisted on close cooperation with the national liberation movement.

The resolution of April 6, 1925 rejects the views of those bourgeois scholars who are still interpreting the problem of the united anti-imperialist front primarily as one of joint actions with the national bourgeoisie (this is precisely the approach followed by Justus M. van der Kroef, to judge from his above-quoted remarks). With respect to Java, which had a rather weak national bourgeoisie, the ECCI not only imperatively called for supporting the national liberation movement—at its bourgeois-demo-

cratic stage—but invited the Indonesian Communists to come forward on their own with a platform of general democratic demands, capable of “organising and leading the broad mass of the people of town and countryside into action against imperialism”. In other words, the Comintern by no means limited its concept of anti-imperialist unity of action to cooperation with the national bourgeoisie, but regarded it principally as a means of drawing into the anti-imperialist struggle of the largest sections of the working masses, above all the peasantry and the urban petty bourgeoisie, unprepared as yet to accept the class programme of the party, but capable of following it or going together with it in an effort to achieve national and general democratic aims.

In May 1925 the ECCI sent a letter to the leadership of the Communist Party of Indonesia to comment on the decisions of its conference of December 1924. The Executive Committee underlined the need to seek mass support for the party’s policy and pointed out that “there is not a single country in the world where the proletariat could expect success in its struggle without active support from the majority of the peasantry.” In its correspondence of 1925 the Comintern strongly recommended to the CPI leadership to keep the Sarekat Rakjat in being, stop it from amalgamating with the party and turn it into an influential revolutionary organisation led by the party and expected to ensure mass support for the CPI’s struggle. “If you refuse to lead the struggle of the peasants in Indonesia against Dutch imperialists, you will hold up the revolution for many years,”<sup>1</sup> the ECCI wrote to the CPI Central Committee.

Ignoring the undeniable facts characterising the Comintern’s Indonesian policy in the 1920s, some Western scholars have been trying to misrepresent the ECCI’s position with regard to the armed uprising in Java and other islands in 1926-1927. The above-mentioned Jeanne S. Mintz and the noted American authority on Southeast Asia, Arnold C. Brackman (his views are usually notorious for their extreme anti-communism), contend that the leaders of the Communist Party of Indonesia obtained the Comin-

<sup>1</sup> *The Comintern and the East*, Moscow, 1979, p. 174.

tem's consent to preparing and staging an armed uprising against Dutch imperialists.<sup>1</sup> It is a matter of record, however, that the CPI Central Committee's decision which said that "the party feels objectively strong enough to reply to reaction by stout resistance and uprising", was adopted late in 1925 but brought to the Comintern's notice as late as the summer of 1926 by a delegation of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Indonesia which had come expressly for that purpose. The ECCI members who talked with the Indonesian representatives took a negative view of the uprising questioning the existence of a revolutionary situation in Java. There was some anxiety, besides, over the absence of a clear-cut political programme for the uprising. In the resolution on the Indonesian question, the ECCI called on the Communist Party of Indonesia to follow a tactic of a united revolutionary bloc with left nationalist elements, "rely, apart from the workers, also on the broad sections of the rural and peasant population and farm labourers and secure the participation of the handicraftsmen, the intelligentsia and democratic sections of the native bourgeoisie". Without proposing a direct course towards an armed uprising, the Comintern recommended the CPI to make the demand for national independence the central point in its action programme. That was an obvious reaction to the danger of leftist deviation which the ECCI could not fail to discern in the plans of the CPI Central Committee. The CPI delegation, having studied the draft resolution, vehemently objected to it.<sup>2</sup>

The armed uprising which began in November 1926 was ruthlessly suppressed by the colonialists. The Communist International and its sections strongly denounced the reprisals against the Communists and other patriotic forces of Indonesia. A number of bourgeois writers have been alluding to a contradiction between the solidarity shown by the Third International and the ECCI's negative stand on the uprising or even interpreting it as proof of

<sup>1</sup> See: Frank N. Trager, *Marxism in Southeast Asia*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1959, pp. 185-87; Arnold C. Brackman, *Indonesian Communism*, Praeger Publishers, New York, 1963, pp. 16, 17.

<sup>2</sup> See: *The Comintern and the East*, Moscow, 1979, pp. 178, 179.

the Comintern's secret consent to the armed uprising. This, naturally, implies omitting to mention that the Comintern's policy was governed by the principles of proletarian internationalism, and the mistakes of the CPI leadership did not exempt other Communist parties from their moral obligation to come to the aid of any contingent of the international communist movement that may find itself in trouble.

A special view of the 1926 events has been taken by Professor Charles B. McLane of Dartmouth University, USA. On the one hand, he considers it beyond question that the decisions adopted by the CPI Central Committee in December 1925 did not coincide with the Comintern's line, and even suggests that "had there been guidance from Moscow—on the peasant question, on insurrection or on both—the subsequent course of Indonesian Communism might have been very different". At the same time he claims—totally in conflict with his own standpoint—that the Comintern misunderstood the situation in Java where the Dutch colonial authorities intensified reprisals against the Communists in 1925 and banned all party and mass organisations of the CPI by November. "Under the circumstances," McLane writes, "the PKI leaders still in Indonesia could follow Soviet advice only at their peril. It is not the time to speak of united fronts and alliances with the bourgeoisie when one's very existence is being threatened."<sup>1</sup>

Let us note once again that the united front tactics in the national liberation stage of the revolution by no means boiled down to cooperation with the national bourgeoisie but implied, first and foremost, the unity of action in carrying through the tasks of this stage between the largest sections of the population—the working class, the peasantry, the native intellectuals and professional people, handicraftsmen, employers and the army—of whom a fairly sizable, not to say overwhelming, proportion cannot go beyond bourgeois-democratic demands either because of their own class interest or because of the level of their political maturity. McLane's viewpoint, if followed home,

<sup>1</sup> Charles B. McLane, *Soviet Strategies in Southeast Asia*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1966, pp. 87, 91.

must inevitably lead to the fatal conclusion that a revolutionary party can and must retaliate to any repression or provocation by an uprising—even in what is certain to be an unfavourable situation—and go into action single-handed, without any allies. Even if we accepted to consider the 1926 uprising solely as a reply to the provocation by the Dutch colonial authorities, deliberately instigating an ill-timed and unprepared insurrection, that would change nothing in the fundamental appraisal of the tactics of the party leadership at the time: to fall for a provocation is also a mistake, and a very serious one at that.

The Chairman of the CPI Central Committee, D. N. Aidit, wrote subsequently (1960) that the party during that period “had not united all those who could be united for the complete isolation of the forces of reaction.... In other words, the Communists ... still had no experience in organising a national front and building a party.”<sup>1</sup> This conclusion reaffirms the rightness of the stand which the Comintern took up on the Indonesian question in the mid-1920s. Moreover, the facts and documents, just referred to, indicate that the Third International offered the Indonesian Communists not only its recommendations for working out the party’s general line of action during that period, but also detailed advice on how to carry it through. This disproves the argument of the above-mentioned Brimmell who, while admitting that ECCI recommendations had been vindicated by subsequent events, still maintains that they contained no practical advice. Incidentally, by that assertion he aims to prompt the reader to accept his verdict that “the Comintern did not understand the Indonesian situation and was not particularly interested in it”<sup>2</sup>—the conclusion that jarred with his own admission that the course of events had borne out the correctness of the Comintern-proposed line.

It is speculation regarding the Sixth Congress of the Third International that stands out in the bourgeois historiography of Comintern policy in the East, notably in Indonesia. The specific feature of that congress, which met in

<sup>1</sup> D. N. Aidit, *Selected Works*, Politizdat, Moscow, 1962, p. 718 (in Russian).

<sup>2</sup> J. H. Brimmell, *Op. cit.*, p. 83.

1928, was that it had to analyse the reasons behind the ebb tide of the revolutionary movement in the East brought about, apart from other reasons, by the abortive insurrection in Indonesia in 1926-1927 and Chiang Kai-shek's counterrevolutionary coup in China and connected with a relative stabilisation of capitalism. Just as in other cases, the decline of the revolutionary process induced some parties to develop liquidationism, shift the emphasis to legal work and surrender some of the party's independence.

Such moods were to be observed in the Communist Party of Indonesia as well. In December 1926 a CPI representative signed an agreement with the Association of Indonesian Students in the Netherlands with a view to creating a single national revolutionary party. What has attracted Western experts on Indonesia more than anything else in this sense is the fact that this agreement, in defiance of the guidelines of the Second and subsequent congresses of the Comintern regarding united front tactics, left the leading role to a typically bourgeois-nationalist association, while the Communist Party, its allies and mass organisations pledged themselves to refrain from criticism of, and all opposition to, the leadership of the association. Reviewing that episode, a prominent American expert on the problems of Southeast Asia, George Kahin, found that kind of blocs to be the only possible and the only promising in the Eastern countries, and expressed his regret that the CPI leadership, on instructions from the Comintern Executive Committee, had repudiated the above-mentioned agreement on the grounds that to have carried on with it would have meant "the liquidation of the independence and leading role of the Communist Party".<sup>1</sup> However, the recollections of Ali Sastroamidjojo, a prominent figure in the nationalist movement of Indonesia, serve to indicate that the agreement had transcended the limits of a compromise acceptable to the Communist Party. He writes that the agreement offered the association a good opportunity "to tie the Communists to itself, getting them to commit themselves to accepting leadership of the nationalists and

<sup>1</sup> George McTurnan Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, London, 1969, p. 89.

refrain from criticising them".<sup>1</sup>

It is a matter of record that, while considering liquidationism as the main danger to the Communist parties at the time, the Sixth Congress of the Comintern could not avoid another extreme, that is a certain touch of sectarianism in the evaluation, notably, of the role of the national bourgeoisie in the colonial and dependent countries.<sup>2</sup> It is this particular circumstance that bourgeois historiography picked on as the major pretext for attacking the Comintern's general policy in this question. It has claimed that the Sixth Congress goaded the sections of the Third International into cutting off all cooperation with non-communist forces and movements. It was once more Brimmell who was most outspoken in formulating this idea, when he contended that the failure of revolutions in Asia "threw the Russian Revolution back upon itself" with nothing "now left but to build up a socialist state in Russia alone", and this supposedly induced the Sixth Comintern Congress to abandon united front tactics and opt for creating disciplined, purely communist organisations "entirely subordinate" to the International and the CPSU(B).<sup>3</sup> McLane asserted that the Sixth Congress produced no programme at all for the communist movement in Southeast Asia to follow.<sup>4</sup> Brackman claimed point-blank that the decisions of the Sixth Congress, being hostile to bourgeois nationalism, "put an end to ... Leninism" in the national and colonial question and that the period between the Sixth and Seventh congresses of the Third International were "lost years" for the CPI and the other Communist parties of Africa and Asia.<sup>5</sup>

But the documents of the Sixth Comintern Congress pertaining to the national and colonial question prove that there was no valid reason for overplaying the touch of sectarianism in the congress decisions. While calling on

<sup>1</sup> Ali Sastroamidjojo, *The Milestones of My Path*, Jakarta, 1974, p. 62.

<sup>2</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies. Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semi-Colonies, Adopted by the Sixth World Congress of the Communist International, 1928*, Modern Books, Ltd., London, 1929.

<sup>3</sup> J. H. Brimmell, *Op. cit.*, p. 65.

<sup>4</sup> Charles B. McLane, *Op. cit.*, p. 139.

<sup>5</sup> Arnold C. Brackman, *Op. cit.*, pp. 24, 28.

the Communist parties to dissociate themselves politically and organisationally from all petty-bourgeois parties and groups, the Comintern did point out: "In so far as the needs of the revolutionary struggle demand it, a temporary cooperation is permissible, and in certain circumstances even a temporary union between the Communist Party and the national revolutionary movement, provided that the latter is a genuine revolutionary movement, that it genuinely struggles against the ruling power and that its representatives do not put obstacles in the way of the Communist educating and organising in a revolutionary sense the peasants and wide masses of the exploited."<sup>1</sup> This proposition agreed not only factually, but almost textually with the guidelines of the Second Congress drawn up by Lenin. The Resolution of the Sixth Congress entitled "The Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies" had a section dealing with Indonesia proper. It pointed out that after the suppression of the 1926 uprising and the subsequent disorganisation of the party ranks, the CPI had to rebuild the damage, restore its organisations, intensify its work within the working class and the peasantry (with "special attention to the partial *practical* demands of the peasantry", the resolution urged). At the same time, the Comintern recommended the CPI to work within all the mass nationalist organisations, "in which the Communist Party must establish factions and rally round it national-revolutionary elements."<sup>2</sup>

Contrary to the arguments of bourgeois historians, the guidelines of the Sixth Congress opened up a certain prospect for the CPI's activities and were applied to some extent by the party leadership. In 1932 the CPI, a clandestine party which had not yet recovered from the defeat it had sustained, adopted a new, 18-point programme generally democratic in character.<sup>3</sup> This programme, however, lacked a precise definition of that particular stage of the Indonesian revolution and retained some traces of earlier, leftist views, as could be seen, notably, from its

<sup>1</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies...*, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>3</sup> See: D. N. Aidit, *Short History of the Communist Party of Indonesia*, Inostrannaya Literatura Publishers, Moscow, 1956, p. 23 (in Russian).

watchword "Full Independence for Indonesia, Establishment of a Worker-Peasant Government", a combination of two elements pertaining to entirely different stages of the revolutionary process.

In his work "Lessons from the History of the Communist Party of Indonesia" (1960), D. N. Aidit pointed out a certain stepping up of the CPI's activity in the early 1930s but indicated serious weaknesses in the communist movement in that country arising from the fact that the CPI had not yet drawn the proper conclusions from the experience of the party's struggle in the early phase of its existence.<sup>1</sup> So, the difficulties confronting the Communist Party of Indonesia in the 1930s were due much more to the particular national circumstances and to the load of wrong views and concepts which had condemned the party to the defeat of 1926 than to isolated wrong wordings in the resolutions adopted by the Comintern in 1928.

Some bourgeois students can be clearly seen intending to consider the anti-imperialist unity of the communist and nationalist movements from an ideological, rather than political, standpoint. The principal idea behind this line of reasoning is generally to bring the reader round to accepting the necessity of a certain convergence of the ideologies of scientific socialism and nationalism, favouring the latter, naturally. This view has been quite clearly formulated by Brackman: "Marxism proved attractive in Indonesia not because of its economic and social doctrine but because of its nationalist content." And further on: "Without the natural cover of nationalism, Communism is at a serious disadvantage in the colonial world."<sup>2</sup> That is to say that the determined and consistent stand of Marxists-Leninists on the right of nations to self-determination is deliberately divorced from the social and economic substance of scientific socialism, opposed to it and eventually presented as something inappropriate to Marxism, while the gains of the Communist parties in the East, particularly in Indonesia, are claimed to have been won precisely because those parties have supposedly departed from what is an authentic communist programme.

<sup>1</sup> D. N. Aidit, *Selected Works*, p. 719.

<sup>2</sup> Arnold C. Brackman, *Op. cit.*, pp. 9, 28.

It will be right and proper to recall that the demand for the right of self-determination to be granted to the peoples of all colonial and dependent countries has been integral all along to the programmes of all genuinely Communist parties, whether of the metropolitan countries or of the colonies, as well as of the Communist International. Therefore, the argument that this stand of the Communists is meant to "cover up" their true aims holds no water. As early as 1919 Lenin, addressing the Communists of the countries of the East, said: "You will have to base yourselves on the bourgeois nationalism which is awakening, and must awaken, among those peoples, and which has its historical justification."<sup>1</sup> It is a different matter that, while acting as consistent, and in many countries the most consistent, champions of national liberation, the Communists never conceal that they do not propose to confine themselves to national liberation as the only goal of revolution and that they see their aim in remaking the entire fabric of society along basically new lines. In this they fundamentally differ from bourgeois nationalists, and the Comintern in all its resolutions on the national and colonial question called on its sections, in one way or another, to keep their class image and their ideological, political and organisational independence when entering into agreement with non-proletarian movements.

This indispensable condition is still as valid as ever. Speaking at the Conference of the Communist and Workers' Parties of Europe in Berlin, on June 29, 1976, Leonid Brezhnev, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, said: "It is especially important that while joining with broad democratic trends, including Social Democrats and Christians, in the struggle against the reactionary forces of imperialism, the Communists should remain revolutionaries and convinced supporters of the replacement of the capitalist by the socialist system. All their activities are geared to solving this historic task."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Address to the Second All-Russia Congress of Communist Organisations of the Peoples of the East, November 22, 1919", *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, p. 162.

<sup>2</sup> L. I. Brezhnev, *For Peace, Security, Cooperation and Social Progress in Europe, Berlin, June 29-30, 1976*, Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, Moscow, 1976, p. 21.

The experience of the communist movement in various countries, including Indonesia, shows that only by safeguarding its class independence can a Communist party make its contribution both towards defending the interests of the working sections of the population and towards resolving problems of nation-wide importance. And, conversely, concessions to bourgeois ideology, in particular to bourgeois nationalism, on matters of principle, namely, by overplaying local peculiarities, opposing different contingents of the liberation and communist movements to each other, neglecting the revolutionary experience of other Communist parties, forgetting the principles of proletarian internationalism, whatever tactical interests may be said to justify these concessions, have the ultimate effect of disastrously weakening a party's potential as the vanguard of the proletariat and as the organisation expected to express the supreme interests of a whole nation. As stated in the Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 25th Congress, "a concession to opportunism may sometimes yield a temporary advantage, but will ultimately do damage to the Party".<sup>1</sup>

The genuine struggle for the party's class independence and for the purity of its ideology has nothing in common with sectarianism and it has never served as an obstacle anywhere to the rise of the Communist party's influence among the working masses and in the society as a whole.

The best evidence of the correct line the Communist International followed in respect of the liberation movement in Indonesia and the compatibility of this line with the requirements of the movement can be seen in the prestige won by scientific socialism and the Comintern as the centre of this ideology in the former Dutch India, including its nationalist quarters. Jeanne S. Mintz writes on this subject: "The brand of socialism which gained influence in politically awakening Indonesia was of the radical and revolutionary type, which was generally considered to be represented by the Third International....

"Hence, from its very beginning the Partai Nasional Indonesia was infused with revolutionary-minded socialist

<sup>1</sup> *Documents and Resolutions. XXVth Congress of the CPSU*, Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, Moscow, 1976, p. 37.

tendencies, and in its propaganda, this party freely borrowed from the concepts and terminology of official communism: the Comintern ... it adopted almost entirely the theory on imperialism of the Communist International."<sup>1</sup>

Beyond doubt it will be a clear and baseless exaggeration to speak about the nearly complete acceptance of the Leninist theory of imperialism, let alone the ultimate conclusions to be drawn from that theory, by the National Party of Indonesia or, indeed, by the nationalist movement of that country in general. But the consistent and uncompromising struggle for national liberation and for the right of oppressed peoples to self-determination, waged by the Communist parties and the Third International as their global headquarters, had raised their prestige too high in the eyes of the oppressed nations and produced a certain ideological effect on the nationalist movement. The speeches of some leaders of that movement, those of Sukarno in particular, often contained certain arguments borrowed from the classics of Marxism-Leninism.

Besides, the policy and propaganda of the Comintern and the Indonesian Communists were, naturally, superimposed on that spontaneous anti-capitalism and egalitarianism which had always been largely peculiar to that country's nationalism, particularly in the anti-colonial stage of the liberation revolution. The contrast between the Comintern's position and the policy of the Second International had its effect as well. Indonesian nationalists were profoundly disappointed over the resolution of the 1928 Brussels Congress of the Second International on the colonial question which, in point of fact, denied the right of self-determination to the peoples of a large group of colonies, including Indonesia, on the grounds that their level of development was too low. A prominent leader of the Indonesian nationalist movement, Mohammad Hatta, wrote that very year: "With this resolution the Second International has alienated itself even more from the oppressed peoples. Its dream of having a large number of supporters among them is likely to remain, as up to the present, a Utopia."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jeanne S. Mintz, *Op. cit.*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>2</sup> *Portrait of a Patriot. Selected Writings by Mohammad Hatta*, Mouton Publishers, The Hague, Paris, 1972, p. 360.

One particular line in falsifying the history of the Comintern and its sections has been to claim that in all stages its work and the recommendations it offered to the Communist parties, including the CPI, were built, above all, on the national interests of Soviet Russia (the USSR from 1922 on), regardless of the local conditions and requirements of the class struggle of the Communists of Indonesia and other countries. In a broader sense, this implies a deliberate intention to set the CPSU off against other contingents of the international communist movement—not only in retrospect, but in dealing with present-day problems as well.

This line can be seen to have been followed, for example, by Ruth T. McVey, who writes: "This concern for revolution in the East was a product of Russian proximity to the major Asian countries and the Soviet Union's consequent desire to influence events in those lands." True, within three pages, McVey had to make a half-confession by saying that "although the requirements of Russian foreign policy would, of themselves, have forced a considerable Communist interest in the awakening of Asia, we may doubt whether this concern would have expressed itself as consistently and uncompromisingly as it did ... had it not been for this ideological incentive".<sup>1</sup> However, this enforced half-concession to the truth still has behind it the idea that the role of the national interests of the USSR was of primary and decisive importance.

The same set of views has been persistently preached by Brimmell whose line of reasoning was as follows: it became clear after the death of Lenin that there would be no proletarian revolution in Europe in the foreseeable future; Soviet Russia could not build socialism without the aid of a world revolution, and therefore she had to create tension in the colonies for the West to face so as to divert enemy forces from her own borders. Hence, according to Brimmell, the attention of the Third International to the national and colonial question.<sup>2</sup> McLane has come close to him by asserting that "Russia's policy in Southeast Asia was once again secondary to its policies in the West".<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ruth T. McVey, *Op. cit.*, pp. 1, 4.

<sup>2</sup> See: J. H. Brimmell, *Op. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> Charles B. McLane, *Op. cit.*, p. 347.

Let us point out, first of all, that the basic elements of the communist policy on the national and colonial question were formulated in Lenin's works long before the October Revolution, when Soviet Russia had not yet existed as a body politic with specific interests of its own. These elements were taken to guide the Communist International's course with respect to the national liberation movements, charted with Lenin's decisive involvement at the Second Congress of the Comintern and never revised subsequently in terms of principle, whatever the changes in the world situation in general and the international position of the USSR in particular. The Third Comintern Congress underlined in its "Theses on the International Situation and the Problems of the Communist International" that "the revolutionary national movement in India and in other colonies is today an essential component part of the world revolution to the same extent as the uprising of the proletariat in the capitalist countries of the old and the new world".<sup>1</sup> The resolution of the Fifth Congress pointed out that "the Comintern must ... give every support to the movement of all oppressed nationalities directed against imperialism, in the spirit of the resolutions of the Second World Congress, bearing in mind that this movement is one of the most important parts comprising the great movement for emancipation which alone can lead to the victory of the revolution, not only on a European, but on world scale."<sup>2</sup> Similar conclusions and evaluations are to be found in almost all the main documents of the Third International.

The basic conclusion which bourgeois historians cannot make or do not want to make is that the Comintern and the CPSU(B) did not regard their interests as something isolated but saw them closely intertwined and combined. When the Comintern acknowledged the special position of Soviet Russia on the world scene as well as her role in the worldwide historical process, that was no concession to the national interests of the Russian Federation or the USSR, but an inference from an objective analysis of the prevail-

<sup>1</sup> *Theses and Resolutions Adopted at the III World Congress of the Communist International, June 22nd-July 12th, 1921*, The Press Bureau of the Communist International, Moscow, 1921, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> *International Press Correspondence*, 29th August, 1924, Vol. 4, No. 62, p. 652.

ing situation without which the formulation of a precise and realistic policy would have been impossible. That is why Lenin, at the Second Comintern Congress, spoke not so much on his own behalf as on behalf of representatives from other parties when he said: "In the present world situation following the imperialist war, reciprocal relations between peoples and the world political system as a whole are determined by the struggle waged by a small group of imperialist nations against the Soviet movement and the Soviet states headed by Soviet Russia. Unless we bear that in mind, we shall not be able to pose a single national or colonial problem correctly, even if it concerns a most outlying part of the world."<sup>1</sup> So, Lenin saw this problem, first and foremost, as indicating the only possible and objectively correct way of analysing the entire international situation, rather than reflecting the interests of Soviet Russia alone.

Nor is there any factual evidence whatsoever to support Brimmell's major argument that the Comintern's Asian policy was designed, above all, to divert a military threat from the borders of the Soviet Union by switching Western attention to the unrest in the colonies. The Comintern, far from pushing its Asian sections into artificially creating the hotbeds of tension in the respective colonial countries—and that is exactly, according to Brimmell's logic, what it should have done—unequivocally cautioned them against revolutionary haste, adventurous approach and underestimation of the enemy forces. As applied to Indonesia, this was particularly manifest, as we have already seen, in the position of the Comintern and the ECCI with regard to the CPI's unjustified and unrealistic commitment to the national armed uprising in 1925 and 1926.

Along with that the Comintern, naturally, devoted the utmost attention to drawing upon the experience of the world's first socialist country and the experience of the Leninist Party. Speaking in 1969 at a scientific session held to mark the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Communist International, a member of the Political Bureau and Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, Mikhail Suslov,

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, "The Second Congress of the Communist International, July 19-August 7, 1920", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 241.

pointed out that the Comintern has “always proceeded from an interpretation of the revolutionary process as a truly universal one in which all the forces of social progress act together, and rightly regarded the first socialist country as the main base for this progress. The Comintern saw the construction of socialism in the USSR not only as the main task of the Soviet people, but also as a most important factor for the success of the revolutionary struggle of the international working class.”<sup>1</sup>

Works by bourgeois historians are wont to highlight the impact the decisions of the Seventh Comintern Congress of 1935 had on the communist movement of Indonesia. This congress is known to have drawn the attention of the Third International to the need to oppose the growing menace of fascism and the consequent danger of war. The Comintern’s appeal for broad-based unity of action to resist fascism applied to the parties which were functioning in colonial countries where the call for anti-imperialist struggle, while retaining its sum and substance intact, should have acquired an anti-fascist thrust. In his report to the congress on August 2, 1935 Georgi Dimitrov said: “The changed international and internal situation lends exceptional importance to the question of the anti-imperialist united front in all colonial and semi-colonial countries.”<sup>2</sup>

The interpretation of the decisions of the Seventh Congress by Western bourgeois researchers boils down to setting anti-fascism off against the struggle with the “original” colonialists, for national liberation. For example, this is the interpretation of the American scholar George Kahin.<sup>3</sup> Charles McLane maintains that the very issue of a united front was unclear to the Indonesians: “Which imperialists was the ‘anti-imperialist united front’ meant to check—Japanese or those in the metropolitan?” To bear out this argument, he refers to a CPI representative as having declared at the Seventh Congress that the party was pre-

<sup>1</sup> M. A. Suslov, *Marxism-Leninism--the International Teaching of the Working Class*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1975, pp. 129-30.

<sup>2</sup> *VII Congress of the Communist International. Abridged Stenographic Report of Proceedings*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1939, p. 172.

<sup>3</sup> George McTuman Kahin, *Op. cit.*, p. 51.

pared to act together with any organisation of the Indonesian people whose objective it was to fight against Dutch imperialism for the liberation of Indonesia. However, coming into conflict with himself, McLane admitted there and then that the representative of the Indonesian Communists had expressed his satisfaction with the approach of the Seventh Congress to the issue of the anti-imperialist united front.<sup>1</sup>

It is clear from the foregoing that the Comintern never set off the struggle with fascism in the East (specifically, with Japanese militarism) against the national liberation movement. The idea was to invite the attention of the Communist parties to the fresh danger and to work out a new tactic appropriate to the changed circumstances. The struggle for national liberation and for democracy was never stricken off the agenda, but took on new forms. Speaking at a meeting of the ECCI Secretariat's Commission on December 22, 1937 on the situation in the Netherlands and the tasks before the Communist Party, Georgi Dimitrov pointed, in particular, to the need to launch a large-scale movement for Indonesia to be democratised.

The course of events following the Seventh Congress, and more particularly of those during the Second World War, inside the national liberation movement of Indonesia bore out the correctness of the line the congress had proposed. A number of organisations had been set up in that country within the framework of a united anti-imperialist and anti-fascist front for common action by Communists and nationalists—the Indonesian People's Movement, the Indonesian Political Federation, etc. Although this front could not rely on support from large sections of the Indonesian people at the time, its activities became a prelude to the organisation of the Resistance Movement in Japanese-occupied Indonesia. Jeanne S. Mintz, who, as we have already seen, had no sympathy whatsoever for the aims of the Third International, admits, nevertheless, that one trend that intensified within the nationalist movement of Indonesia in the 1930s was to lay stress on the anti-fascist struggle which was unfolding to meet the fascist

<sup>1</sup> Charles B. McLane, *Op. cit.*, pp. 231-32.

threat in the metropolitan country. "As a result," Mintz writes, "there were wings of the nationalist movement whose programmes coincided with objectives of the Communists in building up an anti-fascist front." And she adds: "During and after the war, when Japanese political manipulation and brutality had thoroughly alienated the Indonesian people, the earlier anti-fascist stand of the Communists and the left-wing nationalists seemed thoroughly justified."<sup>1</sup> Let us add to this that the subsequent record of history has more than once demonstrated the identity of the interests of the Communist parties and the left-wing nationalist movement in the struggle for democracy, when there was a danger of a totalitarian regime being installed in the country: historical experience indicates that such a regime, usually starting its repressive policies by tracking down Communists, almost never ends by doing that but, on the contrary, inevitably cracks down, in one way or another, upon fairly large sections of nationalists and other democratic movements.

A prominent leader of the Indonesian communist movement, a member of the Comintern Executive Committee, Manovar Musso, whom the ECCI sent to Indonesia in the first half of 1935 to organise the work of rebuilding the CPI as a national force capable of acting as the vanguard of the anti-imperialist struggle, made full use in his activities of the latest guidelines drawn up by the Comintern before and after the Seventh Congress. When explaining the sum and substance of the united anti-imperialist front tactics, he drew upon the conclusions in Dimitrov's report to the Congress and described them as most valuable and useful in his dispatch to Moscow in April 1936.<sup>2</sup>

The consequences of the political line which the Indonesian Communists had followed in the wake of the Seventh Comintern Congress went far beyond the chronological limits of the Second World War. As a result of the consistent anti-fascist struggle against Japanese militarists, the

<sup>1</sup> Jeanne S. Mintz, *Op. cit.*, pp. 65, 69.

<sup>2</sup> A. B. Reznikov, "From the History of the Struggle for a United Anti-Imperialist Front in the East (Following the Seventh Congress of the Communist International)." In: *The Communist Parties of the Developing Countries in Action for United Front*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1976, pp. 29-31 (in Russian).

Communist Party had gained so great a prestige among the major classes and sections of the Indonesian society by the end of the war and by the time of independence as was utterly incommensurable with its rather small membership in those years. That enabled the CPI, in spite of all obstacles and outright acts of provocation by reactionary elements, to become a mass party in the early 1950s and a political force of national dimension producing a deep-going revolutionising influence on the country's entire development in that period.

## THE COMINTERN AND THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT IN CHINA IN THE LATE 1920s AND THE EARLY 1930s

A. M. GRIGORIEV

The non-Marxist historiography of the Chinese revolution gave a good deal of prominence in the 1950s and, more particularly, in the 1960s to works on the history of the Communist Party of China and the revolutionary movement in China in the late 1920s and the early 1930s. Their overwhelming majority focussed on the issues involved in the relationship between the CPC and the Comintern.

Let us recall that the period between the break-up of the united front of the CPC and the Kuomintang (July 1927) and the opening act of the outright aggression of Japanese imperialism against China (September 1931) was one of the key turning points in the history of the Chinese revolution and the CPC. In the revolutionary movement, which was rallying the national forces behind the slogans of agrarian revolution and the establishment of the Soviets, there was a swing from the predominantly "urban" stage of 1925-1927 to the "rural" stage, that is, to the creation of CPC armed forces and base areas in the rural localities. The years of 1927-1931 were the opening period of the Soviet movement, the period that saw the formation of the early big units of the Red Army of China and the Soviet areas—bases of revolution.

That was, likewise, a new stage in the evolution of the CPC in those years, with a change of leadership and a rising role of local party organisations which were formed within military contingents. The proliferation of these organisations led to the party's composition being changed

in the late 1920s as the CPC became a predominantly peasant party by its social make-up.

The basic alignments began to take shape within the CPC in army units and within the territory of revolutionary bases in the early 1930s. The relations between them went far towards shaping the course of the inner-party struggle in the 1930s and 1940s. It is these alignments that produced practically all the supreme commanders of the People's Liberation Army of China (PLA) and, subsequently, the party and government leaders of the PRC.

The events of the late 1920s and the early 1930s shed light on the sources of the ideological and political platform of the basic trends in the CPC: Marxist-Leninist, internationalist, and nationalist. A leftist-adventurist, Sinocentric platform (the Li Ii-san line) emerged within the CPC at the turn of the thirties, which largely anticipated the "special" Maoist course of China's foreign policy of the late 1950s. Many leaders of the PRC, including Mao Tse-tung, became active supporters and proponents of that course at the time. Meanwhile, a Marxist-Leninist and internationalist trend came to be formed and consolidated in the course of a hard-fought ideological and political battle against the Trotskyite and right-liquidationist groupings and against putschist and leftist guidelines, as well as due to theoretical and political assistance from the Comintern and the CPSU(B).

This period came to occupy a special place in the elaboration of the strategy and tactics of the revolution in China. The documents of the CPC and the Comintern in the late 1920s and the early 1930s comprised provisions regarding the form and content of that revolution as well as the relation between the struggle in the cities and the countryside and the specific route of the Chinese revolution, the questions involving the ways of building up the CPC armed forces, the objectives of work among the masses and the fundamental principles underlying the agrarian programme. As the subsequent course of events has shown, the work on solutions to these problems, by its magnitude, went far beyond the limits of the objective they had been originally posed and solved for. With certain corrections made by the CPC in its platform to fit it with the decisions of the Seventh Congress of the Comintern, many de-

cisions and guidelines dating from the late 1920s and the early 1930s made up the backbone of the strategy and tactics which led to the victory of the Chinese revolution at a subsequent stage. It is for that reason that the events of those years and the elaboration of the strategy and tactics of the Chinese revolution have been all along an object of ideological and political struggle both within the CPC and on the international scene. This has found expression in the different trends of the historiography of the Chinese revolution.

One particular feature of the accounts of the record of the Comintern-CPC relationship that have been produced by the exponents of non-Marxist historiography is their close association with the formulation of the concept of the history of the CPC and the Chinese revolution in Maoist historiography. While bourgeois historians of Comintern policy in China during 1920-1927 borrowed their facts and "arguments" from such sources as the writings of Trotskyites and the turncoats of the communist movement, the authors of the majority of most widespread Western non-Marxist works used in their interpretation of the events of those years a general scheme peculiar to official Maoist historiography.

In this context, a brief insight into the formation of the Maoist and basic bourgeois versions, into their origin and the factual base they have sprung from, as well as into their interaction and "parallel" development, will provide conclusive evidence whereby to judge their scientific value and objectivity and also their role and place in ideological and political warfare.

The interpretation of the events of that period has held a special place in Maoist historiography from the very outset. Its cornerstone argument has been that it was Mao Tse-tung who, in a confrontation with the then CPC Central Committee and in defiance of the Comintern, worked out the "right political line" of the Chinese revolution, with a course set towards building up base areas and CPC armed forces in the countryside, "surrounding the cities with the countryside" and a subsequent shift of the revolution into the cities, as well as a set of "right lines" with respect to the military, agrarian and other issues. It was, above all, the references to Mao Tse-tung's activities in

1927-1930 that were produced in a bid to “substantiate” this argument. This version became an important instrument in Mao Tse-tung’s hands in inner-party strife during the “chengfeng” period (movement for the rectification of style), served as the starting point in propagating the Mao Tse-tung cult in the 1940s and 1950s and was subsequently exploited, in the 1960s, as a means to impose Mao Tse-tung’s “ideas” and the “special course” of the Maoists on the world communist and national liberation movement.

This version originated from Mao Tse-tung’s autobiographic interview for Edgar Snow in 1936. That was used, in turn, for preparing Mao’s political biography.<sup>1</sup> In that interview Mao Tse-tung presented his case during the period of the Autumn Harvest uprisings of August-September 1927 as a “special” and “right” one which was not, however, approved of by the CPC Central Committee; the retreat to Ching kangshan was presented as a deliberate move towards creating bases in rural localities and as the implementation of the “new strategy” in defiance of the putsch-type directives from the central authorities. The decisions of the Sixth Congress of the CPC were interpreted to imply a post-dated approval of the course alleged to have been embarked on already at Ching kangshan. At the same time, his position during the reign of Li Li-sanism was described as the “enforced obedience” to the orders from the central authorities. In 1936 Mao Tse-tung was still hesitating to revise the Comintern assessments of the Third and Fourth plenary sessions of the CPC Central Committee, but it is significant enough that even at that time the appropriate Comintern documents concerning the Chinese revolution were not mentioned in the Snow interview. Moreover, Mao Tse-tung insisted that he had worked out and pursued his course all on his own in a confrontation with the party headquarters. Besides, he transparently alluded to the fact that this course had no support from the Comintern.<sup>2</sup>

The next period in falsifying the history of the events of 1927-1931 was the one involving the “Decisions on Some Questions of the CPC History”, adopted by the Sev-

<sup>1</sup> Edgar Snow, *Red Star over China*, London, 1937.

<sup>2</sup> It is indicative that Mao Tse-tung himself described Edgar Snow’s book as a “truthful” one about the Chinese revolution.

enth Plenary Session of the Sixth CPC Central Committee (April 1945).<sup>1</sup> That document presented the entire record of the CPC from the summer of 1927 to the conference at Zunyi (January 1935) as a history of three alternating "left" deviations, with Mao Tse-tung declared throughout all the stages to have been the exponent of "correct" ideas and the "main" and "steadfast fighter" against all deviations. His authorship of the "correct" line of the Chinese revolution was borne out by references to isolated extracts from his works of 1928-1930 (without the works themselves being named) and the appropriate interpretation of his practical activities. Not only did the "Decisions" fail to mention the Comintern's role in working out the strategy and tactics of the CPC, but, on the contrary, they expounded an ill-disguised nationalist idea that Mao Tse-tung had defied the ECCI guidelines by working out the "correct" line: the "Decisions" directed most of the criticism against the so-called "third left line" which was said to have been drawn up at the Fourth Plenary Session of the CPC Central Committee in keeping with the activities of the partisans of "overseas patterns". The Sixth Congress was essentially judged by the principle of "what it did not produce". As far as Mao was concerned, he was said to have given his replies "in his works and practical activities" following the Sixth Congress to the questions which "had either not been resolved at the congress or had been resolved improperly". The Third Plenary Session of the CPC Central Committee was generally appraised positively, while the Fourth Session very negatively.

The process of falsifying the CPC history has been manifold. First of all, the achievements of the entire party were ascribed to Mao Tse-tung while the role of the Comintern and the CPSU(B) in working out the strategy and tactics of the Chinese revolution was played down and distorted. That was combined with a special treatment of the Mao positions in those years, which implied hushing up his leftist and Trotskyite evaluations of the situation during the period of the Autumn Harvest uprisings, excesses of agrarian policy in 1928, 1929 and 1930, as well

<sup>1</sup> *Decisions on Some Questions of the CPC History*, Yenan, 1945 (in Chinese).

as the leftist plans for the capture of Jianxi province "within one year", which eventually developed into active support for the Li Li-san line in 1930.<sup>1</sup> The argument about Mao's "resolute struggle" "against all deviations" was designed to create the impression that Mao had been in "constant opposition" to the party headquarters, acting from "correct positions". Finally, in the "Decisions" Mao's views of the late 1920s and the early 1930s were "updated" to conform to his "ideas" of the early 1940s and were proclaimed to be "the basic ideas of new democracy".<sup>2</sup>

The "work" of falsifying was carried forward during the appropriate editing of his writings of 1928-1930 to be included in his *Selected Works* and in the notes made by the editing commission. For example, the notes to the "Decisions" had the arguments about Mao's formulation of the "correct line" related to particular works with all references to their edited version. To support Mao Tse-tung's claim to having produced the "correct" general "political" line, there were references to his works "Why Can China's Red Political Power Exist?", "The Struggle in Chingkangshan" and, more particularly, to his article "A Single Spark Can Start a Prairie Fire".<sup>3</sup> The formulation of the "military line" was traced in the article "On the Rectification of Incorrect Ideas in the Party" (a section of the resolution of the Ninth Party Conference of the Fourth Corps of the Red Army). The argument about the "correct line" in the agrarian-peasant question could not be confirmed by any specific document of those years and, therefore, Mao's position was "reconstructed" on the basis of criticisms of the CPC-sponsored policy in dealing with the kulaks and the landlords of the 1940s, i.e., the

<sup>1</sup> For evidence of the assistance of the Comintern and the CPSU(B) to China in working out the strategy and tactics of the revolutionary struggle in that period see: A. M. Grigoriev, "The Comintern and the Revolutionary Movement in China Under the Slogan of the Soviets (1927-1931)". In: *The Comintern and the East*, Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1979, pp. 345-88. On Mao Tse-tung's position during that period see: A. M. Grigoriev, *Op. cit.* and for more details: *Idem, The Revolutionary Movement in China in 1927-1931. Problems of Strategy and Tactics*, Moscow, Nauka Publishers, 1980 (in Russian).

<sup>2</sup> *Decisions on Some Questions of the CPC History*, p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> See: Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1955.

period of the united front.

The re-editing of the *Selected Works* never stipulated either in the text or in the notes, was done in keeping with the Maoist account of the events of that period. A textual analysis of Mao's earlier works available to us and their scrutiny as against the re-edited version will show that the process of "editing" involved a cardinal rewording of many formulations and the deletion of whole sections challenging the argument about Mao's "resolute struggle" against the "erroneous" positions of the Central Committee and Mao's "contribution" towards working out the "correct line". For example, a collation of Mao's earlier publications with the relevant CPC Central Committee documents of those years has shown that the resolutions of the Second Conference of the Party Organisations of Ching kangshan, which met in October 1928 (re-edited as an article entitled "Why Can China's Red Political Power Exist?"), repeated the points, including the wrong ones, of the CPC Central Committee's Plenary Session of November 1927; Mao's report of November 1928 to the CPC Central Committee (re-edited as an article entitled "The Struggle in Ching kangshan") restated the arguments of the Central Committee's letter written before the Sixth Congress on the basis of the resolution of the Ninth ECCI Plenum; while in the Central Committee's letter of April 1929 (in which Mao put forward his leftist plan for the capture of the Jianxi province within a year) the question of the correlation between the struggle in the cities and in the countryside was presented in full accord with the CPC Central Committee's directives of the spring of 1929 and, therefore, the relevant passage of Mao's letter was omitted in the re-edited version. Finally, the earlier publications of Mao's letter of January 5, 1930 to Lin Biao (which came to be known as "A Single Spark Can Start a Prairie Fire") show that the basic points of that document are very similar (if not identical) to the guidelines of Li Li-san's Directive No. 60 (of December 6, 1929), which already exhibited many features of the leftist-adventurist platform of 1930.<sup>1</sup> These facts are worth noting, first, because they shed more light on the charac-

<sup>1</sup> For details see: A. M. Grigoriev, *The Revolutionary Movement in China in 1927-1931...*, pp. 148-54, 178-79.

ter and techniques of Maoist falsification and, second, because most of Western scholars have, as a rule, taken advantage of those re-edited works of Mao to base their own versions on.

Generally speaking, it is the *Selected Works* and the notes to them, as well as a number of works on the history of the CPC and the Chinese revolution, which appeared in China in the first half of the 1950s, that shaped the official Maoist version of the history of the CPC.<sup>1</sup> It reiterated the basic stock of events and evaluations and extolled Mao Tse-tung's activities out of all proportion while passing over those of the entire party, its leaders and the Comintern.

The inordinate glorification of Mao's activities and the claim that he had personally devised the "correct line" led to a real problem—that of the CPC's relationship with the Comintern and the latter's role in helping the CPC to work out its strategy and tactics—being replaced by what was a far-fetched problem of second-rate importance for that period—the CPC Central Committee's relationship with Mao Tse-tung and the relation between his "correct line" and the line of the Comintern. Since whatever positive things there might have been in the CPC's record were associated, above all, with Mao's activities, those of the CPC Central Committee were generally assessed in the negative sense, particularly beginning from the Fourth Plenary Session of the CPC Central Committee which was declared to be the starting point of party domination by the "Wang Ming-Bo Gu line". It was from that standpoint that all of the Comintern's theoretical and political activities were viewed after 1930. One tactic in employing this oversimplified rough-hewn approach to cultivating Mao's personality cult was that of suppressing the documents and real facts of CPC history as well as the documents of the Comintern. It is noteworthy in this context that the only unclassified Chinese publication of documents and evidence on the history of the Chinese revolution

<sup>1</sup> Hu Qiaomu, *Thirty Years of the Communist Party of China*, Renmin Chubanshe, Peking, 1951; Chen Boda, *Mao Tse-tung on the Chinese Revolution*, Peking, 1951; Hu Hua, *Outlines of the Neo-Democratic Revolution in China*, Renmin jiaoyu Chubanshe, Peking, 1952 (all in Chinese).

in 1927-1931, which appeared in 1953, comprised as few as three documents.<sup>1</sup>

Following the Eighth CPC Congress things began to change. The range of sources somewhat widened with the publication of a number of collections of documents, the re-edition of the CPC Central Committee magazines of those years, *Puersaiweiko* and *Shihua*, as well as memoirs.<sup>2</sup> It should be pointed out that their circulation was extremely limited. A special publication of material of this kind—*Hungqi Piaopiao* (“Red Banners Arc Up”)—appeared in 1957. Sixteen issues were printed by 1961. The first volume of the publications under the title of *A Single Spark Can Start a Prairie Fire* came off the press in 1958, and so did memoirs in the provinces.

Although the official version of the CPC history was present in all recollections, their readers could see that many rather essential facts from the history of Red Army bases and units, mentioned in the memoirs, were a far cry from the semi-official records and did not square with them—above all, with the claim of Mao’s “absolute priority” in elaborating and resolving all the problems of the Chinese revolution.

New trends began to appear in publications dealing with party history after the Eighth CPC Congress. Although the histories of the Chinese revolution, published in the late 1950s and the early 1960s, generally reproduced the scheme laid down in the “Decisions on Some Questions of the CPC History”, a number of works were found to depart somewhat from that scheme. For example, Miao Chuhuang’s “Short History of the CPC” (1957), in contrast with the “Decisions”, said nothing about Mao’s “struggle” against the “first left line” while its cessation was explained by the demands of a “majority of the party membership”. The section on the “second left line” pointed out that the units of the First Front of the Red Army (with Mao as political commissar) participated in the storming of Changsha in July and August 1930.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See: *Material on the History of the Neo-Democratic Revolution in China*, Peking, 1953 (in Chinese).

<sup>2</sup> *Material on the CPC History*, Vol. 3, Peking, 1959 (in Chinese).

<sup>3</sup> See: Miao Chuhuang, *Short History of the CPC*, Xiuyexi Zazhi she, Peking, 1956 (in Chinese).

The "Lectures on the History of the Chinese Revolution", released by the CPC History Chair of the Peking People's University in 1959, contained the first mention in Chinese publications of Comintern documents and of its aid to the CPC in 1927-1931, notably in drafting the decision of the August 1927 Conference, as well as of the significance of the resolution of the Ninth ECCI Plenum (February 1928) for overcoming the "first left line" and of the ECCI's role in ending Li Li-sanism. It was pointed out in the statement of the decisions of the Sixth CPC Congress that the Congress had put forward the unfolding of a peasants' guerrilla war and the creation of the Red Army as the "central objective" and formulated the "central watchwords in the peasant movement".<sup>1</sup>

During the period which followed the failure of the "great leap forward" and was marked by mounting nation-wide criticism of Mao's course, the trend to muffle his cult found reflection in the largest-ever publication of this kind in the PRC—a 4-volume *General History of the Neo-Democratic Revolution in China*. The chapter on the events of 1927-1931 in the second volume contained a fairly detailed account of the decisions of the Sixth CPC Congress which made it clear that they incorporated, in one form or another, many of the guidelines ascribed to Mao Tse-tung.<sup>2</sup>

However, all publications on the CPC history and on the Chinese revolution were suspended and propaganda material began to be mass-produced after the Tenth Plenary Session of the CPC Central Committee (September 1962) which the Maoists used to launch their new offensive. With the formation in 1963 of the Maoist concept of the struggle of the "world countryside" against the "world city" as the "general line" of the international communist movement, the "interpretation" of the history of setting up base areas and creating the Red Army became one of the ideological and political means of preaching the experience of the Chinese revolution as an absolute truth. The accounts of the record of the base areas and of the Red Army became

<sup>1</sup> *Lectures on the History of the Chinese Revolution*, Zhongguo-Renmin daxue Chubanshe, Peking, 1959, pp. 213-22 (in Chinese).

<sup>2</sup> *General History of the Neo-Democratic Revolution in China*, Vol. 2, Renmin Chubanshe, Peking, 1962, pp. 34-58 (in Chinese).

even more abstract and stereotyped while the reviews of the internal and international conditions which determined the particular course and many features of the experience of the Chinese revolution contained no further mention either of the specific Chinese environment, or of the role of the international factor or of the aid from the Comintern and the CPSU(B).

The "cultural revolution" marked a new stage in the "history" of the revolutionary movement in China.<sup>1</sup> Most of the works on the CPC history, by Hu Qiaomu, Miao Chuhuang, Ge Ganzhi, were officially disavowed and declared to "belittle" Mao's role in the history of the CPC and the international communist movement. The "Decisions on Some Questions of the CPC History" were also proclaimed to be "mistaken" (apparently because they mentioned the names of Liu Shao-chi and Qui Qubo. After the Ninth Congress of the CPC (1969), the Maoists attempted to justify a new version of the history of the CPC and the Chinese revolution in their *Lectures on the CPC History*,<sup>2</sup> and in other material on the history of the Chinese revolution. The falsification of history to promote the Mao cult, including that of the period under investigation, acquired an even more unscrupulous character under that version. There was, for example, no further mention of the role of international factors in the development of the CPC, its strategy and tactics, of the positive activities of any PLA and CPC leaders except Mao Tse-tung. In that way the latest Maoist version took on a subjectivist, idealist and nationalistic character: the "Great Leader" was virtually portrayed as a "great loner", and his "ideas" and decisions were presented as the principal source of development and victories of the revolution in China.

After the dismissal of the "gang of four" there was a certain tendency to abandon earlier guidelines in the PRC along with attempts to preserve intact the basic points

<sup>1</sup> For aims and directions of Maoist falsification of the CPC history during that period see: V. I. Glunin, A. M. Grigoriev, "Falsification of the CPC History in Maoist Historiography", *Bulletin of Moscow University. Orientalology*, Moscow, No. 1, 1970.

<sup>2</sup> "Falsification of the Party's History with the Aim of Capturing Power in the Party", *Hungqu*, Peking, No.7, 1978.

of the CPC history during the "cultural revolution".<sup>1</sup> While maintaining the argument about Mao's leading role in elaborating the strategy and tactics of the Chinese revolution in 1927-1931 (to conform to the provisions of the "Decisions on Some Questions of the CPC History"), a number of authors seek to remove certain extremes by surrounding Mao with his "co-workers", speaking about other founders of the first Red Army units and Soviet bases operating under Mao's guidance who carried out his ideas, etc. The "gang of four" was criticised for "ill-intentioned inordinate extolling of Chairman Mao". Some of the works and recollections revealed a desire to widen the range of facts and personalities mentioned. The 50th anniversary of the Nanchang uprising and the Autumn Harvest uprisings was marked by the publication in 1977 and 1978 of quite a few articles and recollections about those events and the people involved in them. However, the sustained prevalence of distorted schemes and the absence of documentary publications, as well as the substitution of subjectivist and pragmatist constructs for a scientific elucidation of history, account for the fact that, as admitted by the Chinese press itself, there have been no historical publications based on documents and facts, not even about such events as the Nanchang uprising.<sup>2</sup> A similar picture can be observed with regard to other questions.

In some articles which appeared in China in the second half of 1979, their authors tried to break through the limits of the "Decisions on Some Questions of the CPC History". Some of these, turning on the argument that the Mao's ideas are a summing-up of the party's collective experience, pointed out that the work "On the Rectification of Incorrect Ideas in the Party", which was described in the "Decisions" as Mao's personal and distinctive contribution to working out various questions of military construction, was, in actual fact, nothing but a restatement

<sup>1</sup> Quo Huaruo, "The Great Strategic Turn of the Red Army from Guerrilla Warfare to Mobile Warfare", *Lishi yanjiu*, Peking, No. 5, 1977; *Idem*, "The Brilliant Victory to Crown a 700-li Fighting March", *Lishi yanjiu*, Peking, No. 1, 1978.

<sup>2</sup> Wang Nianyi, "An Investigation of Certain Historical Realities of the Nanchang Uprising of August 1 (1927)" *Lishi yanjiu*, Peking, No. 7, 1979; "It Is Only by Being True to Facts That One Can Be True to the Truth", *Ibid.*

of the guidelines drawn up in the directives of the CPC Central Committee.<sup>1</sup> There was even a publication which, invoking some documents<sup>2</sup> unknown to researchers, referred for the first time to Mao Tse-tung's errors—the theoretical and practical support Mao Tse-tung is said to have given to the Li Li-san line.

These attempts to turn to real facts and documents, for all the appeals to “be true to facts”, still passed over the significance of the international factor in the development of the Chinese revolution. While claiming to be “objective”, they did not so much as mention the international assistance which was given to the CPC and the Chinese revolution by the Comintern and the CPSU(B) in the late 1920s and the early 1930s.

The bourgeois historiography of the PRC, the revolutionary movement in China and the development of relations between the Comintern and the CPC during that period have been represented since the early 1950s by the works of two schools of bourgeois Sinology and politology, united by their anti-communist thrust but differing in their methods and approach to tactics. The most widespread version in the West until the early 1960s was the one that “explained” the course of the revolutionary struggle in China as an “international communist plot” or “totalitarian revolution” which was the cornerstone of bourgeois propaganda in its interpretation of the Comintern's activities. It is a matter of common knowledge that the Communists' activities in various countries were depicted by these propagandists as the “scheming” of the Comintern and Moscow, and the Communist parties as “agents” or “the hand of Moscow”, etc. In fact, the very development and outcome of the revolution in China and the policy that led to its victory in the long run were described in that concept as a realisation of the “Eastern policy” of the Comintern and Moscow. Such an interpretation of the policies of the Comintern and the CPC responded to the fundamental political guideline of those who had devised it and actively supported the doctrine of “rolling back communism” and

<sup>1</sup> Xiao Ke, “Great Programme of Army Building. Recollections of the Gutian Conference”, *Hungqi*, Peking, No. 8, 1959.

<sup>2</sup> Tian Yuan, “One Problem of the Li Li-san Line Period”, *Lishi yanjiu*, Peking, No. 10, 1979.

the policy of "containing and isolating" both the USSR and the PRC, which was intensively implanted by the ruling quarters of the West. The exponents of that school of thinking, writing in the 1950s about China,<sup>1</sup> to suit this major political guideline, did not go into the "details" of history or into an analysis of the positions of various groups and trends in the CPC. The complete identification of the CPC's policies and the positions of all its leaders with the Comintern line (within the framework of the argument about the "diktat of Moscow") was used by them as the principal argument in favour of the policy of "containing and isolating" the PRC. Mao Tse-tung was assessed by the partisans of that concept as a "Marxist-Leninist" and as the "translator of the strategy of the Comintern and Stalin into Chinese", while his positions in all the stages of the history of the CPC were identified with those of the Comintern and the CPC Central Committee.

The partisans of that concept borrowed their facts and evaluations from Harold R. Isaacs' work *The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution*, which appeared back in 1938 with a preface by Trotsky.<sup>2</sup> The thrust of the book, which peddled Trotsky's version of Chinese history, was to try and "prove" the fatal character of the turn towards united front tactics in the mid-1930s and, above all, the baneful consequences of following the Comintern's line and rejecting Trotskyite tactics. (Isaacs "predicted" that this rejection spelled the "unavoidable destruction" of the CPC and the Chinese revolution.) This argument takes up a lot of space in the book. The assessments of such events as the Autumn Harvest uprisings and the Canton Commune, as well as of the decisions of the Sixth CPC Congress and Li Li-sanism, were in full harmony with those of Trotsky and China's native Trotskyites. The Comintern was held responsible, for example, for the abortive armed actions, organised by the CPC in the autumn and winter of 1927; Li Li-san's leftist-adventur-

<sup>1</sup> Karl A. Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1957; Franz H. Michael, George F. Taylor, *The Far East in the Modern World*, Holt, New York, 1956; S. Tang, *Communist China Today: Domestic and Foreign Policies*, Praeger Publishers, New York, 1957.

<sup>2</sup> Harold R. Isaacs, *The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution*, London, 1938.

ist line of 1930 was proclaimed to have been a Comintern line because the author inferred it from the decisions of the Sixth CPC Congress and the Sixth Congress of the Comintern. Li Li-san's dismissal from CPC leadership was presented as an illustration of "Moscow's craftiness"; he was claimed to have been made a "scapegoat" for the Comintern's mistakes when "Moscow's policy" failed. This Trotskyite argument about "the Comintern's responsibility for all the reverses of the Chinese revolution" has been echoed by non-Marxist historiography of the CPC at every turn.

Another concept of the history of the CPC and the Chinese revolution as a manifestation of "special" or "Chinese communism" was first launched in the early 1950s by the proponents of a different, more flexible type of tactics in dealing with China—Sinologists John K. Fairbank, Benjamin Schwartz and Conrad Brandt.<sup>1</sup>

The interpretation of the events related to the history of the CPC in the late 1920s and the early 1930s, both in *A Documentary History of Chinese Communism* and in the book by Benjamin Schwartz *Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao*,<sup>2</sup> are virtually a combination of Trotskyite ideas borrowed from Isaacs' book, as well as of "facts" and appraisals of the "first sketch" of the Maoist version of the history of the CPC during that period, expounded in the above-mentioned book by Edgar Snow *Red Star over China*. Comments on the documents dating from 1927 to 1934 in the *Documentary History* have been made by Schwartz and were virtually nothing but a restatement of corresponding passages from his own book. The period from 1927 to 1931 is represented by eight documents covering only the years 1927-1930. These are quoted mostly in extracts and not very authentic translations. It is worth noting a coincidence with the structure of the book of Benjamin Schwartz himself: the bulk of the *Documentary History* is devoted to the events of 1927-1930, while those of 1931-1934 are related in a very cursory way.

<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Schwartz, Conrad Brandt, John K. Fairbank, *A Documentary History of Chinese Communism*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1952.

<sup>2</sup> Benjamin Schwartz, *Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1968.

The "curtailment" of the 1927-1931 period in the *Documentary History* and in Schwartz's book up to the Fourth Plenary Session of the CPC Central Committee (January 1931), which has been done in total disregard for a scientific approach to analysing the successive periods of the CPC history and those of the elaboration of its strategy and tactics, is still kept up by bourgeois Sinology. It is from the Trotskyites, from Isaacs' book, that these authors have borrowed the method of interpretation of the CPC-Comintern relations and the argument about "the Comintern's responsibility" for all the reverses and defeats of the CPC. Thus, Schwartz, writing in full accord with Isaacs' assessments, reduces the sum and substance of the guidelines of the Sixth CPC Congress to the preparation of armed uprisings in the cities,<sup>1</sup> while "inferring" Li Li-sanism from the proceedings of the Sixth CPC Congress, and repeats the Trotskyite description of Li Li-san as a "scapegoat" for the Comintern's guilt.<sup>2</sup> With reference to some works by CPC turncoats, issued in the Kuomintang China, Schwartz introduced into bourgeois historiography a version (also floated by the Trotskyites) about leadership in the CPC Central Committee being "captured" in 1930 by a group of "Comintern-picked" Chinese Communists trained in the Soviet Union to exercise "Moscow's control over the CPC".<sup>3</sup>

Snow's book has served as a source for the interpretation of Mao Tse-tung's policy as a "special" and, moreover, "realistic" one which had been elaborated and pursued by him in 1927-1930 in the struggle against the then CPC leadership, contrary to it and in defiance of the Comintern—a policy "oriented on the peasantry" and on the countryside in contrast with the "Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy" of the Comintern which was alleged to imply orientation on the working class and the cities alone. Mao's actions during the period of the Autumn Harvest uprisings and the march to Chingkangshan were declared by Schwartz to be the "point of departure of a strategy which was to lead the Chinese communist movement to ultimate success".

<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Schwartz, *Op. cit.*, pp. 122-26.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 155-56.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 148-49.

"It is thus most interesting to note," Schwartz emphasised, "that this whole development was inaugurated under a cloud of disfavour, without the blessing of the party leadership, and most likely without the knowledge of Moscow."<sup>1</sup> Basing himself on what Snow had written, Schwartz asserted that Mao Tse-tung had opposed the Li Li-san line. In keeping with the Maoist version, the author wrote about the discovery of a new strategy of revolution springing from Ching kangshan which was born "under a cloud of orthodox disapproval",<sup>2</sup> while the CPC's line on setting up base areas was declared to be a victory for Mao's strategy.<sup>3</sup> One point Schwartz added to Snow's and Isaacs' versions referred to the influence of personal rivalry and "a question of power closely related to a question of strategy" on the development of relations between the CPC Central Committee and Mao Tse-tung.<sup>4</sup>

So detailed an examination of the basic points in Schwartz's book using Isaacs' and Snow's versions and abounding in factual mistakes, as the author himself admitted when he had his book reprinted, has been necessary because of concept it set out has "survived" its factual background to become a kind of "classic" for bourgeois historiography in the 1960s. It is likewise noteworthy that the *Documentary History* and the book by Benjamin Schwartz were about the only works in the West in the 1950s to offer a relatively systematised account of the CPC history. They have had their effect on the works which appeared in other countries, including Japan, at a later date. The author of *A Study of the CPC History*, Ishikawa Tadao, while repeating Schwartz's scheme and appraisals of the 1927-1931 events with some inessential modifications, did not conceal that he had borrowed his major facts from Schwartz's book in exposing the Li Li-san line and the Comintern's positions.<sup>5</sup>

In the controversy they launched in the first half of the 1950s against the advocates of the "special Chinese

<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Schwartz, *Op. cit.*, p. 102.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 183.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

<sup>5</sup> Ishikawa Tadao, *A Study of the CPC History*, Keio tsushin, Tokyo, 1959, pp. 188-92 (in Japanese).

communism" version, the partisans of the "international communist plot" concept referred principally to the facts of Sino-Soviet cooperation as their main arguments. Their opponents most often turned to official Chinese historiography, particularly after the issue of Mao's *Selected Works* in English. Thus, in the preface to the third printing of his book in 1968, Benjamin Schwartz stressed the point that "the new evidence ... lends added support" to the earlier analysis. His major conclusion was about a "deep conflict between the Central Committee group and the Mao leadership". "The Chinese Communists themselves now insist," Schwartz wrote, "that one of the basic issues of ideology ... between the Central Committee group and the Mao leadership was the question of whether the strength of the Red Army was to be used to preserve the rural bases or as an instrument to recapture the movement's urban bases".<sup>1</sup> Neither Schwartz nor any other authors of his type have ever questioned the authenticity of that "new evidence" and the character of the editing of Mao Tse-tung's works.

The argument about Mao's "special" and "independent course" has been accepted by the partisans of the Trotskyite version as well. In the early 1960s Harold R. Isaacs, who had earlier predicted the "unavoidable failure" of the Chinese revolution, explained the CPC victory in an afterword to his re-edited book by saying that "in the remote hinterlands of Central China they [Chinese Communists—*Auth.*] found their own means of survival and new paths to power", since the links to the Communist International "played little or no role in the hinterland movement".<sup>2</sup>

The confrontation of the two rival bourgeois versions of the CPC history was further stimulated at the turn of the 1960s, when the Maoists launched their "special course" in domestic and foreign policies. The violent clash of the exponents of the major trends in bourgeois historiography—Karl Wittfogel and Benjamin Schwartz—in the columns of *The New Leader* and *China Quarterly* magazines marked a further stage in the controversy. To answer the question: "How original is Mao Tse-tung?", the parties to the contro-

<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Schwartz, *Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao*, pp. VIII-IX.

<sup>2</sup> Harold R. Isaacs, *Op. cit.*, Second revised edition, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1961, p. 300.

versy once more turned to the history of the 1920s and 1930s. To explain so keen an interest in the events of those years, the editors said: "The answer is of interest beyond the bounds of academic studies of Chinese Communism, for it must affect appraisals of the future course of Peking's policies".<sup>1</sup>

To vindicate the concept of a "Communist conspiracy" and "totalitarian revolution", Karl Wittfogel, in his article "The Legend of 'Maoism'"<sup>2</sup>, has once more shown (and rather convincingly) the dubious and scarce knowledge of sources behind the concept set forth in Schwartz's book and in the *Documentary History*: the bias behind the selection and the lack of a scientific approach to the publication of the documents, misinterpretations and distortions of a number of important Comintern documents, etc. He also pointed out that Schwartz and his colleagues had used Mao's re-edited works, rather than the original texts of a number of his writings. At the same time, Wittfogel tried to disprove his opponents' concept by indicating that some of Mao Tse-tung's works "lacked originality", such as, above all, "The Report on an Investigation of the Hunan Peasant Movement" and the work "On New Democracy", which the authors of the *Documentary History* have described as the best evidence of Mao's "special strategy". In an effort to back up the major premise of the concept of "totalitarian revolution", whereby Mao was no more than the translator of Comintern strategy into Chinese, Wittfogel amplified the "totalitarian" version by yet another false argument (echoed and elaborated on by his supporters) that Mao Tse-tung's position in general, and in the late 1920s and the early 1930s in particular, coincided on major issues with the Comintern line.

In the controversy Schwartz still insisted that after 1927 Mao Tse-tung devised "his own strategy" and applied it in actual practice first against the "Central Committee groups" and then against the "twenty-eight Bolsheviks" and the Comintern which was behind them. Departing from his earlier positions, Schwartz now interpreted the

<sup>1</sup> *China Quarterly*, London, No. 1, 1960.

<sup>2</sup> Karl A. Wittfogel, "The Legend of 'Maoism'", *China Quarterly*, London, No. 1, 1960.

“Maoist strategy” as a means and “heresy in act”, never clearly explained in theory, on the one hand, and, on the other, as a contribution towards the practical application of Lenin’s ideas, that is, towards a radical departure from Marxism-Leninism and a modification of the theory itself.<sup>1</sup> Schwartz also exploited Wittfogel’s emphasis on Mao Tse-tung’s works and the events of 1927. “I find it rather interesting,” Schwartz wrote, “that in his search for ‘empirical evidence’ Prof. Wittfogel now concentrates wholly on the year 1927 and completely neglects the whole question of relations between Mao Tse-tung and the Central Committee during the much more vital period 1928-35.”<sup>2</sup>

From the early 1960s on, the controversy in bourgeois historiography extended to the events in China in the late 1920s and the early 1930s. The book by Xiao Zuoliang (Hsiao Tso-liang), *Power Relations Within the Chinese Communist Movement, 1930-1934. A Study of Documents*,<sup>3</sup> which appeared in 1961, was a kind of reply to Schwartz’s invitation to look into that period. The book quoted a vast amount of documentary evidence dating from 1930-1934, borrowed from the Taiwan archives which the author summed up and commented on. By and large, the book offered a slightly updated version of the “totalitarian revolution” concept: infighting within the CPC, choice of strategy and tactics, change of watchwords, etc., were dictated, as Xiao Zuoliang would have us believe, by the rivalry of different groups in the scramble for power within the party, without giving up the already known “rules of the game”, i.e., within the Moscow (Comintern)-Shanghai (Central Committee)-Soviet regions (Mao) triangle. On the surface the book was directed against the Maoist version of the CPC history: in a small chapter “Mao Rewrites History”, the author made a critical scrutiny of the “Decisions on Some Questions of the CPC History” and made the conclusion that many of the most important

<sup>1</sup> See: Benjamin Schwartz, “The Legend of the ‘Legend of Maoism’”, *China Quarterly*, London, No. 2, 1960.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>3</sup> Hsiao Tso-liang, *Power Relations Within the Chinese Communist Movement, 1930-1934. A Study of Documents*, University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1961.

points of the CPC's strategy and tactics, ascribed in the "Decisions" to Mao, had been actually worked out in Comintern decisions.<sup>1</sup> But just because these particular points of Maoist historiography were used by Schwartz and other partisans of the "Chinese communism" concept as "new evidence" to support their own version, the criticism was spearheaded against them as well. Moreover, the author's comments on the documents in which he analysed the *Documentary History* and the books by Snow and Schwartz were directly addressed to the latter. Xiao Zuoliang pointed out not only a host of factual mistakes but, with documents to support him, exposed the misinterpretation by Schwartz and his followers of some episodes from the CPC history fundamental to their own version. The most essential conclusion was that the Li Li-san line seriously diverged from that of the Comintern and hence the attempt of Schwartz and his followers to picture Li Li-san as a "scapegoat" for Moscow's "mistakes" was unjustified.

At the same time Xiao Zuoliang, to conform to the general concept and the ideas of Wittfogel and also, of course, to "counter" the "special course" version, passed Mao Tse-tung off for a partisan of the Comintern line during the exercise of the Li Li-san line. Xiao Zuoliang's version keynoted most of the publications on the CPC history written by the adherents of the "totalitarian revolution" concept and published in the United States and Taiwan during the 1960s.

For some time the partisans of the "Chinese communism" concept had nothing to oppose to Xiao Zuoliang's book and preferred to pass it over in silence, let alone class it as a "monograph". Thus, Robert C. North wrote in 1963 that the West does not have a "single standard monograph". "The failure of Western scholarship to undertake, encourage, and support dispassionate and disciplined studies of Chinese communism on a wider scale and more sustained basis is in itself a phenomenon worthy of sober investigation," North pointed out.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See: Hsiao Tso-liang, *Op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Robert C. North, *Moscow and Chinese Communists*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1963, pp. V-VI.

With the Maoists passing to outright divisive tactics in the international communist movement in 1962-1963, the "special Chinese communism" concept, as applied to the events of the late 1920s and the early 1930s, came to predominate in Western Sinology from the latter half of the 1960s on. Its authors and supporters sought to "reinforce" its factual substance, an object of devastating criticism in the mid-1960s, by the material they derived from official Maoist historiography. This line in tracing the CPC history of the period of interest to us turned out to be typical of the following books: Jerome Chen, *Mao and the Chinese Revolution*,<sup>1</sup> Shanti Swarup, *A Study of the Chinese Communist Movement*,<sup>2</sup> and John E. Rue, *Mao Tse-tung in Opposition 1927-1935*,<sup>3</sup> which made up a specific "pro-Maoist" trend in bourgeois historiography. We find it possible to define that trend in this way because, by and large, the above-mentioned books and some smaller related publications are characterised by uncritical use of arguments and evidence from official Maoist historiography and Mao's re-edited works as well as by what has been essentially an apologetic attitude to Mao's activities and personality.

Leaving aside certain distinctions between them, one must say that the overall thrust of these books is fundamentally a follow-up to the concept of "special Maoist strategy" and "Chinese communism" in contrast with the "totalitarian revolution" concept. J. Chen unequivocally declared that in the dispute between Wittfogel and Schwartz he was closer to the latter and once more reiterated Schwartz's charge that the events of the Soviet movement remained outside the opponents' field of vision.<sup>4</sup> Chen considered the books by Snow and Schwartz to have been the most important sources he had ever worked on.<sup>5</sup> He believed his attempt at discovering something in "Mao's strategy" that reflected the traditional peculiarities of

<sup>1</sup> Jerome Chen, *Mao and the Chinese Revolution*, Oxford University Press, London, 1965.

<sup>2</sup> Shanti Swarup, *A Study of the Chinese Communist Movement*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1966.

<sup>3</sup> John E. Rue, *Mao Tse-tung in Opposition 1927-1935*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1966.

<sup>4</sup> See: Jerome Chen, *Op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

Chinese society, its morality, etc., to be his own element of approach to Maoism in contradistinction to the existing ones which he called "Western". Elaborating on these ideas, Chen proposed such definitions as "the use of the armed struggle of the peasantry as the main force in creating the new China is a generally acknowledged tradition of the Chinese system".<sup>1</sup> The events of 1927-1931 were virtually interpreted in keeping with the Snow-Schwartz version "reinforced" by relevant quotations from Mao's re-edited works. The overall assessment of Mao's positions conformed to the objective the author had set himself: "to show, among other things, Mao's penetrating understanding and adroit handling of problems and the brilliance of both his words and his actions."<sup>2</sup>

Following him up, Rue, reproducing the basic points of Maoist historiography in his book *Mao Tse-tung in Opposition 1927-1935*, sought to "prove" that in 1927-1931 "Mao took his first steps toward developing an independent theory of his own"<sup>3</sup> in defiance of the then CPC leadership and the Comintern. Rue repeated the Trotskyite arguments about Mao's role and, focussing his attention on the far-fetched "Mao-Stalin" problem, portrayed Mao as a fighter against "Stalinism" and the "Stalinists" in the CPC. On the surface, the book looked like a well-argued study, somewhat overloaded with material and footnotes. However, the experts with a "first-hand" knowledge of sources have a perfectly clear idea of the pseudo-scientific background to that biased anti-Comintern "composition", with the "required" quotations taken out at will from various editions of Mao's works, with the "missing" facts and documents replaced by their interpretations in subsequent Maoist publications and with no end of factual mistakes.... Wherever the facts and documents mentioned jarred too obviously with the argument about Mao's "special" and "correct course", Rue switched over to Mao's "constant opposition" (no matter "from the left" or "from the right"), that is, to the argument that made the headline.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 8.

<sup>2</sup> Jerome Chen, *Op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> See: John E. Rue, *Op. cit.*, pp. 6-7.

Swarup, while sticking to Mao Tse-tung's "special course" version in his book *A Study of the Chinese Communist Movement*, attempted, as it seemed to him, to overcome the "limitations" of the concepts of Schwartz and Wittfogel. He declared that Schwartz's interpretation of "Mao's strategy" was narrow. In his opinion, the "Maoist strategy" comprised not only the idea of a peasant Communist party, but one of a united front with the national bourgeoisie in the cities and the countryside which Mao was alleged to have worked out back in the late 1920s.<sup>1</sup> In actual fact, Swarup uncritically repeated the argument from the "Decisions" that it was the basic ideas on new democracy that were set forth in Mao's works in the late 1920s.

While accepting Wittfogel's point that "Mao's strategy" had much in common with the Comintern line, Swarup at the same time produced a "new interpretation" of the "Comintern-Mao" relations: he held that the CPC policy of 1928-1934 was, generally speaking, Mao's policy, rather than that of the Comintern. According to Swarup, Mao had imposed his viewpoint on the Comintern and "the Comintern had come down on the side of Mao".<sup>2</sup> These conclusions, far-fetched though they are, produced a "Wittfogel in reverse", as they did not square with the paltry Trotskyite idea about the "Comintern's guilt" accepted by Schwartz. Besides, Swarup conceded that Li Li-sanism was a deviation from the ECCI line.<sup>3</sup> In other words, regardless of the author's intentions, his conclusions cut across the basic bourgeois concepts of those years with respect to the CPC history.

The works by Stuart R. Schram stand somewhat apart. His initial publications treated and interpreted Maoism as nothing but "heresy in act". In the foreword to his book *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung* (1963),<sup>4</sup> which made him famous as a "Maologist", he painted "The Report on an Investigation of the Hunan Peasant Movement" and the *Documentary History* with the same

<sup>1</sup> See: Shanti Swarup, *Op. cit.*, pp. 169-70.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 225-26.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 208-09.

<sup>4</sup> See: Stuart R. Schram, *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung*, Praeger Publishers, New York, 1963.

brush, and in his article "On the Nature of Mao Tse-tung's 'Deviation' in 1927" he took the same approach in characterising Mao's position in the autumn of 1927 as the first step towards developing his "new strategy".<sup>1</sup> In his works of 1965-1966 he found Mao's "special strategy" to comprise such an element as "revolutionary nationalism" which he described as the topmost factor behind the shaping of Mao's ideology.<sup>2</sup> Schwartz seconded this argument of Schram's<sup>3</sup>: nationalism fit in perfectly with the concept of "special Chinese communism", allowing it to be related with a larger concept—that of "national communisms", which was being worked out in bourgeois politology at the time. One reservation to make is that a bourgeois author would never see "nationalist" in a negative sense. Schram's profile of Mao Tse-tung was couched in heroic, romantic and apologetic terms.<sup>4</sup> Mao Tse-tung's activities during that period were summed up by a compilation of "facts" and assessments, borrowed from Snow's, Isaacs' and Schwartz's books as well as from Mao's re-edited works and official historiography.

The utterances of avowed advocates and propagandists of Maoism constituted a special trend in non-Marxist historiography which emerged in the 1960s. Writing for Maoist and pro-Maoist periodicals, they took advantage of the official Maoist version of the events of the late 1920s and the early 1930s to propagate the concept of a "war of the world countryside against the world city". In the latter half of the 1960s and the early 1970s the exponents of this trend and their fellow-travellers from the "New Left", particularly in France, Italy and Japan,<sup>5</sup> preached

<sup>1</sup> See: Stuart R. Schram, "On the Nature of Mao Tse-tung's 'Deviation' in 1927", *China Quarterly*, London, No. 18, 1964, pp. 55-56.

<sup>2</sup> See: Stuart R. Schram, "The Man and His Doctrines", *Problems of Communism*, Vol. XV, No. 5, Sept.-Oct. 1966.

<sup>3</sup> See: Benjamin Schwartz, "Stalinism or 'Chineseness'?", *Problems of Communism*, Washington, No. 5, 1966.

<sup>4</sup> See: Stuart R. Schram, *Mao Tse-tung*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1966.

<sup>5</sup> See, for instance: K. S. Karol, *La deuxième révolution chinoise*, Editions Robert Laffont, Paris, 1973; Nijjima Atsuyoshi, *Mao Tse-tung's Ideas*, Tokyo, 1968; Fujii Masuo, *Short History of the CPC, 1921-1975*, Toho shobo, Tokyo, 1975 (in Japanese).

the Maoist version of the CPC history in a number of works claiming to be scientific. It is indicative that these publications, for example, the book by Karol, as well as a number of Japanese works, rather outspokenly betrayed the anti-Comintern essence of the basic arguments, of the Maoist version disguised in Maoist historiography, and reiterated Trotskyite "charges" against the Comintern and the CPSU(B), which demonstrated once more the "harmony" and link-up of anti-Comintern, anti-Soviet invectives of Trotskyites and the nationalistic tenets of Maoist historiography.

The Maoist patterns of the CPC history (just as the whole of Maoist propaganda) were current among some sections of intellectuals and students of the capitalist countries. In the course of the "cultural revolution" in China these patterns became increasingly vulgar and primitive, and their propagation and advertising abroad were having the effect of discrediting both the patterns themselves and their pedlars.

There was an intensified process of eroding the main arguments of all the basic concepts of Western origin, regardless of the subjective intentions of their authors, which went on during the subsequent round of the controversy by the early 1970s, with more "material" and more "facts" brought into play. The publications by Soviet Sinologists, notably the books *The Comintern and the East* (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1979) and *Prominent Soviet Communists in the Chinese Revolution* (Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1970), played a certain part in that process.

The subsequent documentary publications by Xiao Zuo-liang (Hsiao Tso-liang),<sup>1</sup> a number of books on the CPC history prepared in Taiwan<sup>2</sup> and the appearance of Richard C. Thornton's *The Comintern and the Chinese Communists 1928-1931*<sup>3</sup> in the United States in 1969 were a blow at

<sup>1</sup> Hsiao Tso-liang, *Power Relations Within the Chinese Communist Movement, 1930-1934. A Study of Documents*, University of Washington Press, Seattle, London, 1967; *The Land Revolution in China, 1930-1934. A Study of Documents*, University of Washington Press, Seattle, London, 1969.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance: Wang Jianmin, *An Outline of the CPC History*, Vol. 2, Zhenzhong Shuju, Taipei, 1966 (in Chinese).

<sup>3</sup> Richard C. Thornton, *The Comintern and the Chinese Communists 1928-1931*, University of Washington Press, Seattle, London, 1969.

the version propagated by the advocates of Mao's "special course".

Xiao Zuoliang's publications (the first one included photostat copies of documents mentioned in his 1961 work, and the second comprised translations and commentaries on documents pertaining to the CPC's agrarian-peasant policy in the early 1930s) showed once more that Maoist and pro-Maoist authors, as well as the partisans of the "special course" version, seem to be deliberately ignoring the facts and documents "inconvenient" from the standpoint of their version yet within easy reach of scholarship.

The works by Taiwan authors started from the "totalitarian revolution" concept while the developments of the period concerned were retold in line with the version proposed by Xiao Zuoliang with specifically Taiwan "additions"—extra-virulent diatribes against the CPC. At the same time, the additional factual material quoted in these books (especially in Wang Jianmin's work), including large extracts from the CPC documents and press,<sup>1</sup> showed that a mere list of factual blunders in the works of Western authors called in question their competence and the authenticity of the versions based on so uncertain factual evidence.

American Sinologists and readers had to face such issues particularly after the appearance of Richard Thornton's book which gave a wider interpretation to Xiao Zuoliang's version of the struggle of various forces (within the Moscow-Shanghai-Soviet regions triangle) for power in the CPC as the main "driving force" of its history in those years. Turning that idea into an absolute truth (and so into an absurdity), Thornton considered the personal rivalry between Mao Tse-tung and Li Li-san as the "mainspring" of the CPC history in 1928-1930. Thornton argued that Li Li-san advanced his leftist platform mostly in fear of Mao's rising influence: he expected Mao to be brought under the control of Li Li-san's "urban" alignment<sup>2</sup> in the event of the successful capture of the cities by the army. In line with Xiao Zuoliang's interpretations, Thornton accepted a number of other erroneous arguments like the one, above

<sup>1</sup> The reason behind the ban on Wang Jianmin's book in Taiwan.

<sup>2</sup> See: Richard C. Thornton, *Op. cit.*, pp. 77, 226.

all, that Mao Tse-tung opposed the Li Li-san line from Comintern positions; he repeated Xiao's mistakes also in his treatment of Mao Tse-tung's stand on the agrarian-peasant issue in 1930. The timing of the book is also open to doubt. Having started his story by an account of the Sixth CPC Congress, he eschewed the consideration of the early studies of the party's new orientation in the pre-congress material of the CPC Central Committee and in the works of its leaders: the closing lines of the account of this new orientation at the Sixth Plenary Session of the CPC Central Committee (January 1931) left out fundamentally important Comintern and CPC decisions of the spring and summer of 1931 orienting the party on enlarging and consolidating the Red Army and base areas, i. e., on shifting the centre of gravity in its activities "into the countryside" and into developing the work of organising the masses. Following in Xiao Zuoliang's footsteps, R. Thornton misjudged the lifetime of the "Li Li-san line" in the CPC as well as its substance (reducing it to planning to seize cities). According to his argument, "there is no evidence" to support the Soviet authors' viewpoint that the Li Li-san platform incorporated the idea of an "outbreak" of a world war and a world revolution, nor any to prove that Li Li-san's position was shared by Mao Tse-tung.<sup>1</sup> Thornton also repeated the version, common to all trends in bourgeois historiography, about the "capture of power" in the CPC Central Committee by the "twenty-eight Bolsheviks"—the Comintern's "stooges", with a direct reference to Schwartz's book at this point.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, Thornton made some conclusions which were to be the death bell for the "special course" concept with regard to the CPC-Comintern relationships in those years. For example, he produced conclusive evidence to show that the course towards setting up base areas and the Red Army had already been outlined in the decisions of the Sixth CPC Congress and reaffirmed in the ECCI's decisions of 1930 and that Li Li-san's position diverged from the Comintern line on all major points, whence the inconsistency of the argument about Li Li-san

<sup>1</sup> Richard C. Thornton, *Op. cit.*, pp. 187, 208, 214-17, 224.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 187, 208, 214-17.

as a “scapegoat” for the Comintern’s “mistakes”. He exposed a host of factual mistakes in the works of Schwartz and his followers.

The general conclusion formulated no longer by a Taiwan author, but “in native English” for the partisans of the concept of “Mao’s special strategy” was extremely unpleasant: it turned out that the “crafty” Comintern, “responsible”, as they claimed, for all the reverses of the Chinese revolution, had strongly recommended the CPC leadership to take the same line which, ascribing it to Mao Tse-tung, they proclaimed to be “anti-Comintern” and “realistic” and to have assured the success of the revolution in China.

Thornton’s book produced certain confusion and mistrust. The *Current History* magazine said that this was a serious investigation deserving attention and consideration; if it was right, it had to stimulate a reappraisal not only of the process of Mao’s rise to power, but also of Soviet policy in China.<sup>1</sup> Schram’s review reflected a most painful reaction from Thornton’s opponents. After pointing out, to start with, that it was “an important and useful work” which “presents considerable new material and successfully challenges previous interpretations on a number of points”, Schram declared that “it would, however, have been more valuable if the author ... had not chosen to regard virtually all those who have written previously on this period in the history of the Chinese Communist movement as either incompetent or dishonest”.<sup>2</sup> And although nothing of the kind is written in Thornton’s book, Schram’s reaction is indicative because it takes a good deal of correction to accept various widespread versions of the CPC history in the West against the background of the material used and individual conclusions made in Thornton’s book. From our standpoint, many of those in the West who have written on the history of the revolutionary movement in China, if not “virtually all”, ought to be reproached not so much “with incompetence or dishonesty” as with the political bias behind the choice of sources and their investigation. Nor can one fail to mention that some of the writers of

<sup>1</sup> See: *Current History*, Philadelphia, No. 9, 1971, p. 170.

<sup>2</sup> *Slavic Review*, Vol. 32, No. 4, 1973, pp. 821-22.

advertising and commercial profiles of Mao Tse-tung and propaganda publications about the Chinese revolution were incompetent people, to say the least.

The prime thrust of Xiao Zuoliang's publications and Thornton's book was against Mao Tse-tung's "special course" concept, yet their inferences about the Comintern's role in working out the idea of setting up base areas and the development of the CPC work in the countryside, combined with the recognition that the "Li Li-san line" sharply diverged from that of the Comintern, struck a heavy blow, besides, at the above-mentioned Trotskyite version, comprising the argument about the "Comintern's responsibility" for all the CPC reverses, which was borrowed from the Trotskyites by all the schools of bourgeois historiography. As a result, some bourgeois authors had to admit in the early 1970s that one of the main sources of their versions of the CPC history and the Comintern's role in China—Trotskyite publications—was no good. That was the reasoning, in particular, in the early 1970s of Franz H. Michael, an influential conservative-minded Sinologist, who had been for a long time in charge of the Institute for Sino-Soviet Studies attached to George Washington University (Washington, D.C.). In his article "Ideology and the Cult of Mao", he wrote that the role of the Comintern and the CPSU and Stalin's role in implementing the Comintern's strategy in China had been misinterpreted by the Trotskyite opposition and, therefore, had never been properly appreciated in the West.<sup>1</sup>

In the early 1970s Western Sinologists found themselves constrained to reconsider one more basically important element of their versions—Mao's position in the heyday of Li Li-sanism. Referring to Soviet authors' publications mentioned earlier on, prominent American historian and Sinologist James Pickney Harrison wrote in his work *The Long March to Power. The History of the Chinese Communist Party, 1921-1972* that Mao was not a staunch fighter against the Li Li-san line because differences between them "concerned emphasis rather than

<sup>1</sup> See: Franz H. Michael, "Ideology and the Cult of Mao". In: *Communist China, 1949-1969. A Twenty-Year Appraisal*, New York, 1970, p. 33.

principles".<sup>1</sup> He had a different view of the Li Li-san line. With a reservation that if these facts were true, he conceded that the Li Li-san platform included the idea of a world war was calculated to trigger off a world revolution thereby. However, under pressure of dominant views, Harrison attempted to reconcile these facts with the "scapegoat" version: he asserted that the differences between the Comintern's line and that of Li Li-san also concerned emphasis rather than principles and sought to oppose the positions of the ECCI and the guidelines of its Far Eastern Bureau branch.<sup>2</sup> However, in 1973 Schram, almost without any reservations, admitted the need to revise the earlier evaluations of Mao's positions of 1927-1930 and, more particularly, those at the time of Li Li-sanism. With reference to Soviet works, he wrote: "The conclusion which appears to emerge from an examination of the available materials is that Li Li-san had indeed deviated further from Comintern policy than has hitherto been generally recognised [in Western Sinology—*Auth.*], but that Mao ... stood in some ways very close to Li."<sup>3</sup> Schram agreed that the Li Li-san plan implied the possibility of a world war breaking out. Taking issue with Thornton, who believed that there was no evidence to support that kind of interpreting the Li Li-san line in the works by Soviet authors, Schram wrote: "There is, on the contrary, solid evidence to support it, and one might even argue that it is here, rather than as regards relations between Li Li-san and Moscow, that there is the greatest scope for revision of previous interpretations of this period."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> James Pickney Harrison, *The Long March to Power. The History of the Chinese Communist Party, 1921-1972*, Praeger Publishers, New York, London, Washington, 1972, p. 170.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 170, 175-80.

<sup>3</sup> *Authority Participation and Cultural Change in China*, Edited and with an introduction by Stuart R. Schram, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1973, p. 11.

In a review of Thornton's book Schram pointed out: "It is a fact that most of us who have written about these problems in the past have seen too great a basic identity between Li's line and that of Moscow, and have accepted to too great an extent the 'scapegoat theory'.... If we have been wrong in this, however, Thornton goes quite as far astray by ignoring the evidence showing that in many respects Mao shared and supported Li Li-san's leftist errors" (*Slavic Review*, Vol. 32, No. 4, 1973, p. 823).

<sup>4</sup> *Slavic Review*, Vol. 32, No. 4, 1973, p. 822.

Although Schram spearheaded the polemic against Thornton's book<sup>1</sup> and the "totalitarian revolution" version it expounded, for him to recognise Mao's active support for Li Li-san's course and his plan to capture the cities meant recognising the untenability of the version of Mao's "special", "village" course. Finally, that also meant admitting that the interpretation of Mao's positions in Maoist historiography in such a way as to make it appear that the partisans of the "special course" idea drew "new evidence" from it has been premeditated falsification.

In that context Schram proposed a new or, to be exact, an updated concept of Mao's "special strategy". He no longer associated it, as before, with the course towards "surrounding the cities by the countryside", maintaining (in Swarup's way) that "Stalin had rapidly come to accept" the significance of Mao's and Chu Teh's tactics of struggle in the countryside in 1928-1929, which found expression in Comintern's appropriate directives regarding the enlargement of the Red Army and the base areas.<sup>2</sup> The "special" aspect Schram saw in Mao's groping for the particular, distinctive strategy of the Chinese revolution, which essentially boiled down, as Schram found it, to using nothing but the methods of Western theories (that is, Marxism), with the "national essence" of the revolution left intact. This approach, according to Schram, conformed to the search of a "special way" for China, which was characteristic of Chinese "conservative nationalists" of the late 19th century who called for foreign methods to be applied but the "national essence" to be maintained. By contrast, Mao Tse-tung remained a Marxist (as Schram argued), although he "Sinified" Marxism in such a way as to change many essential propositions of Marxism.<sup>3</sup>

"Sinification", Schram held, consisted, first, in laying down a whole range of guidelines of the Yen-an period, emphasising the special role of the peasantry, the slogan of self-sufficiency, self-reliance, decentralising, the army's

<sup>1</sup> In a review of his book Schram sarcastically offered to the author to write another book on this subject, taking into account fresh evidence, that is, actually to rewrite the main sections of a book already out (*Ibid.*, p. 823).

<sup>2</sup> *Authority Participation and Cultural Change in China*, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6-8.

involvement in production, etc., and, what was the main thing, in the "mass line".<sup>1</sup> Secondly, Schram considered that its most important manifestation was expressed in Mao's aspiration for the restoration of the national dignity of the Chinese and for overcoming what was alleged to be the CPC's unequal and humiliated position in its relationship with the Comintern and the CPSU. It is from that position, Schram contended, that Mao waged his struggle for power in the 1930s and 1940s against the "Moscow-oriented faction", upholding the distinctive identity of the Chinese revolution which showed itself in that it "must find its primary source and inspiration in China herself", and that "the Chinese revolution could only be led by a Chinese".<sup>2</sup> Schram regarded Mao's support for Li Li-san's Sinocentric platform as the first overt manifestation of Mao's ambition to end inequality, as an attempt to "put China first" instead of Moscow.<sup>3</sup> Li Li-san's "statements to the effect that his basic loyalty was to China rather than to Moscow", Schram wrote, "his faith that revolution would break out in China before it did in Europe, and his conviction that foreigners could not understand China, were all strictly parallel to the attitudes adopted by Mao Tse-tung then and later."<sup>4</sup> That was what Schram saw as a constant difference between the CPC and the CPSU and between Mao Tse-tung and the "Moscow-oriented faction".<sup>5</sup>

Let us leave aside the question as to whether the particular policy conducted in the liberated regions during that period should be considered a "contribution" to Marxism or a "departure from Marxist orthodoxy". Let us confine ourselves to noting that, in recounting the Yen-an experience, Schram proceeded from its idealisation in Mark Selden's book *The Yen-an Way in Revolutionary China*,<sup>6</sup> and in his interpretation of the "mass line" (as antipodal, as it were, to the "elitism" of orthodox Marxism) he reiterated the

1 Authority Participation and Cultural Change in China, p. 27.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 6, 18.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

5 *Ibid.*, pp. 14, 15.

6 Mark Selden, *The Yen-an Way in Revolutionary China*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1971.

arguments of leftist pro-Maoist advertising which was current in the West during the period of the "cultural revolution".<sup>1</sup> Given these essential reservations, one could accept Schram's view that the Maoist platform which began to take shape in the late 1930s and the early 1940s was distinguished by Sinocentrism and its reverse side—national limitations, an overemphasis on the role of peasantry and the faith in the omnipotence of military and guerrilla methods of policy and "simple" means of economic organisation as "self-sufficiency", etc. An evaluation of these positions is another matter. Marxist historians consider that some features of that policy, above all, the specific methods of social and economic organisation in liberated areas which Mao Tse-tung, together with other CPC leaders, helped work out, responded to the conditions of that period. At the same time, they rightfully see that experience, as well as Mao's nationalism which was a serious negative factor even at that juncture, as sources of a "special" Maoist course after 1949—the "great leap forward" policy and its subsequent modifications, all kinds of variations and nationalistic combinations in the international arena: these clearly betray both Sinocentrism and attempts to apply military and guerrilla tactics to peace-time construction.<sup>2</sup>

It would seem that in the light of Schram's assessments of the sum and substance of Li Li-san's and Mao Tse-tung's course in 1930 and the available evidence of the Comintern's role in interrupting that course, in working out the tactics of the united national front and in overcoming Mao's sectarian guidelines in the mid-1930s, especially during the Xian events,<sup>3</sup> an unbiased scholar ought to have, at least, shown caution and prudence in his approach to the evaluation of Mao's positions dictated, to quote Schram,

<sup>1</sup> For details see: *Contemporary China in Foreign Studies*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1979, pp. 59-64, 83-97 (in Russian).

<sup>2</sup> For details see: *Recent History of China*, Moscow, 1972 (in Russian).

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance: K. V. Kukushkin, "The Comintern and the United National Anti-Japanese Front in China (1935-1943)". In: *The Comintern and the East*, Moscow, 1979, pp. 389-420; A. M. Grigoriev and A. B. Reznikov, "G. Dimitrov and the Problems of the United Anti-Imperialist Front". In: *Georgi Dimitrov, an Outstanding Leader of the Communist Movement*, Politizdat, Moscow, 1972, pp. 276-85 (in Russian).

by his "chiliastic excitement" and by a determination to "put China first".<sup>1</sup> However, Schram, without any arguments to support him, contended that after 1930 Mao "began to think once again in terms of the gradual development of the revolution in the countryside".<sup>2</sup> In line with the established pattern of Maoist historiography, Schram projected into the past, into the first half of the 1930s, Mao's idealised "moderate" policy of the late 1930s and the early 1940s. In total disregard for his position of the mid-1930s and, eventually, the important circumstance that, even after Mao's coming to power, his personal views and methods of approach were repeatedly corrected both through Comintern recommendations and by the positions of other groups of Chinese leaders, Schram maintained that "Mao's strategy" had been "characterised by prudence, realism, and patient effort".<sup>3</sup> He needed such an assessment not only in order to avoid having to speak up for Mao's Sinocentric revolutionarism. Schram used it to present his major argument—the cornerstone of his entire concept whereby such events in the CPC as Mao's struggle for power in the 1930s and 1940s, the "Sinification of Marxism", "chengfeng" and, finally, Maoism itself and the "cultural revolution" were put down, above all, to Mao's effort to end the "unequal relations" of the CPC with the Comintern and the CPSU. While positively assessing Mao's position and laying stress on his determination to extricate China from its "humiliated position", Schram sought to picture the CPC-CPSU relations as a clash of the "realistic" Maoist model of revolution, taking into account the national conditions of China, with the Moscow or Soviet model, which was inappropriate to China, and with Moscow's hegemonic ambition. In a bid to prove this thesis, Schram made great play of the correctness of distinctive and national ways and about the fact that the very search for them was tantamount to restoring national dignity and positive by itself, regardless of whether or not the foreign model works.<sup>4</sup> Schram made this appeal to national sentiment and self-respect instead of an analysis

<sup>1</sup> *Authority Participation and Cultural Change in China*, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

of a real problem, to wit, what Mao's "Sinocentric" and "chiliastic excitement" meant in practical terms, for China and the rest of the world. His reaction to the assessments given by Soviet authors to Mao's positions during Li Li-san-ism is indicative in this respect. Schram presumes that Soviet criticism of Mao's positions was due, supposedly, to Mao's and Li's ambition to challenge Moscow's "supreme leadership" and that there was a danger of the Soviet Union being involved in a war for the interests of the Chinese revolution.<sup>1</sup> The critic omits to mention a few "particulars": first, that the Li Li-san line put the very existence of the CPC in jeopardy and, second, that this appraisal reflected the Comintern's and the CPSU's attitude of principle to world war as a means to achieve communist ends, whereas Mao held an opposite view in this respect both "then and later".

In his "new" version of Mao's "special course", Schram wholly retained one argument common to all schools of non-Marxist historiography—about the power take-over in the CPC in early 1931 by a Comintern-trained special group ("twenty-eight Bolsheviks", the "Moscow-oriented faction") which, by opposing Mao's "special strategy", got him removed from office in the Central Soviet Region in 1932-1934.<sup>2</sup>

Those who did return to China to work in the late 1920s and the early 1930s were not a "group", nor the "twenty-eight Bolsheviks", but several hundred Chinese Communists and Young Communist League members, who had been trained in the Communist University of the Toiling People of the East and in military and other educational establishments of the Soviet Union. Some of them were the Communists whom Chinese Trotskyites and other opposition elements had dubbed "twenty-eight Bolsheviks" for their commitment to the guidelines of the Sixth CPC Congress in the course of the ideological struggle in the Communist University of the Toiling People of the East. But neither in 1930-1931 nor at any other time later have they been a specially selected, factional or restricted group. The hardly pro-Comintern author of a book, pub-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

lished in the United States, about CPC personnel training in the Soviet Union during those years<sup>1</sup> has pointed out that “28” was a relative figure, and that—and this is the most important circumstance of all—those men “were united more by their ideological position than by any formal organisation”.<sup>2</sup> Some of those young Communists, as Wang Ming, Wang Jiaxiang, Zhang Wentian, Bo Gu and others, while working in Shanghai and other areas in 1930, displayed great courage in opposing Li Li-san’s platform both at the Fourth CC CPC Plenary Session and after. They held appropriate positions of responsibility in the Central Committee and a number of Soviet regions. It was Li Li-san and his following who first labelled them as “Moscow-oriented faction”.

The argument about Moscow’s undivided control of the CPC Central Committee and of the government of the Soviet regions was floated in the early 1930s by Trotskyites and breakaway groups in the CPC and subsequently revived by Mao during the “chengfeng” period. The actual situation was different. Suffice it to turn once again to some of the sources which came to light in the West back in the late 1960s, notably the memoirs of Zhang Guotao (Chang Kuo-tao) which appeared first in Chinese at Hong Kong and subsequently in English in the United States in 1971-1972.

Although Zhang Guotao’s memoirs were couched in anti-Comintern terms, not even he considered the organisational decisions of the Fourth Plenary Session to have implied power take-over by the Wang Ming faction. He pointed out, besides, that soon after his return to China (January 1931) a Standing Committee of the Political Bureau was set up to direct all the work of the Central Committee, “comprising Hsiang Chung-fa [Xian Zhongfa], Chou himself, and me”.<sup>3</sup> In other words, there was no pre-dominance by the “twenty-eight” in the core of the Central

<sup>1</sup> One of the “twenty-eight”, he was arrested by the Kuomintang secret police in 1934 and later strayed from the CPC.

<sup>2</sup> Sheng Yuen, *Sun Yat-sen University in Moscow and the Chinese Revolution. A Personal Account*, University of Kansas Press, p. 215.

<sup>3</sup> *The Autobiography of Chang Kuo-tao by Chang Kuo-tao*, Vol. 2, University of Kansas Press, Lawrence, Manhattan, Wichita, 1972, pp. 149-50.

Committee leadership.

From Zhang Guotao's memoirs and the works published in Taiwan in the 1960s on the history of the CPC, the Western authors at least should know that the "men of Moscow" were far from holding key posts in the government of the main Soviet regions. The leading posts in the Hunan-Hubei-Anhui region were held by Zhang Guotao and Xu Xiangqian; in the Central Soviet Region, until Chou En-lai's arrival there in December 1931, by Mao Tse-tung, Chu Teh, Xiang Ying, Peng Dehuai, and then by Chou En-lai as well as Liu Bocheng and others. And it was not the "men of Moscow" but Chou En-lai and Liu Bocheng who called for Mao to be removed from military work in 1932, i. e., still before the Central Committee headquarters moved from Shanghai into the Central Soviet Region.<sup>1</sup> In a bid to prove that there were differences of principle between Mao the realist and the "Moscow-oriented faction", Schram and supporters of other "special course" versions refer to the invectives against the members of that group from the CPC leaders, who labelled them as "carriers of overseas patterns", the "scribes divorced from the practice of the Chinese revolution", etc., floated by Mao during the "chengfeng" period, and even to his statements of the 1960s, like this one: "These comrades in the Communist International simply did not understand, or we could say they utterly failed to understand, Chinese society, the Chinese nation, or the Chinese revolution."<sup>2</sup> One can hardly escape the impression that this inordinate trust in Mao's later declarations has grown out of a premeditated calculation rather than from a miscalculation in the choice and analysis of sources. For the facts and documents dating from that period indicate that the "charges" against the "Moscow-oriented faction" (and the Comintern) reflected, first, not so much their position as the nationalistic self-assurance (and limitations) of Mao himself, and, second, that these "charges" were but a ploy in the struggle for power, an attempt, by trading on national feeling, at shifting the blame for the reverses in the struggle of the first

<sup>1</sup> See: A. S. Titov, "The Struggle at the Ningtu Conference", *Problemy Dalnego Vostoka*, No. 2, 1973.

<sup>2</sup> *Authority Participation and Cultural Change in China*, pp. 14-16.

half of the 1930s, for certain leftist guidelines of that period, which were supported by virtually all the CPC leaders, including Mao, to a restricted group of people and at passing off factional infighting and divergence of opinion on certain political issues (with more than the "Moscow-oriented faction", incidentally) for "differences of principle".

On the whole, Schram's refurbished version has turned out to be yet another way of misrepresenting the substance and results of the CPC-Comintern interaction in the late 1920s and the early 1930s. It has been used to the same end as the preceding attempt at denigrating Comintern policy, trading on the national feeling and nationalistic prejudices of some of the Chinese leaders, dishing up the fake argument about the "historical inequality" of relations between the CPSU and the CPC, and between the Soviet Union and China.

We do not know of any other versions today concerning the period of interest to us. On the other hand, one could refer to a recurrent publication of the old ones unchanged in the re-edited books we mentioned earlier on, and in individual articles and general works which appeared in the West as well as in Japan and China during the 1970s.

\* \* \*

To strike the balance. We have considered the main versions of non-Marxist historiography whose authors, turning to the events of the late 1920s and the early 1930s, attempted to construct general concepts of the CPC-Comintern relations and appraise the latter's role in the elaboration of the strategy and tactics of the Chinese revolution. The reader will, of course, notice that we have done our best to avoid giving our own assessment in this particular case, leaving him to form his own judgement on the philosophies the authors of these versions were inspired by.

By way of a general conclusion, we would say that for over a quarter of a century non-Marxist historiography has been advancing and propagating certain concepts which have been constructed by a slanted choice of facts and documents, using falsified evidence and a misinterpretation, in one way or another, of virtually all the major

events of that period. It is anything but a shortage of sources that can explain such a paradox. This could have been a predicament to hint at in the West until the early 1960s. But from then on the bulk of factual material, quite sufficient for an objective interpretation, has been available for scholars. The main reason, it has to be stressed, must have been the biased approach and premeditation in choosing the points of departure. Maoist historiography has deliberately juggled with facts to foster the Mao cult and propagate the Maoist precepts. Bourgeois historiography has just as deliberately (rarely subconsciously, under the influence of anti-communist prejudice) committed itself to a negative attitude towards the Comintern and the CPSU and to denigrating their activities at any cost. Here is one noteworthy fact to bear out this conclusion: the proponents of the most widespread Western versions of Mao's "special strategy" characterised the Comintern's role negatively and Mao's "strategy" positively when they "did not suspect" the latter of having credited himself with the Comintern's contribution towards elaborating its major components. Their general conclusion about the Comintern's role did not change (what did change was only their set of anti-Comintern "arguments") after Mao's "rewriting of history" had been generally recognised in the West as well.

There is yet another noteworthy common feature of all non-Marxist versions—an effort to present the Comintern as a kind of extra-national force and its activities as diktat infringing national dignity, and as a policy which contradicted the national interests of China and the interests of the CPC. This device has clearly betrayed the intention of all schools of bourgeois historiography and politology to distort and subvert the major source of strength of the international communist and liberation movement—internationalism—by trading on the national and patriotic sentiments and the nationalistic prejudice of some Chinese leaders and, in a larger perspective, on the complex problem of combining the international and the national aspects of this movement. One can say that there is a certain amount of evidence on hand in this particular field to show some trends in bourgeois historiography developing "parallel", in unison, as it were, with Maoist historiography.

The Maoist nationalistic falsification of the record of relations between the CPC and the Comintern, the CPC and the CPSU(B), has turned out to furnish “arguments” for the production of bourgeois concepts of “national communisms” and for ideological subversion aimed at setting apart the various streams of the revolutionary movement.

Neither the Comintern leaders nor Marxist historians have ever said that all of the Comintern decisions on China, including those relating to the late 1920s and the early 1930s, were infallible. The Comintern bears its share of responsibility for some sectarian assessments of the role of the Chinese national bourgeoisie and the intermediate forces in the revolutions of the East which were current during the period between its Sixth and Seventh congresses. We say “its share of responsibility” because, for one thing, neither in the 1920s nor at a later stage had the Comintern’s relations with its constituent parties been ones of “diktat and subordination” and, for another, the ECCI had been under the heaviest “left” pressure from the CPC when it dealt with the situation in China from the late 1920s on. Most of the CPC leaders of the day are known not only to have negated the role of the national bourgeoisie, but to have constantly overrated the successive stages of the revolution, which was clearly shown, for instance, by Li Li-sanism and Mao’s position in those years. But to gloat over and play up these isolated errors, even if serious, while refusing to consider events and processes integrally, in a historical retrospect—and the interaction between the Comintern and the CPC was, indeed, such a major factor—means acting like pseudo-scientific philistines or political tricksters. Even if one leaves out such “little trifles” as the Comintern’s assistance to the Communist Party of China in working out its agrarian programme or its military construction line in the 1920s and 1930s and in drawing the party’s attention to the work of organising the masses, and if one confines oneself to looking objectively at the ECCI’s role and its decisions at least during such landmarking times in the history of the CPC as those of the turn towards building the army and base areas in the late 1920s and the early 1930s, as well as towards creating a united national front in the mid-1930s, the elimination of Li Li-sanism in 1930 and the sectarian

precepts of Mao in 1936—that will be enough to see the full importance of the development of the CPC as a Comintern section for the revolution in China. Bourgeois authors, so readily taking up the arguments of Maoist historiography, would do well to reflect, when appraising the Comintern's role in China, on the reason why it was just those particular decisions of the Comintern that Mao credited himself with as his major trump cards.

Marxist historians have nothing to do with viewing, as bourgeois authors would make believe, the revolutionary process in China as only an “unfolding in time and space” of the Comintern's ideas and guidelines, with the Chinese Communists as passive executors. But for the heroic struggle of the Chinese Communists, with a wealth of experience gained at the cost of great sacrifice to add to the storehouse of the experience of the world-wide revolutionary movement, and but for their creative approach in resolving many problems and translating these solutions into practical reality, there would have been neither revolutionary strategy nor revolutionary practice fundamental to the victory of the revolution in China.

It is contrary to the records of history to speculate on who, in the long run, must be credited with assuring the victory of that revolution, the Comintern or the Communist Party of China. Its success sprang both from the heroic struggle of the Chinese Communists and international cooperation which was a process that was far from simple and smooth. It showed itself in a collective summing-up of experience within the framework of the Leninist strategy, in the coordination of positions and tactics in the international arena, and, finally, in the direct assistance from the Comintern, the Soviet Union, the CPSU, and other revolutionary and democratic forces to the revolutionary people of China. International unity, rather than nationalistic self-isolation and overemphasis of a “special Chinese road” as opposed to the policies of the socialist countries, is still today the only way the Chinese people can extricate themselves from the impasse created by the Maoist “special strategy”.

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