

THE COMINTERN (THIRD INTERNATIONAL) AND
THE CPI WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
M. N. ROY (1920-30) : A CRITIQUE.

SADA NAND

NEW DELHI
MAY 1976

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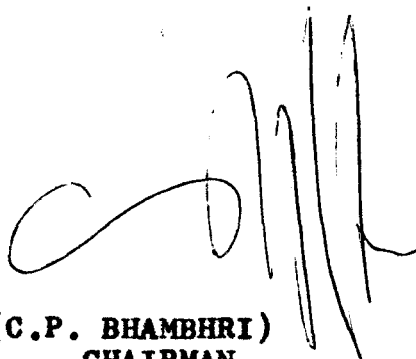
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DECLARATION

**Certified that the material in this Dissertation
has not been previously submitted for any other
degree of this or any other University.**

Sada Nand
(SADA NAND)


**(C.P. BHAMBHRI)
CHAIRMAN.**

Sudipta Kaviraj
**(SUDIPTA KAVIRAJ)
SUPERVISOR**

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ABBREVIATIONS

- CW COLLECTED WORKS, Vols. 1-45
V.I. Lenin, Progress Publishers, Moscow.
- HCPI-I DOCUMENTS OF THE HISTORY OF COMMUNIST PARTY
OF INDIA, VOL. I, 1917-22.
G. Adhikari (ed), PPH, Delhi, 1971.
- HCPI-II DOCUMENTS OF THE HISTORY OF COMMUNIST PARTY
OF INDIA, VOL. II, 1923-25.
G. Adhikari (ed), PPH, 1974.
- MCPI MYSELF AND THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA, 1920-29.
Muzaffar Ahmed, National Book Agency, Calcutta,
1962.
- NLME THE NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT IN THE EAST,
V.I. Lenin, Progress, Moscow, 1957.
- OHCI OUTLINE HISTORY OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL
A.I. Sobolev and others (ed), Progress,
Moscow, 1971.

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INTRODUCTION

Though the history of the world communist movement begins with the work of the Third International (1919-43), yet the working class movement in the world had started in the middle of the 19th century, partly as a corollary to Industrial Revolution and partly due to the development of capitalism particularly in England and Germany. It was in June 1832 that the red flag was first hoisted by the workers in Paris, the flag which is now universally used by the entire communist and revolutionary working class movement.

This study of the world communist movement deals only with the Third International. It would hence be desirable to take a brief look at the earlier phases of the movement - the genesis, growth and nature - atleast for the sake of the continuity of the thematic, and to see how marxist theory before the Third International looked at the problem of revolution in the colonies.

Karl Marx first developed the theory of the world revolution. Marx's theory of revolution matured in two phases which are qualitatively different from each other. Marx before 1850 was a German revolutionary with more particularistic concern for revolution in Germany. He was an activist who fought in the ranks of the army in the Revolution of 1848.

Before 1850, Marx's theory of revolution was determined by what happened in Europe and particularly in Germany. With the Vienna Settlement of 1815, an era of reaction and counter-revolution had set in Europe which evoked organised opposition of the proletariat. Hence, before 1850, Marx's analysis focused on the proletarian revolution in Europe over the subsequent, and more complex concept of a world revolution. Due to his intellectual pre-occupation in the European politics, Marx first looked for classes who could make revolution in Europe. In the process he, of course, paid some attention to cross national solidarity of the proletariat, but it was still only in the European context. In the colonial world, this was yet to be developed. Therefore, the contents of revolution both in Europe and the colonial world were radically different from each other. In the European politics, it was the metropolitan proletariat and in the colonial world, the down-trodden masses, who were at two different locations of the capitalist structure of operation. Marx, during this period, seems to have believed in a strict sequence between the metropolitan and colonial revolutions. Socialistic revolutions in the metropolis were the precondition for colonial revolutions.

Marx paid careful attention to the colonial problems after 1850, mainly due to two important events - Taiping Rebellion in China, and the Indian mutiny of 1857. Though

most of Marx's work in this period was done by way of journalism, yet it brings out the outlines of his theoretical work on this problem. Marx stated that imperialism has produced a social revolution without intending it, and the imperialist colonisation has produced the greatest and the only social revolution ever heard of in Asia. He looked at the problem of India and the colonial world mainly as an historical problem of understanding the socio-economic formations, to the exclusion of political speculations of the future of the colonial world. Though Marx took interest in the 1857 Indian revolt and even characterised it as the First War of Independence, yet his political formulations about the future of India were not clear.

But theoretical discussion on the problem of the colonial revolution and its possible linkages with revolution in advanced western societies was of central importance in marxian theory. Despite the difference in the contents of the two revolutions - anti-imperialist in the West and entirely different in colonies, both had one thing in common. Both were movements of men who were victims of capitalism and hence opposed to it. The difference in the nature of the two revolutions was also explained by marxists by two theoretical devices i) theory of stages of revolution and ii) theory of imperialism. Marx, of course, dealt with these theories somewhat unsystematically and on a very ^{high} level of generality,

but they were developed fully in the works of Lenin. The distinct social content of two revolutions were structurally connected by the imperialist system. If social revolution comes it would dismantle the national structures of capitalism in Western societies and if colonial revolution comes it would dismantle the international capitalist system. But in both cases it was capitalism which was challenged and whichever revolution happened earlier, that would make the other more likely. This account of Marx of a colonial revolution, though tentative, incomplete and sometimes suffering from the defects taken over from the sources of his data, was still short of a fully worked out theory. Marx believed in the revolutionary infirmity of the peasantry in the colonial world and thought they were destined to follow and not to lead. He held that leadership would come from the middle classes in democratic revolutions, and from the proletariat in the socialist ones. Marx has not left a complete framework for a colonial revolution except his sympathy and best wishes for the future proletariat, yet his analysis of the colonies provided a basis to be developed fully by Lenin at a later date. Lenin further developed the Marxian idea and came to the conclusion about the existence of three mainstreams in the world revolutionary process - a) the emergence of socialist states in Europe, encouraging and helping the revolutionary process in the colonial world b) the national

liberation movements against the imperialist-capitalists, in the colonies and semi-colonies c) the struggles of working class in developed countries furthering the process of world revolution.

The present study does not deal with the process of world revolution and Comintern's involvement in it. It deals with a much more limited theme -- the CPI when it tried to further the national-liberation movement in the country against the imperialist rule and under the general guidance of the Third International. In the study of the foundation and development of the CPI and Indian communism during the period, one is severely handicapped with dearth of material. So far only 4 or 5 full-scale studies of the early Indian communist movement have come out, but even these are highly restricted in their outlook, nature and content. A major part of the histories of the Party have been written after the split in the Party in 1964 and hence their account tends to be affected by hindsight. Often the accounts are full of mutual bitterness. The scope of the study of the early communist movement in India is further restricted due to the secret and illegal nature of the movement on the one hand, and the oppressive activities of the imperialist administration. Hence many controversies surround the process of the formation of the CPI till 1925 and its chequered development till 1930. This forms the background of Chapter I.

The link between the early communist movement in India and the Third International was provided by M.N. Roy. Hence

M.N. Roy has been treated in this work 'not as a figurative head but in the literal sense', Roy, right from the beginning, advocated ultra-left views. He even opposed, though unsuccessfully, Lenin's Preliminary Theses on the National + Colonial Question at the Second Congress of the Comintern. He continued to hold his line till the Fifth Congress though he did not oppose Lenin's policy publicly after the Second Congress. The predicament of Roy was that he was to act within four corners of Lenin's policy. Therefore, after Lenin's death and in the Fifth Congress, Roy once again reverted to his stand of the Second Congress. Roy was partially encouraged to take his stand due to temporary success of his line of argument regarding the colonial world. Even the Chinese revolution of 1925-27, where Roy was sent by the Comintern, to provide guidance seemed to have proved that the bourgeoisie in the colonies was reactionary and counter-revolutionary.

Roy, of course, amended his views about the role of bourgeoisie before the Sixth Congress. This was shortly after his expulsion from the Comintern. His attitude had to a great extent softened towards the national bourgeoisie and the movement led by Gandhiji. After his expulsion from the Comintern, Roy came and settled in India and started working for some-time in close cooperation with Nehru and Gandhi. Roy's association with the National Congress did not last long. He soon broke away with the Congress and moved towards his utopia called New Humanism.

But, strangely, now the Comintern leadership ideologically came closer to Roy as is evidenced by the Sixth Congress theses where revaluation of the role of the bourgeoisie was done, at a time when Roy himself had amended his views. In 1927-28, Roy had moved to the right compared to his earlier position, the Comintern to the left. However, it failed to bring off a reconciliation because other issues were involved.

In the last analysis, Roy was not very successful in organising the early communist movement in India. This was because he was not ideally suited to follow the Comintern's line of the Second Congress. Paradoxically, events moved in such a way that he was expected to make effective a policy he had originally opposed. His failure was also due to the fact that he was not in India since 1916 and had no first hand knowledge of the nature of the national liberation movement in India. The vigilance of British intelligence made communication with the organisational foci difficult. Roy, though he formally adhered to Lenin's line out of necessity, yet while guiding the communist movement in India, Roy was subconsciously advocating what he considered right, which was atleast considerably different from Lenin's formulations.

CHAPTER - I

ORIGINS OF INDIAN COMMUNISM

Political Background

The October Revolution of 1917 in Russia greatly influenced the nationalists and revolutionaries in India to begin their search for new ways and means to intensify struggle for the independence of India.¹

Before dealing with the impact of the Russian Revolution on the intensification of the communist activities in India, a glance at the early struggles in this direction is desirable. It may be pointed out that the extremist era of the Indian National Congress (1905-18) witnessed a sharp rise in the peasants' struggles and workers' movement in India, though in the case of working class movement, the rise was intermittent before 1914. These innumerable, though unrelated actions, by the labouring class were one of the most important forces of freedom struggle during this period. The activities of the militant nationalists e.g. Lokamanya Tilak, among the labour class movement gave impetus to the rise of their national consciousness. One significant aspect of the militants'

1. The Preamble of the CPI's constitution adopted in 1958 acknowledges it: 'The CPI arose in the course of our liberation struggle as a result of the efforts of Indian revolutionaries, who under the inspiration of the Great October Revolution were seeking new paths for achieving national independence.'

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political programme was its emphasise on inspiring broad masses of people into the anti-imperialist movement. However, in rallying the masses, the militants appealed exclusively to national and religious feelings, since a large number of them hailed from Indian petty-bourgeois and bourgeois intellectuals who showed no interest in inculcating or developing class consciousness among the proletariat.² Thus the militancy of the extremists was on the political plane but without social programme. The young national bourgeois, particularly its more radical petty-bourgeois fringe in the form of militant nationalist, strove to win a section of the working class, under the slogans of anti-imperialism as 'Swaraj is my birth right'. The militant nationalists also regarding the working class as a significant instrument in the struggle for national independence.

A major event which helped the process of revolutionary upsurge in India was the trial and conviction of Lokmanya Tilak in 1908, for courageously condemning British colonial rule and upholding India's right to national self-determination. Commenting on this Lenin wrote:

'... India is beginning to stand up in defence of her political leaders... In India, too, the proletariat has already developed to conscious political mass struggle and that being the case, the Russian-style British regime in India is doomed... The class consciousness of European worker has already found its comrades in Asia, and their number will grow with every passing day and hour'(3)

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2. Choudhary, Sukhbir. Peasants' and Workers' Movement in India, 1905-1929, PPH, Delhi, 1971, p.46.
 3. Lenin, V.I. The National Liberation Movement in the East, Moscow, 1969, p.14. *which article?*

The mass movement reached its climax in July 1908 when the people of Bombay organised a public strike and the Bombay labourers came out on a mass political strike. The Bombay labour strike not only demonstrated the workers' solidarity with the nationalist forces, but also revealed that the Indian working class was already taking an active part in the direction of national progress. It was a political action of labour as a class.

The outbreak of the first world war gave a new impetus to the working class movement. Perhaps, this was partly due to the Indian soldiers drawn mostly from among the masses, going to Europe to participate in the war and in the process seeing the advanced life of workers which brought a new political consciousness in the Indian workers. But above all, there had occurred the October Revolution of 1917. The victory of the workers over the bourgeoisie of Russia for the first time in the history of the world stirred the Indian workers. It swept the Indian workers and peasants out of their apathy and transforming their movement for national liberation. The period of 1919 to 1922 was one of tremendous national upheaval, a period of revolutionary uprisings of the Indian people against British imperialism and for national liberation. It was not an isolated phenomenon of Indian history. It was a part of the processes of world revolution against imperialism. It appeared in two forms. One was the revolutionary movement of the working class for liberation from capitalism and for establishment of

socialism; and the other was the liberation movement of oppressed nations for liberation from imperialism. The October Revolution had a direct impact on the Indian and Asian developments. It directly and openly appealed to the oppressed nations to overthrow the imperialist yoke. Secondly, it spoke to the exploited masses, particularly the workers and peasants, against landlord-capitalist exploitation. Even ordinary workers, awakened into political consciousness by the burden of the war and its consequences, spoke of how the capitalists and landlords had been liquidated in Soviet Russia.⁴ Thus only the Russian Revolution of October 1917 impressed itself on the minds of the Indian people, and particularly the working class by its national-revolutionary and class-emancipatory role and ideology.⁵

In the wake of October Revolution, there was the famous strike organised by the textile weavers in Ahmedabad in March 1918. Its success marked the beginning of innumerable strikes organised by the Indian workers in the industrial areas like Bombay, Kanpur, Calcutta, Jamshedpur, Madras etc. Besides these strikes for economic issues, workers in Bombay and a number of other industrial towns went on a political strike against the

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4. AITUC - Fifty Years, Documents, Volume I, AITUC Publications, New Delhi, 1973 - Introduction by S.A. Dange, p.x.
 5. Ibid., p.xiii.

Rowlatt Acts, demonstrating thereby their growing political consciousness. It marked the entry of the working class in the nationalist phase.⁶ The active participation of the proletariat in the demonstrations organised against the Rowlatt Acts made the nationalist-minded intelligentsia realise the revolutionary significance of the role that labour could play in the struggle of nationalism. Hence they propagated for establishing permanent associations for workers to improve their social and economic lot and setting up their own independent trade union organisations.

Even before the outbreak of October Revolution, the political consciousness of the Indian masses arose partly due to the Russian Revolution of 1905-7 against Czarist autocracy and partly due to the individual revolutionaries who were indulging in terrorist activities to advance the Indian revolution against the imperialist rule, even through self-annihilation. Commenting on the Russian events of 1905, Gandhi wrote:

'A comparison can be made, up to a point, between the people of the Russia and our own. Just as we are poor, the Russian people are also poor. We have no voice in conducting the affairs of state and have to pay taxes with demur, the same is true of the Russians also. Seeing such oppression, some Russians do come out bravely against it from time to time. Some time ago there was a rebellion in Russia'. (7)

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6. Dessai, A.R. Social Background of Indian Nationalism, Popular Book Depot, Bombay, 1959, p.185.
 7. Joshi, P.C. and Damodaran, K. Marx Comes to India, Manohar Book Service, New Delhi, 1975, p.15.

Citing the events of 1905 in Russia, Gandhi pointed out that the power of Indian Viceroy was in no way less than that of the Czar. 'We, too, can resort to the Russian remedy against tyranny...We can also show the same strength that the Russian people have done'.⁸ The Indian revolutionaries functioning abroad against the alien rule, learnt the art of bomb making. Some of them even made arrangements for secretly importing arms and ammunition with the help of German Foreign Office. Due to the oppressive retaliatory activities of the imperialist government, some of these Indian revolutionaries were executed while some escaped to foreign countries in collaboration with patriotic groups of Indians in London, Paris, Berlin and the United States. One of such revolutionaries was Lala Hardayal who while teaching in the United States got in touch with various socialist and anarchist groups. He was closer to the latter.⁹ In U.S. the most militant part of the Indian community was the emigre Sikh peasantry engaged as workers in various capacities. They had become political conscious due to their having suffered racial discrimination at the worst. They also formed the Ghadar Party of which Lala Hardayal was one of the important leader. During the course of First World War the Ghadar Party stepped up its preparations for armed revolt in

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., p.26.

India and expected the help of the anti-British foreign powers, especially Germany. As the First World War broke out Lala Hardayal jumped bail and sailed for Europe. The Ghadar organisation was no more confined to the United States but had spread inside Punjab, to South East Asia and, also among Indians in the British colonies in Africa and elsewhere.¹⁰

The October Revolution of 1917 in Russia was of tremendous significance in the awakening of the exploited classes in India. Despite the British government's care that the truth about Bolshevik Revolution did not reach India, it did not succeed. The truth of this world-shaking event was made known to Indians by a leading nationalist daily of Bengal in November 1917 itself: 'The downfall of Tsardom has ushered in the age of destruction of alien bureaucracy in India too',¹¹ and even the Montague-Chemsford Report of 1918 tersely observed: 'The Bolshevik Revolution in Russia has given impetus to Indian political consciousness'. The patriotism and revolutionary zeal of Indian nationalists drew them to the outlook and theory which made possible the victory of the October Revolution. The revolution illumined their path forward. The name of Lenin became the symbol of the leap in the consciousness of the advanced revolutionary nationalists of this country. In 1921, Dhunketu, the first communist weekly in Bengali, compared the

10. Ibid., p.28.

11. Chattopadhyay, Gautam, Communism & Bengal's Freedom Movement, PPH, Delhi, 1970, p.

Bolsheviks to Kalki (an incarnation of the God Vishnu) wielding the sharp sword on behalf of the harassed and long oppressed people'. A year later, the well-known Bengali nationalist weekly, Atmasakti, also wrote: 'The substantial similarity in the conditions of Russia and India bring to our mind the problems of Bolshevism. Like Russia, India too is a predominantly agrarian country. The number of educated persons are about the same in both the countries. Both the countries are strongly religious-minded...The factors that led to the rise of Bolshevism in Russia are also present in India...They cannot be kept down and under any more'.¹² The success of October Revolution put an end to the fatalism which had paralysed the Indian people who now felt confident to draw the imperialist rulers out of the country as the Russians have chased out the feudal lords and the bourgeoisie and had taken over power. Besides, there were a considerable number of Indian patriots who secretly visited the Soviet Union e.g. Maulvi Barakatullah, a prominent Indian revolutionary who after his meeting with Lenin in 1919 said: 'The dawn of mankind's liberation is appearing on Russia's horizon, the bright sun of that happy day is Lenin'.¹³

The impact of the October Revolution on the upsurge of the revolutionary movement in India has been aptly described

12. Ibid.

13. Choudhry, Sukhbir, op.cit., p.71.

by K.M. Panikkar '...of the individual events which influenced the political and moral development of India...probably the greatest was the Russian Revolution. The capture of power by the proletariat, not only in Moscow, but throughout the enormous country stretching out to the bowder of the Pamirs, made a deep impression on India's youth'.¹⁴

Owing to the establishment of a workers' government in the Soviet Union, the Indian workers understood the significance of the organised power, which favoured the establishment of the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC). The first session of the AITUC was held on 30 October 1920 in Bombay due to strenuous efforts of left minded intellectuals, prominent Indian National Congress leaders and members of the British Labour Party. The Congress was attended by 801 delegates from all over India representing 106 affiliated and sympathising trade unions which together with miners' representatives represented 5 lacs of workers. In its presidential address,¹⁵ Lajpat Rai, expressed satisfaction over the fact that the Indian proletariat was joining 'hands and brains' not only to consolidate its interests, but also to forge a link in the 'chain of international brotherhood'. In his speech he expressed his indignation over the fact that the labour was still treated as a commodity to be sold and purchased in the Indian

14. Ibid., p.118.

15. Adhikari, G. HCPI-I, p.207.

market. He pointed out:

'Militarism and Imperialism are twin children of capitalism; they are one in three and three in one. Their shadow, their fruit and their bask all are poisonous. It is only lately that an antidote has been discovered and that antidote is organised labour'. (16)

Lala Lajpat Rai pointed out the existence of two truths, it is either capitalistic and bourgeois or socialistic and added:

'My own experience in Europe and America leads me to think that socialistic or Bolshevik truth is any day better, more reliable and more human than capitalistic and imperialistic truth'. (17)

He concluded his address by exhorting the audience to assist in the process of organising Indian workers, of making them conscious and educating them in the ways and interests of the common weal.

With gradual development of industrialisation in prominent cities, the working class tended to develop a new outlook. It shed its old religious approach to social divisions and political struggle. The industrial population of industrial centres appeared obviously divided into capitalist and labourers rather than into religious communities. With the growth of this new consciousness, the workers began to struggle for the establishment of a national order guaranteeing the equitable distribution of economic power. In 1921 alone, 396 strikes were organised with a loss of 6,984,426 working hours, involving 6,00,351 workers. Plantation workers of Assam striking against retrenchment

16. Ibid., p.209.

17. Ibid., p.210.

started a big exodus in May 1921 to their different provinces. This was in the face of unbearable police repression. The EB Railway workers of Chandpur staged a remarkable protest strike in sympathy with the plantation workers. 60000 mill workers of Bombay staged a brief protest strike on the first death anniversary of Tilak on August 1, 1921. The highest indication of the rising political consciousness of the working class was seen when they backed the call for hartal to proclaim India's boycott of Prince of Wales's visit on 17 November 1921 by complete general strikes in the industrial towns like Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. This was perhaps the first all-national political general strike in India. In Bombay, where Prince of Wales landed, besides the general strike, barricades were raised to fight the police, the territorial army and the regular soldiery that were sent to quell the strike and uprising. The strike and fighting lasted for 5 days. The Daily Herald, the Labour paper in England, called it the 'strongest uprising'. During the struggle, the official estimate is that 30 people were shot dead in Bombay alone'.

According to Dr. G. Adhikari,¹⁸ four trends can be identified from among the revolutionary nationalists, from which individuals and groups in their search for new paths for the struggle for independence turned to scientific socialism and communism under the impact of October Revolution. The

18. Adhikari, G. HCPI-I, pp.1-2.

Communist Party founded at Tashkent in October 1920 by M.N. Roy and others was directly and indirectly the result of these trends. The trends detailed by Dr. Adhikari are:

(a) Indian national revolutionaries operating from abroad in the period of the first world war and thereafter from Germany, the U.S.A., Turkey and Afghanistan, who earlier functioned through the Berlin Committee and the 'provisional government of independent India' or otherwise and later came to be influenced by the October Revolution -- amongst whom we have such outstanding names as V. Chattopadhyaya, Mr. Barakatullah, M.P.B.T. Acharya, M.N. Roy and Abani Mukherji.

(b) National revolutionaries from the Pan-Islamic Khilafat movement, who went abroad in the war period (1914-16) and those from the Hijrat Movement of the postwar period and who similarly later came under the influence of October Revolution among whom we have such names as Mohammad Ali Sepassi, Rahmat Ali Khan, Ferozuddin Mansoor and Abdul Majid and Shaukat Usmani.

(c) National revolutionaries of the Ghadar Party organised among the Sikh and Punjabi emigrant labour (U.S.A.) before the first world war, who staged an unsuccessful revolution in 1915 at the time when KOMAGATA MARU arrived in India. It is the post-war period of the Ghadar Party when it was revived and reorganised by Rattan Singh and Santokh Singh, with the latter as the general secretary, and who in 1922, took the initiative to establish contact with the Communist International.

(d) The fourth and the most important trend was of the national revolutionaries in India itself -- from the left wing of the National Congress, the terrorist organisations and parties, the Khilafat movement, the Akali movement (especially its Babar Akali left wing which was linked with the Ghadar Party). Individuals and groups from this trend -- after the debacle of the movement in 1921-22 or those who never accepted the same -- turned to scientific socialism and the class organisation of workers and peasants under the impact of the October Revolution and later became the founders of the early communist groups in different parts of the country e.g. Dange in Bombay, Singaravelu in Madras, Muzaffar Ahmed in Calcutta and the Inqilab group in Lahore'.¹⁹

Roy Transformed into a Communist

M.N. Roy has often been described as the 'founder of the Communist Party of India'.²⁰ The similar opinion is held by Muzaffar Ahmed.²¹ Since this work deals with M.N. Roy only


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19. Dr. Adhikari has somewhat neglected this trend - that in terms of their basic class-base, there were connections between the trade union work of early 'extremist' nationalists and communist activists of the twenties. This trend has been discussed in detail in this Chapter under the sub-head 'Problems of Organisation - 1920-25'.
20. Haithoox, John Patrick. Communism and Nationalism in India, M.N. Roy & Comintern Policy 1920-39, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1971, p.3.
21. 'The CPI was founded abroad in 1920 and the person who took the main initiative in founding it was M.N. Roy'. Ahmed, Muzaffar. Myself and the Communist Party of India, 1920-39 (NCPI), National Book Agency, Calcutta, 1970, p.28.

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after his conversion to communism, a brief account showing his transformation from an extremist nationalist of early youth to a communist is desirable. This distinct phase of Roy's life served as the prelude to his sudden emergence at the Second Congress of Communist International, as the spokesman of Indian communism.

Narendra Nath Bhattacharya, later known as Nanvendra Nath Roy, joined the revolutionary movement in Bengal at the early age of 14, under the inspiration of Jatin Mukerji, a known revolutionary of Bengal. He took a sincere and active part in the movement against the Partition of Bengal in 1905. There are sufficient references to this effect in the Sedition Committee Reports. He had a difficult childhood, the kind of which invariably creates a sense of frustration. The politics which first attracted him was of armed struggle against the alien government and for the liberation of the motherland. His first arrest was in 1907 followed by another in 1910. He was arrested in the Garden Reach Dacoity Case and the Baliaghata Dacoity case and also in the famous Howrah Conspiracy Case. He absconded bail in 1915. His involvement in these dacoity cases should not be misunderstood since these dacoities were undertaken to provide money to carry on the revolutionary movement for the liberation of India. Roy made his mark slowly but steadily in the nationalist revolutionary movement and left India 'incognito' after the outbreak of

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World War I. Backed by the German influence he organised s.s. 'Maverick' affair, when an attempt was made to ship arms and ammunition to India for the use of the revolutionaries. In this connection Roy visited Shanghai, Java, Sumatra, and Batavia (now Djakarta). He remained some time in Japan and later made his way to America where he was indicated in the San Francisco Conspiracy Case. Narendranath assumed the name of M.N. Roy in 1916 while he was in U.S.A. evading arrest for his revolutionary activities. The name assumed by him was to 'wipe out the past and begin life as a new man'. In U.S.A. Roy contacted H.L. Gupta and Dr. Chandrakanta Chakrabarty and other Indian revolutionaries who were in league with the Germans. It was here that Roy's transformation from a Bengali nationalist of the extremist school to an international communist began. 'I frequented the New York Public Library to read the works of Karl Marx, and discovered a new meaning in them. It was not long before I accepted socialism'.²² One evening he attended a socialist rally addressed by the Indian nationalist leader Lala Lajpat Rai, who spoke of the poverty of India. After the speech a member of the audience asked Lalaji what difference it would make if Indians were exploited by 'native capitalists' rather than by 'foreign imperialists'. Lajpat Rai replied that 'it does make a difference whether one is kicked by one's brother or by

22. Roy, M.N. Memoirs, Allied Publishers, Delhi, 1964, p.28.

a foreign robber'. The reply struck Roy as inadequate, and for the first time, he felt that there was something missing in the nationalist blueprint for freedom.²³

It was at the New York Public Library that Roy, for the first time, made his acquaintance with the writings of Karl Marx. In his gravitation towards Marxism, Roy was no doubt influenced by Evelyn Trent²⁴ an American Lady, and many socialist supporters of Indian independence such as H.L. Gupta and Dr. Chakrabarty. Evelyn's views on Bolshevism were similar to Roy's and she assisted him in the propaganda work and contributed numerous articles to the periodicals issued by him. However, till then his conversion to Communism was far from complete.

In June 1917 Roy was indicted for illegal entry in U.S.A. and an arrest warrant was issued. Roy, with his wife, managed to abscond to Mexico. Roy came to Mexico when that country was in the 'throes of a revolution' - the character of which [anti- was] imperialist and anti-feudal. Mexico was asserting its independence from U.S. imperialism. The Carranza regime, which was in power in Mexico, when Roy arrived and which granted protection to him, had in February 1917 proclaimed a new bourgeois-democratic constitution which announced comprehensive land reforms and social measures e.g. right to strike, to trade union, social security etc.

23. Haithcox, John Patrick, op. cit. p. 7

24. 'They were married in New York'.

Ibid., p.7

Though the constitution was proclaimed, yet the masses/ especially the peasantry were in fermentation fighting for its full implementation and the Carranza government was moving tardily forward under their pressure. With the joining of U.S. in War in 1918, Mexico with its anti-U.S. position offered Germany an alternative centre of operation. It was in such Mexico that Germans contacted Roy and gave him money to buy arms for Indian revolutionaries.²⁵ Roy, besides circulating in Mexican society, began to frequent his meetings of various socialist groups in the Mexico city. One of these was a small group called the Mexican Socialist Party.

Roy considered Mexico the land of his rebirth. It was because here he met the Soviet emissary, Michael Borodin, whom Roy credits with having initiated him 'in the intricacies of Hegelian dialectics as the key to Marxism' and with 'having broken down his resistance to Marxist thought. In daily discussions with Borodin on the theory and practice of communism and the philosophical aspects of Marxism, Roy sought to resist Borodin's arguments with a defence of cultural nationalism. After listening to Roy's arguments Borodin would protest, 'but it is all subjectivism'. Borodin succeeded in convincing Roy that he was attempting to defend a point of view in which he no longer firmly believed. These few months with Borodin, according to Roy, 'constituted the most memorable period' of his life. It was at this time, he later wrote that 'the foundations of my subsequent intellectual development were laid'. Thus, shortly after the end of the

25. Adhikari G. HCPI-I, pp.144-5

First World War and the defeat of Germany, Roy had turned to a new source of support for revolutionary activities in India.

Roy sought to gain control on the Mexican Socialist Party, of which he was a member, and convert into a communist organisation. Roy did not succeed in persuading the members of the party to change its name and its principles. Roy and a small group of his followers, therefore, broke from the party and founded the Communist Party of Mexico, with the blessings of Borodin. This party subsequently won affiliation with the Communist International. Although Roy was to become the doyen of communists in India, he attended the 1920 Congress of the Comintern as an official representative of the Communist Party of Mexico. Roy gives the following account about his leaving Mexico and reaching Moscow to attend the Second Congress:

'I left the land of my rebirth (Mexico) as an intellectually free man, though with a new faith. I no longer believed in political freedom without the content of economic liberation and social justice. I had also realised that the intellectual freedom from the bondage of all tradition and authority was the condition for any effective struggle for social emancipation'.(26)

Problems of Organization: 1920-1925

The emigrant Communist Party founded at Tashkent, with the participation of 7 members (M.N. Roy, Evelyn Roy, Abani Mukerji, Rosa Fitingof, Mohammad Ali, Mohammad Shafiq and

26. Roy, M.N. Memoirs, op.cit., pp.219-20.

and M.P.B.T. Acharya) cannot be considered as a genuine communist party of India. Some of these individuals were not even Indians and had no real knowledge of the national-liberation movement of India. Incidentally, the foundation of CPI at Tashkent prior to any counterpart in India, helped hostile critics to imply that Indian Communist Party was basically a foreign implantation. Notwithstanding this, the CP of Tashkent did a lot of propaganda work, brought out a Paper - The Vanguard - and helped the communist groups in India to coordinate their activities which had started inside India by the year 1921 through the efforts of leaders belonging to the left-wing of the Indian National Congress and by others who came under the impact of the October Revolution. The emergence of these groups was not the outcome of any decision taken jointly; they started independently of each other and at different places. In Calcutta, the initiative was taken by Muzaffar Ahmed and a communist group emerged around him. In P^Ho^Jab, the task of building the party was initiated by Ghulam Hussain who taught Economics in Edwards Church Mission College in Peshawar. In Madras, Singaravelu Chettiar would receive precedence over everyone else in any account of the building of the Party in Madras. Singaravelu, before becoming a communist, was, according to the Central Intelligence Bureau, a 'non-cooperator' and a 'labour agitator' and was the first Congressman to pronounce from the Congress platform at Gaya

(in 1922) that he was a communist. In Bombay, the communist group was formed due to the efforts of Dange, who founded a weekly newspaper in August 1922, The Socialist. Before this, Dange also wrote a book in April 1921 - Gandhi Vs. Lenin, about which Muzzafar Ahmed, not a very sympathetic observer, wrote that it required 'a lot of guts to write such a book then'.²⁷

The background of these communist activities were the developments of the year 1921 which can be grouped into two series: (a) events and developments belonging strictly to the non-cooperation movement and (b) spontaneous uprisings and movement of workers, peasants and of masses in general, not strictly part of the non-cooperation movement but all the same taking place under its strong nation-embracing impact.

The non-cooperation movement began in January 1921 with the appeal to the students to boycott schools and colleges, to lawyers to boycott courts -- rather the spirit of boycott of the entire British administration. The boycott of educational institutions was complete while the boycott of courts was not much successful although some of the eminent lawyers like Motilal Nehru, C.R. Das and others fully supported. In order to test the strength of the movement, the British government announced the Indian visit and tour of the Prince of Wales from November 1921. The Congress, however,

27. Ahmed, Muzaffar. The CPI and its Formation Abroad, National Book Agency, Calcutta, 1962, p.10

decided to organise an all-India hartal on the day of the arrival of the Prince of Wales and to boycott receptions to him at all places. This was done. But on the day of the arrival of the Prince of Wales, there was a spontaneous general strike of the textile workers in Bombay and there were retaliatory actions by the masses against police repression, such as burning of tram cars, liquor shops etc. While the spirit of non-cooperation with the British government revived and organised the masses through the length and breadth of the country and the situation was ripe for launching a general civil disobedience movement, Gandhi, the leader of the non-cooperation movement held the opposite views. He said: 'The hope of reviving mass civil disobedience has once more, in my opinion, been dashed to pieces, the atmosphere for mass civil disobedience is absent'. The British government soon stepped up its repressive measures.

The second series of struggles in the year 1921, though not part of the non-cooperation movement, cannot be separated from the new phase of independence movement. These struggles were manifested through: (a) The Nanakana massacre which took place on 20 February 1921 and opened the mass phase of the gurdwara reform movement and brought the Sikh masses into the mainstream of the national freedom movement; (b) The Eka movement of the U.P. tenant-peasants was widespread and militant. It was a revolt of the peasant tenants against unbearably oppressive group of the landlords

though not yet for the abolition of landlordism; (c) The Moplah rebellion was essentially an uprising of peasant tenants of Malabar against the oppression of landlords - basically a peasant movement despite the communal overtones developed in it (d) A country-wide strike wave which included several big economic strikes and one general political strike which led to the emergence of a militant trade union movement.

It was in the year 1921 that in the name of the Communist Party of India, a manifesto signed by M.N. Roy and Abani Mukerji was addressed to the 36th Indian National Congress held at Ahmedabad. The Manifesto²⁸ condemned the Gandhian effort of fighting for superficial cause e.g. Khilafat, revision of Treaty of Sevres and urged the Congress to fight for the 'betterment of the material condition' of the poor workers and hungry peasants. The Manifesto stated that: 'The slogan which will correspond to the interest of the majority of the population and consequently electrify them with enthusiasm to fight consciously is 'land to the peasant and bread to the workers'. The abstract doctrine of national self-determination leaves them passive, personal charms create enthusiasm loose and passing'. The Manifesto also held:

'Non-cooperation cannot unify the nation... it is bound to fail because it does not take the economic laws into consideration...The only social class in whose hand non-cooperation can prove to be a powerful

28. Adhikari, G. HCPI-I, pp.341-44.

weapon i.e. the working class has not only been left out of the programme but the prophet of non-cooperation himself declared 'it is dangerous to make political use of the factory workers'.

The Manifesto observed:

'mere end of the foreign domination is not the sufficient inducement for the people at large. They should be told in clear terms what benefits would accrue to them from the establishment of Swaraj. It has to be demonstrated by the acts of the Congress that it proposes to achieve the amelioration of the people's sufferings, and that it will not neglect their immediate needs in quest of abstract freedom to be realised at some future date'.

The Manifesto outlined that the Congress had done nothing to lead the workers and the peasants in their economic struggle and stressed: 'so long as the Congress does not show its capability and desire to make the every day struggle of the masses its own, it will not be able to secure their steady and conscious support'. The workers, the Manifesto stated, 'rebel against exploitation, social and economic and it does not make any difference to them to which nationality the exploiter belongs...The consciousness of the masses must be awakened; that is the only way of keeping them steady in the fight'. The Manifesto concluded with the wish that 'let the Congress reflect the needs of the nation and not the ambition of a small class...Let it prove by deeds that it wants to end foreign exploitation not to secure the monopoly to the native propertied class, but to liberate the Indian people from all exploitation. Let it show that it really represents the

people and can lead them in their struggle in every stage of it'. This resolution moved by Hasrat Mohani, was defeated due to the opposition of Gandhi.

During the course of the Non-cooperation movement the contradiction between the slogan of non-violence with which Gandhiji and Congress leadership sought to restrict the movement, and the objective response of the struggling masses to other militant slogans of the non-cooperation movement viz. 'Swaraj in one year' and 'End the Satanic Government', came to the fore. This contradiction made a deep impression on the minds of young left-wing revolutionaries and from their ranks arose a criticism of Gandhian ideology and methodology of struggle and also of the political programme of the movement. Most of them quite naturally were attracted by the Socialist Revolution in Russia and by the ideology and practice of the Bolshevik Party and its leader Lenin. The revolutionary mass upheaval of the non-cooperation movement at its beginning, was a part of the world wide mass upheaval, which was heralded by the victory of the workers and peasants revolution in Russia. An advanced criticism of Gandhian ideology and methodology can be found in Dange's booklet 'Gandhi Vs. Lenin'; which not only pointed out the inevitable shortcomings of Gandhian movement but also contained an alternative path and programme for Indian independence struggle. 'A great merit of this booklet is that it is a pioneer effort at criticism of Gandhism, of its

method of struggle, and to forecast in the light of the experience of the Russian Revolution and the teachings of Lenin, some of the essential features of communist proposals for the policy and programme of Indian independence struggle'.²⁹ Dange, for the first time, clearly visualised in the book that the Indian struggle for emancipation will have to go far beyond the limits set by the non-cooperation movement. Dange then posing his problem proceeds to solve two problems: 'How to throw off the foreign yoke? With what methods?' and 'How to destroy evil of capitalism amongst us which is making fast progress and will double its speed when we are politically free'. Dange proceeds to 'compare and contrast these two systems of philosophy and action and try to see their efficiency to arrive at the desired effect' Dange poses the question as to how the terrorism of the imperialist government against the national freedom movement in the form of non-cooperation and no-tax movement is to be paralysed and 'gives a correct answer viz. through the education, organisation and uprising of labour and peasantry'.³⁰ Thus the fruitful idea put here is the combination of the non-cooperation movement with the organisation of workers and peasants leading to workers' general strike and peasants' uprising in order to overthrow imperialist rule. Dange also puts his proposal to

29. Ibid., p.281.

30. Ibid., p.279.

solve the problem of labour vs. capital: 'that firstly the great concerns like railways, mines, and vast factory plants may be nationalised or controlled by state'. To prevent accumulation of capital in the hands of few, Dange proposes some sort of ceiling on individual income. To solve the agricultural problem, his proposal is 'breaking up of the large estates and the promotion of small holding schemes by the state'.³¹

The suspension of the non-cooperation movement had not only national but ~~international~~ international repercussions. Gandhi's decision was disapproved not only by a considerable section of people fighting for national liberation within the country but also by the Comintern and its leaders who genuinely sympathised with the cause of Indian independence.³² The withdrawal of the movement evidenced to the peasants that the movement was not a type of action which would annihilate the imperialist state structure but one which was meant to pressurise the colonial rulers for coming in to an understanding with the Congress.³³ It was now felt that the dislike of violence was nothing but the obvious fear of the bourgeoisie that once the masses enter the sphere of political action with their own technique of struggle, the movement would cross

31. Ibid., p.280.

32. Choudhry, Sukhbir., op.cit., p.25.

33. Ibid., p.108.

the limits set by it. To them, Gandhian attempt to escape from bloodshed and violence through metaphysical casuistry was the negation of real politics.³⁴ The withdrawal also dismayed the young militants like Dange and E.M.S. Namboodripad and others, who had earlier, aroused by the call of Gandhi, joined the anti-imperialist movement and had cheerfully gone to prison. Even Singaravelu was very critical of Gandhi's attitude and said 'It has been a disaster to have postponed the movement after Ghauri-Chaura' and concluded 'we have miserably suffered for our errors and mistakes'.³⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru wrote in his Autobiography:

'Suddenly, early in February 1922 the whole scene shifted, and we in prison learnt, to our amazement and consternation, that Gandhiji had stopped the aggressive aspects of our struggle, and that he had suspended civil resistance...We were angry when we learnt of this stoppage of our struggle at a time when we seemed to be consolidating our position and advancing on all fronts. But our disappointment and anger in prison could do little good to any one, and civil resistance stopped and non-cooperation wilted away'. (36)

Prior to Fourth Congress of the Comintern (November-December 1922) Roy had been in contact with the communist groups in India. This was in pursuance of the Communist International policy to have a greater active role in the

34. Ibid., p.109.

35. Ibid.,

36. Nehru, Jawaharlal. An Autobiography, Bodley Head, London, 1935, p.29.

national liberation struggle of the colonial people through their branches in the imperialist countries. In the light of these political developments, the Comintern planned to establish contact with India by establishing a centre at Berlin. Because of the unfriendly attitude of the Afghan government, nothing much could be done from Central Asia. Roy was put in charge of the work of directing Indian political activities in Berlin. Roy's first task was to regain contact with India by sending trained communists to her, corresponding with his former comrades and revolutionary associates in Bengal and by despatching printed communist propaganda literature to this country.³⁷

Roy published a brief item in the Inprecor of 17 July 1922 inviting the Indian Communist Party to send delegates to the Fourth Congress of the Comintern. Another article was published by Roy in the Vanguard of Indian Independence for the same purpose. Roy, knowing that these articles could not enable Indian delegates to come to the Congress, sent Charles Ashleigh in September 1922 to India secretly to meet Dange and also to contact Muzaffar Ahmed. Roy had sent Ashleigh to Dange to invite him or to send a representative to the Fourth Congress. This is evidenced from two letters from Roy to Dange - one dated 26 September 1922 and the other dated 3 October 1922. In the second letter Roy acknowledged a letter

37. Choudhary, Sukhbir, op. cit., p.129

from Dange which contained Dange's proposal for starting a Socialist Labour Party in India, and asked him to postpone his idea till the Fourth Congress, which he invited Dange to attend in person or to send a representative and also promised him 'suitable arrangement and support for the Socialist as well as literature and literary contribution'.³⁸

The main purpose of Ashleigh's visit was to make contacts with the various communist groups that had already begun functioning in India by 1922 and to get a representative delegation to come to the Fourth Congress. This comes out clearly from the Roy-Dange correspondence, after Ashleigh's visit, produced in the Kanpur Conspiracy Case. Muzaffar Ahmed's charge brought out in his latest book: 'Ashleigh then handed over to Dange, the letters, documents and the passage money for the delegates to the Fourth Congress. I do not know what the exact amount was, but according to Masood Ali Shah, the British spy, it was £800, possibly in eight one hundred pound notes... and that Dange pocketed the money'³⁹ stands unsubstantiated and hence slanderous⁴⁰ because (a) there is no mention of any money sent by Roy through Ashleigh for the passage of proposed delegates in the Roy-Dange correspondence produced in the Kanpur Conspiracy case (b) the prosecution in the Kanpur

38. Kaye, Cecil. Communism in India, 1919-24, Editions India, Calcutta, 1971, p.33

39. Ahmed, Muzaffar. op. cit. p.319

40. Adhikari, G. MCPI-I, pp.522-26

Case has not mentioned any such fact which would have naturally strengthened their charge against Dange and other accused. This correspondence, on the contrary, throws sufficient light on the following points (i) that Like Dange and later Singaravelu, Roy was also interested in the task of welding the various communist groups in an all-India party; of formulating its immediate programme of fighting for complete independence of the country and for urgent political and economic demands of the masses (ii) that Dange was made the centre of activities, 'we look upon you as the most suitable person and trust you have seen that some result is achieved' (Roy's letter dated 2 November 1922 to Dange) (iii) that Roy was happy at the formation of the Socialist Labour Party 'which he expected would be affiliated to the Comintern, the latter being the only revolutionary international body' (iv) that no one from India attended the Fourth Congress of the Comintern as is evidenced from Roy's letter dated 12 December 1922 to Dange '... absence of anybody straight from India was lamented' (exhibit no. 7 in the Kanpur Case) (v) that in his letter dated 19 December 1922 Roy unfolded his new plan to Dange proposing that a conference be held in India with 'representatives from all the groups in agreement with our programme and who feel the need for a new start in the movement'. Roy also stressed 'a revolutionary mass party has to be organised as a part of the Congress' and makes two points viz. (a) 'our party must be built on a very strong foundation' i.e. on the

Handwritten notes:
Dange
immediately

basis of Marxism-Leninism, its concrete and creative application to Indian conditions and (b) 'we have to work both in legal and illegal ways'. Roy further elaborated his point that the revolutionary left-wing mass party in the National Congress 'must be under the control and direction of our party which cannot but be illegal' (vi) that four communist groups functioning in India in 1922 should send their representatives to Berlin for a conference scheduled to take place in February 1923, but which never took place. Dange and Singaravelu rejected the idea as impractical from the outset while Muzaffar Ahmed complained that Roy never sent him any passage money for the conference.⁴¹

By the time of the Gaya session of the Indian National Congress (30 November 1922) the country was seething with spontaneous working class and peasant struggles. Roy published One Year of Non-cooperation which gives the contemporary account as follows:

'Since the beginning of 1922, there were innumerable strikes on a wide scale e.g. East Indian Railway strike involving 35000 men and the jute mill workers' strike... Revolts among the Akali sikhs of the Panjab for the possession of temple lands... the Eka or the Unity movement among the peasants of the United Provinces and central India for resistance to rent and tax collection...'(42)

Roy, therefore, published his 'Action Programme of the Indian National Congress' and got it circulated at Gaya Session.

Besides he also wrote a pamphlet bearing the title 'What Do We

41. Ibid., p. 527

42. Ibid., p. 561

Want' which gave a popular exposition of the same. It was a programme of anti-imperialist, anti-feudal revolution, the main planks of which were political independence, abolition of landlordism, nationalisation of public utilities, minimum wage and eight-hour day for labour and workers' control of industry. This was for the first time to formulate a programme for India which was to be the basis of the united anti-imperialist front bringing together all the anti-imperialist classes, including the national bourgeoisie, in the struggle for complete independence.⁴³ The Comintern also sent its 'message' to delegates attending the Gaya Session. The message asked the Indian National Congress to work for 'the establishment of democratic republic, completely independent of any foreign control' 'through a revolution'. It also called for 'adoption of an economic programme' and said 'by leading the rebellious poor peasantry against reactionary and loyalist landed aristocracy, the Congress will on the one hand strike its roots deeply into the masses and, on the other, will assail the very bedrock of the British rule...The native army, which maintains British domination in India, is recruited from among the poor peasantry. So a programme of agrarian revolution will win the native troops to the cause of national freedom.'⁴⁴ Both Dange and Singaravelu were present at the Gaya Session

43. Ibid., p.563.

44. Ibid., p.565.

which also passed a resolution on 'Labour Organisation', which welcomed the move by the AITUC and various kisan sabhas in organising the workers of India and set up a committee to assist the executive council of the AITUC 'for the organisation of Indian labour both agricultural and industrial'.

Patterns of Govt. Repression
Of Early Communist Activity

The British government in India, realising that they could not stop the ideas of socialist Russian Revolution spreading into India, prepared a repressive machinery to smash the rising communist movement. The first ever attempt was made to crack down the communist movement in four Conspiracy Cases launched between 1922 and 1924. These cases reflect the political and ideological calculations behind early British policy regarding communism in India.

The whole of the nineteenth century had witnessed inter-imperialist rivalries between England and Russia both in Europe and Asia. The political calculations of the early British policy in India were dominated by the fact that India was her colonial position whose men, money and material were to be exploited in the best interest of the mother country i.e. India. Russia by her unique geographical situation has posed a danger to England in Europe but particularly to India in the Asian sub-continent. With the success of October Revolution in Russia there was a qualitative change

in the 'Russian danger' for England in Europe and its colonial possessions in Asia. This was due to the establishment of a socialist regime in Russia, sympathetic to the oppressed and downtrodden people in the colonies of the imperialist countries e.g. England. The ideology of the Comintern was also in keeping with Lenin's deep concern for amelioration of people in colonies and semi-colonies. Since the rise of early communist activities in India were designed to end the foreign imperialist rule, it was natural for the British rule in India to crush these with a heavy hand. The repression of the imperialist rule of the early communist activities increased with the growth of national liberation movement in India from a class struggle to a mass movement on the one hand and the increasing influence of the left-wing nationalists on the Indian National Congress, on the other hand. Even ideologically, the imperialist rule was averse to the increase in the workers' and the peasants' movements in the country which were ultimately expected to mature in a socialist state. The British rule, therefore, tried to create a wedge between the native bourgeoisie and the early communist leaders so that they could win the bourgeoisie to their side, separate the communists from the mainstream of the masses and then suppress them.

The imperialist government in India, therefore, besides resorting to repressive measures, often appealed to the

possessive instincts of the middle class in the country. It would often depict to the bourgeoisie in India that the success of communist movement in the country would sound their death knell as a class; all their accumulations and property would go to the state in which the proletariat would be the ruler. The following line of the High Court judgement against the communist trials substantiates the point: 'Whilst the conspiracy had for its principal object the overthrow of the British rule in this country, the conspirators looked even beyond this...British rule, government by upper and middle class Indians alike, were to be swept away, the confiscation of property was to be wholesale... Violence and destruction of property were to be encouraged and conflicts to be precipitated...The power of the upper and middle class Indians was to be destroyed by taking from them all that they possessed'.⁴⁵ The British government would often tell the bourgeoisie in the country to serve its relations with the communists who indulged in violent and extra-constitutional activities. It would tell them the benefits of the British rule in the country and particularly for this class of 'status quo'. It would depict the fear of Russia marching towards India, through communist activities, which may end their prerogatives enjoyed now, and make them stand before the proletariat in subserviance.

 45. Adhikari, G. HCPI-II, p.296.

One interesting aspect of these Peshawar and later Kanpur trials is that they bring out the latent contradictions in the British policy. The manner of trials showed a surprising continuity between the terrorist and nationalist trials and these communist trials. As is well known, the trials against the terrorists (e.g. Bhagat Singh), the nationalists (e.g. Tilak's trial in 1908) and the communists (Peshawar trials and the Kanpur Case) charged the accused with sedition or entering into a conspiracy with a view to deprive the King-Emperor of his sovereignty over India. Similarly the manner of these trials is surprisingly similar i.e., no overt act in entering and furthering a conspiracy to overthrow the government, was proved beyond doubt in any of these cases and yet the accused were sentenced.

91 However, a deep scrutiny of these trials would prove that the underlying political, ideological calculations put Peshawar and Kanpur trials in entirely a different category, both from the viewpoint of nature (quality) and quantum (quantity).

The Peshawar Conspiracy cases were launched against muhajirs, who in the autumn of 1920 had crossed over into Soviet Russia. After the Bukhara revolution, the muhajirs gathered in Bukhara where Roy met them. Roy sought to persuade them to come with him to Tashkent where they could recuperate as well as study to equip themselves for participation in the struggle for independence after their return. The majority declined the offer and wanted to return to India

immediately. The first batch reached Peshawar on 3 June 1921, consisting of 40 of which some 26 had been identified as having joined the political and military schools at Tashkent during 1920-21. From these muhajirs, the British government also came to know of some other muhajirs who had accompanied Roy to Tashkent. The imperialist government kept a watch for the return of these and began arresting them from the middle of 1922. All these became accused in the Peshawar conspiracy cases.

From the judgements delivered in the cases, one can know:⁴⁶

i) That in the first case Mohammad Akbar, his father Hafizullah and his servant Bahadur were made the accused. Both Mohammad Akbar and Bahadur were sentenced under section 121-A of IPC while Hafizullah was acquitted and released. The judgement read'...The attitude of the Bolsheviks towards all settled governments is a matter of common knowledge. So also their hostility and desire to overthrow the governments of all civilised powers as at present constituted. This general knowledge is a matter of which judicial notice can be taken'.⁴⁷

ii) That in the second case the same Mohammad Akbar, along-with others, was charged with smuggling out letters from jail.

46. Adhikari, G. HCPI-II, pp.26-39.

47. Ibid., p.29.

The court judgement pronounced on 27 April 1923 sentenced him to 7 years rigorous imprisonment while his co-accused were sentenced to 5 years rigorous imprisonment each.

iii) That the third case known as Moscow-Tashkent Conspiracy Case began on 7 March 1923. The main accused was Akbar Shah who alongwith some other muhajirs was in Tashkent school and had gone to Moscow to receive training at the Communist University for the Toilers of the East. The judgement delivered in the case pointed out that there was conspiracy both at Tashkent and Moscow to overthrow the British government established in India and the accused were its members. It also pointed out that the accused were fully trained to organise revolutionary work in India's national-liberation movement. Secondly, literature, books, pamphlets and journals which make a socio-economic analysis of India under British rule, define the nature of the revolutionary work and outline the programme of the national-liberation movement. Thirdly, evidence is also produced that the communist group already functioning in India then (1923) were asked to take charge of these cadres and put them to work. The judgement also quoted Roy's ideas and then pointed out that 'This is no peaceful communism. He (Roy) preaches revolution by force. The revolution in India is to be accomplished by the armed rising of the masses in a struggle to destroy capitalism'. The judgement also quoted a letter dated 25 December 1922 from Roy to Dange: '...A number of boys who had received their training in Moscow have been sent to India. They are

all members of our party (Communist Party of India)...Their intellectual calibre however is not to the mark nor are they proletarians. But they are good boys and have received a fairly good Marxian training. They will develop in practice...'

iv) The next Peshawar Conspiracy Case was Crown vs. Mohammad Shafiq. The judgement pronounced on 4 April 1924 sentenced the accused to 3 years rigorous imprisonment, for being an active member of the conspiracy at Tashkent and Moscow, and concluded '...unlike other Indians at the time with the accused, the latter was an active agent of the revolutionary party, and unlike his companions who left the country, the accused elected to remain behind and continued his revolutionary work...Before his surrender he visited India as a Bolshevik agent...He was sent by Roy on a mission to India'.

The first arrests of communists, who were later to figure in the Kanpur Conspiracy Case, began as early as May 1923, just at the time when the main Peshawar Conspiracy cases were concluding. These arrests were in fact a continuation of the campaign⁴⁸ of anticommunist repression started by the Peshawar cases. The strategy of the British imperialists in their attempt to destroy the rising communist movement was to discredit the patriotism of the communists; to show them as agents of a foreign power and to drive a wedge between

48. Ibid., p.273.

them and the militant left-wing in the Congress and the national movement.⁴⁹

The main accused in the Kanpur Conspiracy Cases were: Usmani, Muzaffar Ahmed, Gulam Hussain, Dange, M.N. Roy, Singaravelu, Nalini Gupta and R.C.L. Sharma. Ghulam Hussain turned informer for the prosecution and was released. The main points of the petition of complaint filed against the accused were: (i) that a revolutionary organisation exists in Europe known as the Communist International and that a section thereof is determined to establish a branch in this country to be placed under the control of M.N. Roy, one of the objects of the same being to deprive the king-emperor of his sovereignty in India; (ii) that in order to achieve this object, an association of workers and peasants or a People's Party was to be formed and used...and that the ultimate idea was to use violence to attain their object.⁵⁰

The Session trial began in Kanpur on 22 April 1924 before the notorious British judge H.E. Holme, who had earlier in the Chauri Chaura case sentenced 172 peasants to death by hanging. Hence keeping in view the notoriety of the judge, the accused made a petition to the governor-in-council for the transfer of the case, which was summarily rejected.

49. Ibid., p.274.

50. Ibid., p.281.

The judge awarded four years' rigorous imprisonment each to Muzaffar Ahmad, Shaukat Usmani, Dange, Nalini Gupta. The case against Ghulam Hussain was withdrawn. Owing to ill-health, Singaravelu escaped trial and proceedings against him were suspended. It is wrong that the case against Singaravelu was withdrawn because he apologised.⁵¹ Another important thing of the trial is that the assessors, who was a sort of farce of a jury, were not unanimous - one of them declared all of the accused not guilty. Of the four sentenced, only Dange and Shaukat Usmani served their full terms while Muzaffar Ahmed and Nalini Gupta were released earlier.

The Kanpur Trials are quite significant in the history of the communist movement in the country. The trial attracted a great deal of attention both, abroad particularly in England, and in India unlike the earlier Peshawar Conspiracy Cases. These trials took place in the regime of the Labour government in England which came to power in the beginning of 1924. One of the pertinent questions before the Labour government in England was: how does the Labour government which has power to power on the strength of the organisation of the working class, sanction the prosecution of citizens of India whose only 'crime' was that they were attempting to organise a working class party. In the Indian press also, the trial received

51. Ahmed, Muzaffar, MCPI, p.408. In this Muzaffar Ahmed alleges that Singaravelu was released since he tendered an apology to the imperialist government.

52. Adhikari, G. HCPI-II, p.288

considerable publicity. The government itself was interested in this publicity to isolate the emerging communist movement from the nationalist opinion. The manner of the trials also showed that there was no difference between the Labour Govt. in England and its predecessor Conservative Govt. as far as India (its colonial possession) was concerned. The question raised here was: If communist and socialist propaganda, the formation of communist and workers' parties affiliated to the Communist International exist freely in Great Britain and in other parts of the British empire, why in India are these acts prosecuted as a 'seditious conspiracy'? Mrs. Evelyn Roy, in her pamphlet 'Will the British Labour Government Stand for This'⁵³ rightly pinpointed the meaning of the Kanpur trials giving three reasons, firstly to crush the steadily-growing mass movement in India, secondly to terrorise those who are seeking to study the ideas of Russia's mighty social revolution and of national revolutions of other eastern countries and thirdly to prejudice the impending Anglo Russian conference on trade. Another significant aspect of the Kanpur trials is that according to official sources, the accused in the Kanpur cases were 'being prosecuted not merely for holding communist views or carrying on communist propaganda, but for having conspired to secure by violent revolution the complete separation of India from imperialistic Britain and in that

53. Ibid., p. 304

endeavour they had formed and attempted to make use of a workers' and peasants' association in India...' The logic is obscure, but the facts are real. Communism as an academic study is legally allowed; applied to Indian conditions, it becomes 'conspiracy'.

Writing on the judgement given in the Kanpur Case, M.N. Roy in an article called 'Labour Justice'⁵⁴ pointed to the three issues involved namely constitutional, political and legal and argued that on each account the case against the accused was untenable and hence the punishment given to the accused was unwarranted. Roy argued that what was proved by the prosecution in the course of the case i.e. the organisation of a working-class party was not unconstitutional in India since the counsel for the prosecution had himself admitted that to hold communist views and preach those views did not in themselves constitute a crime. Politically, Roy argued, the case was equally untenable. 'Self-determination of peoples is the order of the day. The leaders of the British Labour Party... are the incorrigible champions of this doctrine of democracy... and therefore it cannot be a crime on the part of certain sections of the Indian people to express their desire to liberate their country from the yoke of foreign domination.' Legally, Roy held, the case was altogether 'hopeless'. No attempt was made to prove the veracity of the letters supposed to be written by Roy. Then, to have received letters written by someone does not by any code of the law constitute a criminal offence.

54. Ibid., p. 311

Roy, therefore, concluded that these men have been sentenced to long terms of rigorous imprisonment simply because they are suspected of being in favour of organising a working class party, with the object of securing the economic and political freedom of the people of India. Roy also pointed out that the policy of the British imperialism was to come to some agreement with the Indian bourgeoisie. The corollary of this policy was to crush the labour movement. The corollary implied hobnobbing with the Indian bourgeoisie to convince them of the utility of British protection and to render valuable services to the Empire by stamping out the working class movement which was bound to be ^amanace to the policy of buying over the Indian bourgeoisie.

The Peshawar and the Kanpur trials made the creation of a legal cover for communist activities in India an urgent task. Roy, subsequently, placed increased emphasis on the formation of a broad-based, legal party in India. In an appeal published by the Indian Communist Defence Committee on July 2 1924 to raise funds to fight the cases for the accused in the Kanpur cases, there was a significant suggestion, 'it becomes an unavoidable duty of all those Indians who hold communist views to form themselves into an Indian Communist Party and to test thereby the attitude of the government towards this right of theirs'.⁵⁵ This suggestion saw the light of the day when Satyabhakta, a member of the terrorist group in United Province, and influenced by the Socialist revolution in Russia attempted to

55. Ibid., p. 318.

form a legal communist party at Kanpur and for this purpose he convened the first Indian Communist Conference (26 - 28 December 1925). The Conference became the instrument of bringing together all the genuine communist groups in the country, thus creating the First Central Committee of the Communist Party of India and framing its first Constitution. It may, however, be added that it was Dange who first mooted the idea of holding an open conference of the Communist Party. The question was openly discussed in the Socialist early in 1924 which proved that though the idea was mooted as early as in 1924 yet it could not be implemented by the communist groups.

Satyabhakta's 'Indian Communist Party' was based on sectarian formulations e.g. that the genuine communist groups in the country were not allowed to exist simply because they claimed affiliation to the Communist International. Satyabhakta hence wanted a purely national communist party. However his 'national communism' was not even 'national' because it failed to formulate a national revolutionary programme for country's independence with the organisations of workers and peasants having a revolutionary role to play. Thus, Satyabhakta was seeking to demarcate himself from the existing communist groups by attempting to form a legal communist party, by presenting its principles and practice in a utopian and naive way. The conference was attended by Ghate, J.P. Bagerhatta, Muzaffar Ahmed, Singaravelu, K.N. Joglekar, R.S. Nimbkar and others to save the communist party falling into the hands of Satyabhakta who had neither an internationalist outlook nor the revolutionary ideas. In an article, S.V. Ghate records'... Satyabhakta objected to the

name 'Communist Party of India' as he smelt bolshevik flavour in it and wanted the name to be 'Indian Communist Party'. Ultimately our suggestion was accepted... Within four days, Satyabhakta announced the formation of a new National Communist Party and left the organisation in the formation of which he himself was a party. When he was approached to hand over the minutes and documents of the Conference, he refused to pass them on since he had established his own party'.⁵⁶

Muzaffar Ahmed's account of the event is '... Uniting the communists of various places we constituted for the first time the Central Committee of the CPI in Kanpur itself. The Conference was held openly and therefore the Committee was also constituted openly... We had to face plenty of criticism-- we deserve this criticism, but there was no other way either... Had we not joined the Conference at Kanpur, the Communist Party of Satyabhakta would have hindered us considerably in future'.⁵⁷

Thus, after Satyabhakta's departure, Muzaffar Ahmed and others formed the Communist Party of India with Singaravelu as President, J.P. Begerhatta and Ghate as General Secretaries. It also formed an Executive Committee which decided to shift the Party's headquarters to Bombay to facilitate communications with the Comintern. 'The first central committee of the Party

56. Ghate, S.V. Foundation Conference of the Communist Party of India, Kanpur, December 1925, New Age Weekly, dated 6 February 1966.

57. Adhikari, G. HCPI-II, p. 608

was organised in 1925. First constitution of the Party was published in 1926. At that time, there was a great possibility of the CPI being affiliated to the Communist International. In this newly organised central committee there were members of the Communist Party formed abroad. But as the party members did not consider the membership sufficient so they did not apply for party being affiliated to the Communist International. All the same, the Communist International considered the CPI as a part of itself'.

The significance of the Conference lies mainly in the fact that the Indian communist movement passed from the stage of groups into the stage of a regular all-India party. This is the reason why this date i.e. the date of the Kanpur Conference is considered as the foundation date of the CPI. The positive achievements of the Kanpur Conference can be summed up (i) that what emerged from the conference was a Communist Party of India - a central consolidation of all genuine communist groups which wanted a link up with the international communist movement, though this was not explicitly declared at the Conference (ii) the Conference gave the opportunity to the genuine communist groups to come together and form the central all-India nucleus for the first time which was crystallised in the Central Executive Committee elected at the Conference. The continuity of the central nucleus formed at Kanpur and maintained throughout the following years became an instrument for building a legal net-work of workers' and peasants' parties spread all over the country, of unleashing a mass upsurge of workers and peasants, and of building the first militant trade unions and kisan sabhas. ✓

Controversy on Formal Foundation
Of The CPI

Following the Second Congress of the Comintern, on 17 October 1920 at Tashkent, an organisation was set up with the name of the Communist Party of India. Seven members, including M.N. Roy, took part at the foundation. It is, therefore, that Muzaffar Ahmed holds that 'The CPI was first formed abroad is a historical fact. It is also a fact that as early as 1921 it was affiliated to the Comintern. When the history of the Communist Party is written in future, the compilers will have to start from this point.'⁵⁸ Muzaffar Ahmed, however, agrees that in the same year i.e., 1921, efforts to build a communist party were also undertaken inside India. In the opinion of Dange: 'The CPI was first founded in Tashkent by a group of emigre revolutionaries in the year 1920. As some of the leading figures like Roy and Abani Mukerji were already in the Comintern, the CPI was immediately given affiliation to the International (Comintern). It also published a journal in English which was described as the organ of the CPI, section of the Communist International.'⁵⁹

Notwithstanding the importance and significance of the foundation of the Party at Tashkent on October 1920 by Roy and others, the CPI, before its split and on 18 August 1959,

58. Ahmed, Muzaffar. The CPI and its Formation Abroad, National Book Agency, Calcutta, 1962, Preface.

59. Adhikari, G. The Comintern Congresses and the CPI, Marxist Miscellany, No.2, PPH, Delhi, 1971, p.5.

decided to adopt the date of Kanpur Communist Conference (26 December 1925) as the date of the foundation of the Party. This decision was keeping in view that at the Third, Fourth and Fifth Congresses of the Comintern (1921, 1922 and 1924), the CPI was considered an affiliated Communist Party - first on the basis of the emigre party organisation formed at Tashkent and later on the basis of the all-India nucleus of the CPI formed in India itself. But it was in 1925 only that the first Central Executive Committee of the Party was formed, the first Party Constitution framed, and efforts having been made to get the Party in India being affiliated to the Comintern through a formal application. Though it may look paradoxical, yet the term 'Foreign Bureau' continued to appear in the Party Constitution till 1929, as affiliated to the Comintern as the CPI formed in India. Strange enough it may appear, yet as late as May 1932 came the open letter to the CPI from the communist parties of China, Great Britain and Germany⁶⁰ pointing out that the general picture of the communist movement in India was not satisfactory and that 'instead of a struggle for an all-India Communist Party we find localism, provincialism, self-isolation from the masses etc., which though it could be understood to some extent in 1930, now represents the main danger to the revolutionary proletarian movement'. Another

60.*...Guidelines of the History of Communist Party of India, CPI Publication, Delhi, 1974, p.38.

61

'open letter' from the Communist Party of China, which followed this three-party letter, on 16 July 1933, pointed out, 'The rapid formation of the Communist Party is the central task of the Indian revolution'. Hence from the above it appears, that the effective foundation of the Communist Party has not taken place even till mid thirties of the present century. Keeping these factors in view, it is difficult to agree with the idea that CPI has been founded in 1920, for the following reasons:

- a) That the Communist Party formed in 1920 had no effective foundation since it had no link with 'the communists in India, or with workers' and peasants' and national-liberation movements'.
- b) That the Communist Party of Tashkent was not recognised by the Comintern as the CPI.
- c) That the Communist Party of Tashkent had neither a constitution nor a programme.

Even the Kanpur Communist Conference did not have the features of a proper foundation Congress of a communist party. But the creation of an all-India nucleus of a central leadership at the Conference and its continuity and the role through succeeding years in building the mass base for the Communist Party of India make the Conference a turning point in the life of the Party. That is why the date of the Conference is considered as the foundation date of Communist Party of India. ⁶²

61. Ibid., p.40.

62. Adhikari, G. HCPI-II, p.629.

It was on 20 August 1959 that the Party sent a letter to the Indonesian Communist Party in answer to its query that 'It was in December 1925 that in a meeting of representatives of the various groups of communists in the country held at Kanpur that the Communist Party of India was formed'.⁶³

Another controversy which is still current is regarding the initiative to form the Communist Party. Roy, one of the founder members of the Communist Party at Tashkent has given the following account:

'...the minority which proposed the formation of an Indian Communist Party was reinforced by the Abdal Rab-Acharya group and on the latter's instigation, sent a telegram to the Turk-Bureau of the Comintern to plead their case. I tried to argue with them that there was no hurry. There was no sense in a few emigrant individuals calling themselves the Communist Party. They were evidently disappointed and I apprehended that the experience might disheartened them...So I agreed with the proposal of the formation of the Communist Party, knowing full well that it would be a nominal thing, although it could function as the nucleus of a real communist party to be organised eventually. An intelligent and fairly young man named Mohd. Shafiq, who had come from Kabul with the Acharya group was elected the Secretary of the Party'.⁽⁶⁴⁾

Devendra Kaushik, however, does not agree with Roy and states that 'the initiative to form the emigre communist party in Tashkent did not come from former Mujahirs whom Roy was imparting political education at Tashkent. None of the seven members with whom the Communist Party of India was first formed

63. Ibid., p.609.

64. Roy, M.N. Memoirs. op.cit., p.465.

at Tashkent belonged to the former muhajir youth who had emigrated from India to Turkistan that year. It was Roy, himself, who took the initiative, although in his Memoirs he gives the impression as if he was in the beginning averse to the idea. The Soviet authorities did not moot the idea in any way. The Communist Party of India remained a very small organisation at Tashkent. It had only 10 members, all residing in Tashkent'.⁶⁵

Muzaffar Ahmed believes that Roy was compelled by necessity to take the initiative in founding the Communist Party at Tashkent. With the Third Congress of the Comintern drawing near, Roy had to found the Communist Party at Tashkent, otherwise what would have been his locus standi there? Whom could he represent?'⁶⁶

Dr. Adhikari's opinion in the matter is 'There is no reason to disbelieve Roy's statement that he did not take the initiative. At the beginning of 1920, there was no Communist Party of India either at Tashkent or in India. Roy was the only communist, in the sense of being a member of the Communist Party, but that was of Mexico'.⁶⁷

Notwithstanding the importance of the work of either the Communist Party founded at Tashkent or the CPI at Kanpur, the recognition of 'foreign bureau' as CPI by the Comintern till

65. Kaushik, Devendra. Link, 26 January 1966, p.72.

66. Ahmed, Muzaffar. MCPI, op.cit., pp.48-9.

67. Adhikari, G. HCPI-I, p.31.

1929, and later the three-party letter, referred to above, which even till 1933 talked of the foundation of a Communist Party in India shows that the question of pre-dating the foundation of CPI is just a formal matter. The CPI was yet to develop into an effective political organisation in the country.

Problems of Ideology, 1920-25

One of the important aspects of the growth of the CPI neglected in the CPI 'histories' so far is the evolution of ideology of CPI. This evolution can be traced in (i) Inprecoor articles (ii) Books written by M.N. Roy - India in Transition (1922), What Do We Want? (1922), One Year of Non-cooperation (1923), The Aftermath of Non-cooperation (1926) and Future of Indian Politics (1926). (iii) Debate on the National + Colonial Question in the Second Congress of Comintern (iv) Debate on Chinese revolution in the Comintern - gradual change in the Comintern's line - generalisation of the Chinese line to all colonies particularly India: '...It was China that had become the central starting point of the Comintern for action in India... Revolutionary China will be a school for the approaching India Revolution...British imperialism in Asia will receive its most decisive blow from the united Chinese-Indian revolutionary forces. Then Asia and the world will breathe freely,'⁶⁸

68. Petrie, David. Communism in India, 1924-27, Editions Indian, Calcutta, 1972, pp.282-3.

(v) Discussion on the National + Colonial Question in the Sixth Congress of Comintern and the link between European and colonial recommendations.

Roy, from 1920 to the eve of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern, was the main theorist of Indian marxism. Most of the theoretical work was done by him and by a small circle of writers around him who writing in the journals of the Comintern: Inprecor and Communist International and the journals Roy brought out from Europe: Advance Guard and its other incarnations as Vanguard of Indian Independence and Masses of India. Among those who aided Roy in writing on India were Santi Devi (Evelyn Trent Roy)⁶⁹ and G.A.K. Luhani⁷⁰ and both of them entirely followed Roy's analysis of the situation. Roy's Indian in Transition (1922) was the first exhaustive treatment of Indian politics in a marxist way. Roy, in this book, tried to understand the complexities of Indian politics by reference to an analysis of the growth and decay of economic forces. Naturally his focus was on the bourgeoisie and the proletariat and the class struggle between them. Roy himself understood the limitations of his material and wrote: 'Thanks to the painstaking researches of

69. She wrote sometimes as Evelyn Roy and sometimes under a false name. Her articles appeared regularly in the early issues of Inprecor, though less frequently than Roy's. Her compositions were somewhere between pure political reportages and theoretical writings. Usually her articles sought to provide proofs of the correctness of Roy's theoretical line.
70. Luhani's articles started appearing in Inprecor from 1926, mostly to fit into Roy's theoretical paradigm. Luhani was more of a political activist than a theorist.

some modern historians, one can learn how many sacks of kishmish the great Aurangzeb consumed in his life⁷¹ but facts about the toiling masses were kept carefully unrecorded. The oppressing classes never kept statistical evidence of their exploitation.

Characterising the 'transition' through which India was passing in 1921, Roy wrote in the Introduction of India in Transition: 'India is not only struggling to free herself from the political domination of a foreign power...Her entire store of popular energy is in a state of revolt against everything which has so far kept her backward and still conspires to do so. This revolt, this great social upheaval, is the essence of the present transition...'⁷² Explaining the role of the bourgeoisie in bringing such transition Roy wrote: '...The liberal bourgeoisie, which stands at the head of the national democratic movement, will not play the revolutionary role which the European bourgeoisie played in the 18th and 19th centuries. The bourgeoisie in India would become a revolutionary factor only if the imperialist rulers bolt and bar its economic development. But the post-war imperialism is dependent more on finance-capitalism than on industrial capitalism...The preconditions for a pure bourgeois-democratic revolution do not exist in India'.⁷³

71. Roy, M.N. India in Transition, Bombay, 1971, p.17.

72. Adhikari, G. HCPI-I, p.359.

73. Ibid.

Another significant marxist study of the period was provided by Rajni Palme Dutt's Modern India which was written in 1926, though Dutt's reputation is grounded on his subsequent India Today of 1939. Roy's India in Transition and Dutt's India Today were to dominate marxist analysis of Indian politics for the next twenty years. Presumably, these were supposed to be so adequate that others never wrote improvements on them, only commentaries.⁷⁴

It may be pointed out that Dutt's analysis in 1926 of the economic policy of British imperialism is more cautious and in that he emphasised the predominating role of British capital in India as against that of Indian capital which it sought to draw more and more into its train. Dutt wrote: '... whereas before the war the value of British capital was four times Indian, after the war it was six times India. Thus not only is the British capitalism already the predominant force, but it is actually becoming more and more the predominant force.'⁷⁵

Defining the role of the bourgeoisie, Dutt stated: '... the Indian bourgeoisie has played a double role. On the one hand they naturally grudge the lion's share of the imperialist exploiters and their own inferior position and would not be averse to securing

74. After Roy's break with the Comintern, his book was disowned by the communist movement and thus Dutt's book remained the only macro-level study in the field. Though recently there has been numerous criticism of Dutt's book - about his facts, his economics, his method, yet an adequate replacement is still to come.

75. Adhikari, G. ICPI-I, p. 361

76. Ibid.

the whole of spoils themselves if that were possible, or in any case to make use of popular agitation to secure a better bargain for themselves. On the other hand, if there is any sign of a popular movement really developing such as would inevitably endanger also their own privileges and position, they at once draw in their horns and hasten to the side of the imperialist bourgeoisie and to its guns for protection... This treacherous role of the Indian bourgeoisie gives rise to the essential problem of the Indian national movement at the present point.⁷⁷ This thesis of Dutt has been aptly summed up:

'... the Indian bourgeoisie was cooperating with the British capitalists and that British capitalists were penetrating into the Indian economy so that it was a dangerous delusion to think that the capitalist development in India was a national development. The interests of Indian bourgeoisie coincided with the interests of the British bourgeoisie and therefore the Indian national struggle had to be a struggle of the working masses against the political and economic exploitation of British capitalists as also of the Indian bourgeoisie, who had entered into a partnership with the former' (78)

It was M.N. Roy, however, who played a significant role to evolve the ideology of the communist activities in the country and to influence its politics, through remote control. Roy, ofcourse, did not achieve much success in his task. This was partly due to the operations of the British intelligence services through the interception of his correspondence and propaganda literature sent to centres established in India. The British intelligence also foiled the attempts of Roy to spread communism

77. Ibid.

78. Ghosh, Shankar. Political Ideas and Movements in India, Allied, Delhi, 1975, p. 445.

in the country through despatch of trained men and agents who were closely watched by the intelligence, sometimes arrested and deported out of the country. Roy's failure to evolve the ideology of the CPI was due to his wrong understanding and analysis of the Indian situation because of his being out of India since 1916. Besides, Roy showed a certain over confidence in historical prediction and his analysis tended to be too quick in putting important personalities and movements into class brackets, mostly too neat to fit in the complexity of the real situation.

It was Roy's faulty understanding of the Indian situation that he applied marxism straight, without any qualifications for the specificity of the Indian conditions. His faulty understanding is reflected in his writings '... India was not under the feudal system⁷⁹ ... that feudalism has been destroyed by a peaceful, not a violent process (the induction of British capitalism and the emergence of the indigeneous bourgeoisie)... breakdown of feudalism has given rise to a strange capitalism - capitalism by proxy - the Indian economy was not under the control of the indigeneous bourgeoisie but under British capital and hence historically a curious situation which depicted the existence of capitalistic exploitation without a capitalistic socio-economic structure! Roy, similarly, wrongly divided the Indian society into 'four distinct classes' - the landed aristocracy, the bourgeoisie and the intellectual, the petty

79. Roy, M.N. India in Transition, op. cit., p.20

peasantry, and the working class including the landless peasantry.⁸⁰ Roy has thus drawn a somewhat simplified model of class-structure, which true to the marxist methodology was calculated by Roy to make India look as much like the European capitalist society as possible.⁸¹

Roy's analysis led him to state that the bourgeoisie was a creation of colonial conditions. He also traced the emergence of nationalism to purely economic conflict and wrote: 'The present situation is not unique in history. It is a stage of social development marked by a sudden and rapid introduction of modern means of production, resulting in a dislocation of the bourgeoisie, economic as well as territorial of the population'.⁸² Roy held that capitalism in India challenged foreign monopoly only nationally at this stage, and its political manifestation was constitutional 'loyalism'. He wrote:

'...The Indian bourgeoisie today stands between two fires - one just beginning to break into flames still clouded with thick smoke, the other large and awe-inspiring, but its imposing glare is not that of living flames...it is or burning embers, to be soon

80. Ibid., pp.20-21.

81. Roy's outline of class structure would create methodological, not just empirical problems. He lumps the intellectuals, hardly a 'class', with the bourgeoisie. The petty-bourgeoisie, politically a significant element is missing.

Kaviraj, Sudipta. The Marxist Argument - A Trend Report in the Survey of Research in Political Science, ICPSR (to be published).

82. Roy, M.N. India in Transition, op.cit., p.239.

covered with ashes. On one side is the great social upheaval fomented by the rising tide of the mass energy which it endeavours to manipulate according to its own benefit and convenience - on the other side stands the imperial power intent upon maintaining its political and economic hegemony, but at the same time showing inclinations to compromise. The unbridled advance of the first, which alone can deliver a death blow to imperialist domination, spells a serious menace to the designs of the nationalist bourgeoisie; while to enter into partnership with imperialist capital is not bad prospect. But the Indian bourgeoisie, by itself, is too weak to make the imperialist government pay heed to its demands. Therefore it must depend upon mass action for imposing its will. This is playing with fire, digging one's own grave'. (83)

Roy, thus, did not believe in any irreconcilable contradiction between the British and the Indian capitalist class. Naturally he expected the British government to accede to the bourgeoisie's demands after some reluctance and the Indian bourgeoisie would be satisfied with a satellite position and move towards political compromise. Roy also held that the national movement was not a popular or a mass movement. The movement led by the bourgeoisie had basically economic and not political ambitions. 'The movement for national liberation is a struggle of the native middle class against the economic and political monopoly of the imperialist bourgeoisie.'⁸⁴ Roy also thought in terms of a pattern of gradual reconciliation between a more assertive Indian bourgeoisie and a progressive accommodating imperialism.⁸⁵

Though Roy did acknowledge the constructive contribution of Gandhism in the national movement, yet by and large he

83. Ibid., pp.239-40.

84. Ibid., p.202.

85. Roy, M.N. The Future of Indian Politics, Minerva Associates, Calcutta, 1971, p.3.

was rather an uncharitable critic of Gandhi. The positive contribution of Gandhism, summed up by Roy,⁸⁶ are (i) the use of mass action for the enforcement of political demands (ii) the building up of a nation-wide organisation such as the Congress Party (iii) the liberation of the national forces from governmental repression by the slogan of non-violence and (iv) the adoption of non-cooperation and civil disobedience, especially non-payment of taxes as tactics in the struggle against foreign rule. However even in this Roy held that Gandhi has always strunk from putting his brilliantly conceived tactics to proper use.

Roy is of the opinion that even the above success of Gandhism and his movements, was not due to the demagogic methods of the religious character attached to the nationalist campaign, as the non-cooperators generally point out. According to Roy, there were deeper economic reasons behind it. This analysis of Roy is even confirmed by the British intelligence reports'...that combination of circumstances that favoured the birth of Non-Cooperation movement were altogether exceptional - war weariness and economic pressure, apprehension and unsettlement in the minds of Indian muslims, the bitter memories of the Punjab disturbances of 1919, and finally a leader in the person of Gandhi, whose appeal to the mass mind was semi-divine and whose influence was far more religious than

86. Adhikari, G. HCPI-I, p.455.

political'.⁸⁷

The shortcomings of the Gandhian movement, as summed up by Roy,⁸⁸ are (i) the most glaring defect was lack of an economic programme to win the interests and allegiance of the masses and to make swaraj intelligible to them. (ii) It was the obstinate and futile desire to unite all the Indian people, landlords and peasants, capitalists and proletariat, moderates and extremists, in a common struggle for an undefined goal. (iii) It was the intrusion of metaphysics into the realm of politics; the confusing of spiritual with temporal aims; the obstruction of the dynamic play of mass action by religious scruples and moral cowardice... Revolution is not a religion, neither is swaraj 'a mental state'...(iv) It is the great defect of its reactionary economics. Mankind has progressed by painful stages from being slave of nature to slave of the machine, which his own intelligence has invented to conquer natural forces... To go 'back to the Vedas' back to the charkha, is to put away the progress of two thousand years and all the bright hopes of a future age... 'Not back, but forward' should be our cry. (v) One grave error of Gandhism is its vacillations and inconsistencies, its lack of steady driving power towards a given goal. To declare non-cooperation

87. Petrie, David. op.cit., p.289.

88. Adhikari, G. HCPI-I, pp.456-58.

with a satanic government, and then to seek compromise with its viceroy...Gandhism is not revolutionism, but a weak and watery reformism, which shrinks at every turn from the realities of the struggle for freedom.

Roy's obvious conclusion about Gandhism was that '...it was the acutest and most desperate manifestation of the forces of reaction trying to hold their own against the objectively revolutionary tendencies contained in the liberal bourgeois nationalism'.⁸⁹ - Again '...Gandhism is nothing but petty bourgeois humanitarianism hopelessly bewildered in the clashes of the staggering forces of human progress'.⁹⁰ Roy also regarded Gandhi's conception of a 'bloodless revolution' as an 'impossibility' and said '...there is bound to be bloodshed. Our revolution will be bloodless only in the sense that blood will not be shed by us. So far as I can see, we shall not shed blood because we have not the means to do so, even if we have the will...'⁹¹ Roy's conclusion was '...Let us also profit from the experiences of revolution elsewhere...The leadership of the non-cooperation movement was prepared to lead a revolution and they started one, but they should have known that every revolution develops ugly side-issues'.⁹² and that '...This victory will be won, not through 'suffering

89. Roy, M.N. India in Transition, op.cit., p.205.

90. Ibid., p.209.

91. Kaye Cecil, op.cit., p.23.

92. Ibid., p.24.

and soul force', but with blood and tears and will be maintained by blood and iron'.⁹³ Roy opined that 'Gandhism was to fall victim to its own contradiction...that Gandhism is bound to be defeated. The signs of the impending defeat are already perceptible'.⁹⁴

In contrast, Lenin always held Gandhi as a revolutionary. This is held by Roy's account in the Memoirs, 'Lenin believed that as an inspirer and leader of a mass movement Gandhi was a revolutionary'.⁹⁵ Lenin, contrary to Roy's viewpoint, advocated support to the national liberation movement in India under the bourgeois democratic leadership of Gandhi.

Roy's sectarian views on Gandhi had influenced other Indian marxists, notably Rajni Palme Dutt, though Dutt's evaluation of Gandhi in 1926 was somewhat different from that of Roy. In Roy's viewpoint Gandhi represented feudalism and big bourgeoisie, Dutt regarded Gandhi having aligned with petty-bourgeoisie intellectual elements.⁹⁶ Dutt was not enamoured of Gandhian methods and he had no faith either in non-violence or in the spirituality of Gandhi. 'There is no question of a gentle persuasive spiritual argument. It is a

93. Roy, M.N. India in Transition, op.cit., p.208.

94. Ibid., p.207.

95. Roy, M.N. Memoirs., op.cit., p.379.

96. Ghosh, Shanker. Socialism and Communism in India, Allied Publishers, Delhi, 1971, p.121.

question of power'.⁹⁷ Dutt also attacked Gandhi's belief that in the nationalist movement there could be a reconciliation of the interests of the bourgeoisie on the one hand and the workers and peasants on the other. He said: 'All parasitic and propertied classes have to weave around themselves a fog of confused language, superstition, tradition, religion, reverence etc. in order to hide from the masses the fact of their exploitation...From this class alignment inevitably follows his (Gandhi's) co-operation with the imperialist Government'.⁹⁸

The critique of Gandhism, thus followed for Roy, increasing stress on the proletariat class. He wrote:

'The vanguards of revolutionary India are the common workers and peasants who constitute 90 per cent of the huge population, no less than one-fifth of the whole human race. These people are not going to give their lives for abstract theories. They want land, they want bread, they want their rights...Now is the auspicious moment for all the peoples of the world to study the significance of India's fight for complete independence. They may find that India may bring about the collapse of the imperialistic capitalistic system. India's movement cannot but be a movement of the masses for the masses...It is the common people who are suffering and it is they who will lead the movement to success'.(99)

Needless to point out that almost all of Roy's predictions went wrong. He had predicted a premature obituary of Gandhi's leadership of movement, totally proved wrong by the course of

97. Ghosh, Shanker. Political Ideas and Movements in India, op.cit., p.445.

98. Dutt, Rajni Palme. Modern India, London, 1966, p.77. ?

99. Inprecor, Vol.1, No.18, 20 December 1921. ~~~~~

history. He expected the Indian bourgeoisie to go over to the side of imperialism, broadly what the Chinese counterpart did a few years later. He believed that the proletariat would bring India's freedom after the betrayal by the bourgeoisie - again a miscalculation. Roy, himself, implicitly admitted the failure of his predictions, in a sense, when he moved away from communism and worked out his private utopia of Radical Humanism.¹⁰⁰

It may be pointed out that these sectarian views of Roy were discussed in detail in the Second Congress of the Comintern but were not accepted by the Comintern. Roy, it seems, had not changed his above views even at the Fourth Congress of the Comintern. He only reserved them at the Fourth Congress to be advocated openly at a later date. Strategically he agreed to Lenin's viewpoint at the Second and even at the Fourth Congress when he himself presented the main report on the Theses on the Eastern Question, which had for the first time clearly put forward the slogan of a united anti-imperialist front for the national liberation movement in the colonies and semi-colonies. At the Fifth Congress, however, Roy once again openly advocated his line of argument spelled out at the Second Congress, thinking that the national liberation movement has lost its character of the united front of all

 100. Kaviraj, Sudipta. The Marxist Argument, op.cit.

classes in an oppressed country e.g. India and that a new period was beginning in which class-struggle was becoming trans-ported in the colonies.

Ostensibly, Roy's analysis was bound within four corners of Lenin's orthodoxy. Roy did not agree with Lenin on the national movement in colonies in 1920 and he did not any more in 1922 or 1925 since his line seemed, on the short run, to be vindicated by events. Still, formally, at least, it was necessary for him to keep to Lenin's essential formulations and terminology.

In pursuance of this and dictated by necessity, Roy looked into the Congress, for persons who could give a more radical orientation to the Congress policies and believed that C.R. Das, Sampuranand and Singaravelu could be the right men for this. It was in November 1922 that Das had said '...I want Swaraj for the masses, not for the classes. I do not care for the bourgeoisie. How few are they?'. The Comintern, therefore, sent a message to C.R.Das, the President of the Gaya Congress(1922) in which it declared that the British rule could not be overthrown except through violent revolution and '... The economic, social and cultural progress of Indian people demands the complete separation of India from imperialist Britain'. However Roy and Comintern was first dismayed with the withdrawal of Non-cooperation movement and later by C.R. Das who in his Presidential address not only rejected the path of violent revolution but

101. Ghosh, Shanker. Socialism and Communism in India, op. cit p. 148

102. Overstreet Cape D. and Windmiller Marshall, Communism in India, California Press, Los Angeles, 1959, p.56.

also declared '... I am one of those who hold to non-violence
 103
 on principle'.

Roy, under the circumstances, felt that the organisation of a party of workers' and peasants' of India was indispensable. Preparations were set afoot in 1923 to organise such a Workers' and Peasants' Party. Roy was instrumental in sending a message of the Comintern to the projected Workers' and Peasants' Party in which it was stated: 'It is clear that the workers and peasants on whose shoulders fall the greatest part of burden of imperialist exploitation, can no longer, remain an adjunct to bourgeois nationalism, to act or keep quiet at its bidding... the working class must come forward
 104
 as an independent political force and take up the leadership.'

At the Fifth Congress, again, when a resolution was passed by the Comintern advocating establishment of direct contact between the Comintern and the Indian National Congress, it was opposed by Roy. The resolution was in keeping with Lenin's line of Second Congress that '...in order to win over the people of the colonial and semi-colonial countries, there must be a further direct development of the direct contact of the
 105
 Executive with the national movements for emancipation'. However, Roy's opposition was due to the temporary success of his sectarian policy and Roy went on to state, '...It is true that

 103. Ghosh, Shanker. Socialism and Communism in India, op.cit. p. 149.

104. Overstreet and Windmiller, op. cit., p.65.

105. Ghosh, Shanker. Socialism and Communism in India, op. cit., p.151.

we must always have a connection with these national movements but it seems to have been overlooked that these connections have not always been successful.

Roy was also against any attempt being made in the country to establish a communist party, having no connection with the Comintern. For example, in 1924, when an attempt was made by Satyabhakta, Maulana Hazrat Mohani and Singaravelu etc. to form a communist party purely an Indian organisation, Roy wrote 'Nothing can be more non-communistic than to say that the Indian working class will play its historic role in the struggle for national freedom and work out its own salvation independently of international proletarian movement. Those who maintain and propagate this point of view and are far from being communists, they are veritable enemies of Indian working class.'

Roy, in his The Aftermath of Non-Cooperation (1926) gradually shifts his emphasis from bourgeoisie who was, to quote him, 'too afraid, too hesitating to follow a revolutionary channel' and 'a section of the Indian bourgeoisie had been won over by the British imperialists and had become their allies'. Roy hence asked the proletariat to wage the struggle against the imperialist in 'a close fighting alliance with the forces of

106. Ibid.

107. Ibid.

108. Overstreet and Windmiller, op. cit., p. 79.

109. Roy, M.N. The Aftermath of Non-cooperation, p. 13.

110. Ibid.

national revolution'.¹¹¹ In The Future of Indian Politics (1926) Roy advocated the organisation of a broad-based Peoples' Party to organise all exploited sections of Indian society namely¹¹² the proletariat, the peasantry and the petty-bourgeoisie. The petty-bourgeois intellectuals, generally regarded^{ed} as vacillating allies in communist theory, were considered important by Roy to organise and provide leadership to the Peoples' Party pledged to a programme of revolutionary nationalism. Roy also, in his book The Future of Indian Politics condemned the Swaraj Party and its leaders and characterised the Party 'as a defender¹¹³ of capitalism and landlordism'. Roy also wanted the class struggle to be intensified alongwith national liberation movement and held that the fight for national freedom in India¹¹⁴ 'becomes a class struggle approximating to the final stage'. The peoples' fight for freedom, according to Roy, must be led by the party of the people - the party in which the proletariat will be in, but it will not be a proletarian party. 'In this Party the proletariat will stand side by side with the petty-bourgeoisie and peasant masses, as the most advanced democratic¹¹⁵ class'.

Roy's position in the Comintern had fallen around 1927. Consequently the defacto leadership of the communist movement in

111. Ibid. p.14

112. Roy, M.N. The Future of Indian Politics, op. cit., p.98

113. Ibid., p.85.

114. Ibid., p. 95.

115. Ibid., p. 114.

India fell in the hands of R.P. Dutt and his British communist accomplices. However, Roy's letter dated 30 December 1927 (popularly known as the Assembly Letter) to Indian communists gave direction about the tactics they should follow. Roy, in the letter advocated, the continuance of an illegal communist party and a broad based, open and legal workers' and peasants' party. His advocacy was that the illegal Communist Party of India should function as the conscious vanguard of the working class and to be the driving force behind the Workers' and Peasants' Party. But the WPP should not, in public mind, be associated with the communists, lest the fear of communism repels many leftist and democratic elements who could otherwise have been induced to join the WPP.¹¹⁶ The WPP, suggested Roy, should be affiliated with the League Against Imperialism, to shed the apprehension that it was controlled from Moscow. The illegal CPI, on the other hand, Roy stressed, should function as a section of the Comintern. Roy also asked the Indian communists to maintain relations with the Comintern through Berlin or Paris agencies and not through London or the British Communist Party.

Roy, by the time of Sixth Congress (July - September 1928) had moved towards the theory of 'decolonisation', which appreciated the role of bourgeoisie in the national liberation movement. The Sixth Congress, however, advocated the sectarian

116. Overstreet & Windmiller, op.cit., pp.104-5.

formulations of Roy till then but altered in 1928 and thus moved to the extreme left by advocating a policy of uncompromising hostility towards the bourgeoisie. This shift in the policy of Sixth Congress was partly due to Comintern's failure in China. The Congress rejected not only Roy's amended views on the role of bourgeoisie but also Dutt's assertion that 'though the bourgeoisie was becoming counter-revolutionary, it still had a vestigial anti-imperialist role to play.' The Congress also declared that the WPPs' could easily be converted into ordinary petty-bourgeois parties and hence asked the Indian communists not to organise such parties. On the contrary, the supreme task of the communists should be to organise all communist groups of individuals scattered throughout the country into a single unified Communist Party.

The Sectarian policy of Sixth Congress took the communist movement away from the wave of national movement. Because of its ultra-left policies, the CPI was put under a legal ban in 1934. These sectarian formulations were reversed only in 1935 and since then the CPI began its actual role of becoming an active mass movement.

Effectivity of Early Communist Movement, 1920-1925

The discussion regarding foundation of the CPI, its founder members, their relevant roles is primarily a matter of technical controversy. These relate to 'personal' and 'split' factors which have been subsequently carried into the writings

of the CPI 'histories'. History cannot and should not be an individual conception and history of Communism in India or the Communist Party of India has yet to take shape.¹¹⁷ Unfortunately, most of the full scale 'histories' of the early years of the CPI have been attempted by party leaders after the split in the Indian communist movement in 1964. Inevitably, therefore, some of the bitterness of the split has been spread over the entire history of the Party. Notwithstanding the importance of these controversies from a formalistic point of view, the more important question, however, is about the relative effectivity of the communist movement as a political instrument in India, during the period under study. This question of effectivity of the communist movement should be judged from two criteria (i) its relative effectivity compared to other parties in the country (ii) the relative effectivity of the movement till 1930 compared to its own later growth particularly from 1934.

The communist movement in the country was not nationally an organised movement to start with and revolved around some personalities. In such circumstances, the CPI from its outset, could not naturally secure the leadership of its freedom movement in a subject country.¹¹⁸ The communist movement was

117. Kaye, Cecil. op.cit., Introduction by N.P. Saha.

118. Ghosh, Shanker, Political Movements & Ideas in India, op.cit., p.488.

in the nature of a secret movement. Though the CPI was not placed formally under a ban till July 1935,¹¹⁹ yet the repressive measures of the imperialist government denied it a legal character. M.N. Roy summarised the position thus in 1926: 'I think it would be betraying a complete lack of understanding of the Indian situation and the nature of Imperialism to think that a Communist Party will ever be allowed to function legally in India'.¹²⁰ The Credential Committee report submitted by Eberlein to the Fourth Congress of the Comintern had similarly held: 'The Communist Party of India cannot represent a definite membership since its work is entirely illegal'.¹²¹ The Communist Party has been for the best part of its years of existence remained a target of repression, its offices, leaders and workers have been subject to searches, raids, confiscations and arrests. Therefore it has not been possible to procure continuous records of its activities and development. One has, therefore, been compelled to make general statements regarding the success of the movement in the absence of any detailed quantitative information about the organisation, membership, leaders, activities etc. This period upto the beginning of early thirties of the present century, can best be called the period of party formation towards the

119. *Guidelines of the History of CPI, op.cit., p.28.

120. Petrie, David. op.cit., p.111.

121. Adhikari, G. HCPI-I, p.527.

end of which the party comes before the country and its people as a sizable and significant mass political mass, contributing to the national freedom movement two new factors, (1) firstly, a theoretically formulated political and economic programme of national independence and secondly, an independent class-oriented workers' and peasants' movement in the face of three rounds of repression launched by the British rulers (a) the Peshawar Conspiracy Cases of 1922-23; (b) the Kanpur Conspiracy Case of 1924 and (c) the Meerut Conspiracy Case of 1929-33.¹²²

The severity of the repressive measures of the imperialist government tend to suggest the significance of the nascent communist activities as the real danger to the British rule in India in the years to come. All possible steps were taken in India, Afghanistan, Persia, Sinkian (China) to stop its reports and influence from reaching India. British embassies and consulates in countries bordering on India became most active centres of conspiracy to overthrow the newly founded proletarian Russian State which was still engaged in civil war and facing intervention from over a dozen imperialist and colonial powers. This is primarily the reason why the number of intelligence reports on this subject is so numerous in the National Archives of India.¹²³

122. Ibid., Introduction, p.x.

123. Kaye, Cecil. op.cit., Introduction by M.P. Saha.

Though it may look paradoxical, yet the viewpoint of the British rule in India of these communist activities tend both to undermine and magnify the same. The intelligence reports on 'Communism in India' dealing with the periods 1918-1924, 1924-1927 and 1927-1933, prepared by the British intelligence confirm the given statement. The salient features of these reports which go on to undermine the significance of the movement can be summed up as follows:

(a) That the communist activities in India were at the behest of the Russian government which had the conviction that Great Britain is her enemy, that her most vulnerable point is India and that 'till India is liberated, Russia will not be rid of the menace of England.¹²⁴ The British intelligence quoted Zinoviev's speech, 'The Indian Proletarian mass must be utilised by us as a result and bulwark for the Comintern in Asia...'¹²⁵ The imperialist rule saw 'the germ of a definite communist plot against India' in the Theses of the Second Congress of the Communist International, held in 1920'.¹²⁶ According to the British Intelligence, to achieve the desired results, Roy was made the instrument through whom the Soviet elected to put forth their main effort - the spark-plug by which they hoped ultimately to explode the violent minded elements in the country.¹²⁷ These rulers thought the

124. Petrie, David. op.cit. p.2.

125. Ibid., p.281.

126. Ibid., p.2.

127. Ibid., p.287.

success of the world revolution, initiated by Russia, would depend upon the corresponding rise in the East - that East is the main reserve of a world revolution...The proletarian revolution is aiming first of all at English imperialism.¹²⁸

(b) That the leaders of the early communist movement in the country were mean and dishonest fellows, persons of low calibre and integrity. That these leaders were mercenary agents of Russia, received lot of money from Russia for their activities in the country and swindled with a large proportion of the same. Some of these lived like princes and had no real sympathy with the toiling masses. They intrigued among themselves to acquire leadership and had mutual hate and distrust. To substantiate these charges, these intelligence reports point out Roy and his confederates proved to be greedy opportunists, lacking in scruples and principles and even in common honesty.^{128-A} These reports quote Ahani Mukerji saying: 'He had quarrelled with Roy because Roy' only worked for gold, not from conviction'.¹²⁹ Similarly it is believed that R.C.L. Sharma (of Pondicherry) had appropriated for his own benefit the money despatched by Roy for the party work in India.¹³⁰ Even Singaravelu, according to these reports, is alleged to 'have embezzled a sum of Rs.16000/- - his share of subsidy of Rs.30000/- granted by the Indian National Congress to Labour Unions in Madras'.¹³¹ These reports quote another

128. Ibid., p.3.

128-A. Ibid., p.67.

129. Kaye, Cecil, op.cit., p.57.

130. Petrie, David. op.cit., p.102.

131. Kaye, Cecil. op.cit., p.79.

letter written by Jotin Mitra to Sepassi expressing his indignation, 'You people do not realise our difficulties here... The boss (Roy) and family are living as Princes...and the boys here - real, sincere workers - are starving. You hypocrites mean no business; you are simply exploiters. Your behaviour has created such a bad atmosphere against you and now, except a few of us, all in Panjab, U.P., Bombay and Bengal are losing confidence in you'.¹³² These reports also tend to indicate that Roy was not undisputed leader of his Bolshevik agents and he had serious rivals in Chattopadhyay and Barkatallah Khan.¹³³ About the flow of Russian money in the country to help these Bolshevik agents, these reports state '...that the Soviet had granted five million gold/roubles to Zinovieff for propaganda in India and the East'¹³⁴ and that '...Roy had received £ 2000 from the Comintern in February, for the journey expenses of the delegates from India to the proposed Berlin Conference and, of this, he proposed to send £ 300 to Dange'¹³⁵ again '...that in 1921-22, the Soviet Government had sent £ 30000 to Kabul for Indian revolutionary propaganda that a good deal of this money was misappropriated by Mohd. Ali (Khushi Mohomed) who forged receipts'¹³⁶ '...On the 3 December 1923, the Third International proposed to the Politbureau that the 'Near-Central Eastern Section' should be allotted a sum of 10,000,000 gold roubles for propaganda in 1924

132. Petrie, David. op.cit., p.99.

133. Kaye, Cecil. op.cit., p.56.

134. Ibid., p.12.

135. Ibid., p.52.

136. Ibid., p.89.

which was to include 5,000,000 gold roubles for the Indian Communist Party,¹³⁷ and that 'Towards the end of the year, another letter from Sepassi was received, in which he made mention of the despatch of various sums of money by Roy to Communists in India. These were £ 200, £ 100, \$ 100 and \$ 300'.¹³⁸

(c) That the communist activities in India posed no real challenge to the sovereignty of King-Emperor in India. Petrie even opines that 'not only did Roy not succeed in establishing a live, waking Communist Party in India, but even those persons who grouped themselves together under that title were a poor enough embleance of any kind of a party. Thus Satya Bhakta was distrusted and repudiated by Roy, while Roy, in his turn was suspected by the party of Begerhotta, Muzaffar Ahmed etc. of diverting to his own uses funds he should have remitted to India'.¹³⁹ The Intelligence reports have tried to undermine still the success of the communist activities pointing out the weaknesses of the modes operandi of these communists, which included sending seditious propaganda literature (promptly intercepted by the Intelligence) and sending 'agents' every now and then avowedly to mislead the Comintern. These reports point out that 'there was very little work done in India and that the Comintern was disgusted with the amount of success achieved in the country'. Hence according to these reports, Sepassi wrote a letter: 'We are in urgent need of atleast 15

137. Petrie, David. op.cit., p.72.

138. Ibid., p.97.

139. Ibid., p.116.

men and money is ready for all of them. They will be given any kind of training...¹⁴⁰

(d) That despite belief in violence, the Comintern had decided not to attempt to foster the projected revolution in India on the milk of pure Communism. Though, therefore, the decision of Gaya Congress to continue non-violence proved distasteful to Comintern leadership,¹⁴¹ yet none of the Roy's manifestos again reverted to the use of violence. According to the British intelligence, one of the chief objectives of Communism in India was to capture and control existing nationalist organisations such as Indian National Congress, but the movement failed to achieve it, these sourced hold.¹⁴²

Paradoxically, the reasons which the imperialist government had in mind when undermining the communist activities in India, were the same when the imperialist government magnified the danger of spread of communism in the country. The imperialist government left no stone unturned to discredit the movement, to distort the facts about the movement to keep the masses away from the contact and influence of the early communist activities. The government indulged in a spade of publicity about the early communist activities on the one hand and indulged in repressive measures through various trials, on the other hand.

140. Ibid., p.96.

141. Ibid., p.285.

142. Ibid.,

The British activities were designed to exaggerate the Russian danger. 'In their secret despatches, the British imperialists in 1920 freely admitted that there is no actual danger of action on India from Soviet Russia; there is no chance of outside Bolshevik agents coming into India; there are Indian Bolshevik agents i.e. Indian communists in India itself and that Indian communists when they emerge will be hardly distinguishable from national revolutionaries'.¹⁴³ However, in their public propoganda in India, the imperialist government played up the 'Bolshevik danger' and harped on the insidious design of Soviet Russia against India. The imperialist government painted the image of local communists as the 'Bolshevik agent' - antinational, having extra-territorial loyalty, agent of the foreign power who had nothing to do with the national movement.

The real objective in the mind of the imperialist government was to crush any movement which might ultimately lead to their expulsion from the country - a coveted possession of England. In their attempts to discredit the communist movement in the country, the imperialist government aroused the bourgeois leadership of the Indian National Congress, tried to convince it that the real objective of communism in India was to capture and control the existing nationalist organisation such as Indian National Congress which believed in the

143. Adhikari, G. HCPI-I, p.75.

constitutional methods and had been a friend and ally of the government so far. The communist movement, if successful, the alien government would point out, shall end all property, special rights and prerogatives enjoyed by the middle class so far. So on the one hand, the imperialist government tried to create a wedge between the rising communist movement and the established middle class movement in the form of Indian National Congress, and on the other hand resorted to repressive measures.

Though it may look astonishing, yet the fact remains that the anti-communist activities of the British colonial rulers of India began even a few years before the formation of the CPI at Tashkent and before the communist groups began functioning in India itself. The method of the imperialist government was the appointment of spies and agents to intercept correspondence, to collect information about the strength, leaders, location and progress of the movement. There is no dearth of material in the political files of the Home Department of 1918-22, preserved in the National Archives, consisting of army and civil intelligence reports from the agents operating in the neighbouring countries and in the Soviet Russia itself. Though much of it must have been destroyed or burnt by the British before they left India. But what remains is sufficient to throw light on the genesis of the Bolshevik Department of the British Indian Police and Central Intelligence. A proper Bolshevik Department under the Central Intelligence and the Indian Police was reconstituted perhaps in 1921.¹⁴⁴

The British Government launched repressive measures in the form of various conspiracy cases against the early communist activists. The British intelligence fully justified their repression of communism in India, '...Wherever Communism manifests itself, it should be met and stamped out like the plague. The spread of Communism in India is not the case of those problems which may be looked at from a particular 'angle of vision', it must be looked straight in the face, and it must be fought with the most unrelenting opposition'.¹⁴⁵

Despite these political calculations and repressive measures of the imperialist Government, the Indian communist movement achieved some success and acquired some effectivity as a political instrument. The effectivity of the communist movement during the period under study, should be judged on three levels namely at the national, regional and Trade Union levels.

There is no denying the fact that at the national level, the communist movement in the country was not pretty successful and effective. It was then an appendage of the Indian National Congress which was well established, was in tune with the feudal and bourgeois set-up of the country and had grabbed the formal leadership of almost all national bodies, despite its pacifist and reformist outlook. On the contrary, the CPI, despite its revolutionary outlook, could not afford to criticise the bourgeois programmes of the Indian National Congress at a

145. Petrie, David., op. cit., p. 292.

national scale since the CPI movement was not well founded and it manned the things with the Indian National Congress at the lower level of command. The CPI was used by the Congress to provide mass following for the Indian National Congress, through personal intimate relationship of CPI leadership with the working class and its organising the movement at grass roots.

At a lower level i.e. at the regional level, however, the CPI was quite successful despite set-backs. The communist movement had already started within the country through regional centres established at Calcutta, Bombay, Panjab, Madras and U.P. These centres, besides working independently in the country, of course under the leadership of M.N. Roy, were also collaborating with the Indian National Congress in the broad national movement and for the purpose threw half-hearted feelers to the Congress leadership. Some of the leaders of these communist centres e.g. Dange and Singaravelu had served the country in the ranks of the Indian National Congress and therefore, could find sympathisers of the communist activities in progressive left-wing congressmen. However the predominant leadership of the Congress, led by right-wing reformists, distrusted their communist colleagues, partly due to their class belongings and partly due to the imperialist propaganda. Still, there was some cooperation with the communists by these progressive Congressmen particularly on the Trade Union front. Even this cooperation was under inevitable strains and there were under-currents of hostility between the communists and their progressive friends in the Congress. These regional centres also received setbacks because of imperialist repressive measures against early communism in India. Besides, there were dissensions

even among the communists. For example in Bengal, after the arrest of prominent members e.g. Abdul Halim, Abdul Razzak, Muzaffar Ahmed, the thin thread of communist activities was taken up by one Abani Chowdhry who tried to contact the Bombay centre run by S.V. Deshpande and B.T. Ranadive, was not successful and there was an estrangement between the Calcutta and Bombay communist centres.¹⁴⁶ Some of these centres have virtually become ineffective because they revolved around persons who no more in the communist movement e.g. the Lahore group become ineffective after Gulam Hussain became an approver in the conspiracy cases against early communist activities. The Madras centre had become defunct after the withdrawal of Singaravelu. Similarly the arrests of Dange, Muzaffar Ahmed etc. in the Merrut cases proved disastrous for the communist movement in the country. It is, therefore, due to the weak position of the early communist movement in the country that the three-party letter stressed the need for finding the real communist party as late as in 1933. Thus the CPI as a viable effective political movement was absent though occasionally the regional centres showed some sign of life.

It was, however, at the Trade Union level that the CPI became an effective political instrument despite under-current

146. Sen, Ranen. Communist Movement in Bengal in the Early Thirties, Marxist Miscellany, No.6, PPH, New Delhi, January 1975, p.4.

of hostility between the CPI and the Indian National Congress even in the Trade Union matters. This hostility was due to (i) that the Indian National Congress retained the formal leadership without doing any ground work of real work. The real organisational work was done by the CPI workers, who worked at the grass roots and made the movement a success. Since the CPI manned the things at the lower level of leadership, with formal leadership being in the hands of the Congress leaders, this led to mutual bitterness. (ii) That the CPI resented the pacifist and reformist outlook of the Congress, a product of its class interests. The conciliatory outlook and ideology of the Congress did not carry the Trade Union movement too far. The CPI on the other hand possessed a revolutionary outlook and believed that the longest period of strike against the capitalist would provide the highest gain to the working class. The Congress on the contrary, believed in a compromising attitude between the working class and the capitalist which indirectly denied the fruit of Trade Union activities to the working class. (iii) That the CPI who collected funds, particularly in Bengal, for Trade Union work wanted the same to be used for the Trade Union activities or a similar purpose of the working class. The Congress resented to this and wanted all the collections to go in the general fund. The CPI did not like this attitude of the Congress which collected funds from various sections and classes of the

country whereas the only financial source of the CPI was the collections raised from the working class.

Tracing the genesis and evolution of the ideology of Trade Union movement in the country one notices that though the Extremists (Tilak etc.) were the first to indulge in political militancy through frequent strikes in the country, yet their political militancy was without a social basis and hence the Extremists could not go deep in the roots of the Trade Union movement. Gandhiji was not temperamentally drawn to the Trade Union movement except as a part of the non-cooperation movement, a pacifist - reformist movement based on extreme non-militant methods. The Swarajists like C.R.Das and Moti Lal Nehru though sympathised with the Trade Union movement yet it was not more than a lip sympathy. The communists were the first to give an economic ideology and programme to the Trade Union movement.

A special characteristic of the Trade Union movement in the country under communists was that though it was less politically militant, yet it was more economically active. Unlike the Trade Union movement in other countries, the Trade Union movement in India was more economic than political. For example, the CPI manifesto on Hindu Muslim unity stated that the lasting fraternal unity in these classes could be forced only through joint struggles as workers' for urgent economic

demands.¹⁴⁷ The lack of political militancy on the part of Trade Union movement can be explained by the fact that the communist elements in the country were working in collaboration with the Indian National Congress, a bourgeois pacifist - reformist organisation, in true spirit of the guidelines laid for them at the Second Congress of the Comintern. The economic militancy of the communists in the Trade Union movement was in a way good because it provided them an opportunity to get closer to the working class masses and organise the movement at grass roots. The real fruits of this policy were reaped in late 1930s' with the Indian Communist movement becoming a mass movement.

Despite these stresses and strains, there was slow expansion of membership in the Trade Union movement, into mainly the industrial workers and petty-bourgeoisie in the eastern and western parts of India. In Bengal, there was the famous strike of about 10,000 carters against police atrocities, leading to pitched battle between the carters and the police.¹⁴⁸ There is, however, evidence to show that the evolution of the Trade Union movement in these parts

147. Guidelines of the History of Communist Party of India, op.cit., p.16.

148. Sen, Ranen. Marxist Miscellany, op.cit., p.3.

of the country was mutually exclusive of each other. The conclusion of the study of Amiya Kumar Bagchi¹⁴⁹ is that in the eastern parts of the country say Bengal, Bihar etc. there is greater amount of political militancy in the working class but less economic prosperity. On the contrary, in the western parts of the country say Bombay, the working class has greater economic prosperity and lesser political militancy. Hence while in Bengal, the tendency was and continues to be so even today, to have fullest control of the trade union movement by the working class, in the western parts there has been tendency to compromise and to break away from the main trend of all India trade union movement if and when dissatisfied. There was breaking up of the AITUC in 1931, when Subhash Chandra Bose was its *President*. On the eve of the session of AITUC, the newspaper Liberty, organ of Bengal Congress, wrote articles against communists dubbing them as pro-British and gave a call for their ouster from the AITUC. The situation was tense. Volunteers were recruited by both sides... It ultimately led to the final breach between the Congress and the Communists and the AITUC. Both called themselves as the AITUC. The session led by the communists was known as Red TUC till 1935, when it was again reunited with the AITUC.¹⁵⁰

 149. Bagchi, Amiya Kumar. Reflections of Patterns of Regional Growth in India during the period of British rule, Centre for Study in Social Sciences, Calcutta.

150. Sen, Ranen. Marxist Miscellany, op.cit., p.6.

The hypothesis of Bagchi is that since Bengal (and also Bihar) came under the control of the British colonial rule earlier than any other part of the country, there was more intense extraction of surplus in Bengal, completely curbing the indigeneous capitalist's competition by use of the State power and thus leading to the introduction of the foreign Managing Agency System and doing away completely with the local organisational activities. This made the working class economically poorer but more uncompromising and militant. The position in western industrial centres was different where the local bourgeoisie was not completely annihilated. The imperialist rule adopted a liberal attitude towards the local bourgeoisie, except in Bengal, where it met tough resistance in the founding years of its colonial rule in India. The indigeneous capitalist in the country, except in Bengal, was under double strain, the strain of the imperialist rule and of the working class. It hence tended to be more pacifist and compromising in case of conflict with the working class. This made the working class to gain economically though its political militancy received a corresponding setback due to the same.

The trade union-movement flourished in the country and even the petty-bourgeoisie came to appreciate communism and hence drew nearer to it. The factors aiding the petty-

bourgeoisie to get closer to the Trade Union movement and communism were: (a) decline of Gandhism and the disillusionment caused in its ranks by the withdrawal of the Non-cooperation movement, (b) petty-bourgeoisie's disillusionment with the traditional terrorism which had only sensationalising but no programmatic content, (c) organisation of the growing ^{working} class, exhibiting both political militancy and economic gains accruing out of organised Trade Union activities.

The Trade Union movement in India which was not organised till 1918, became organised during the period 1918-26. A close look at the Trade Union activities and the results during the period 1918-26 brings one to the conclusion that the Trade Unions were increasing, their membership was increasing, that the Trade Union movement was a reality and Trade Unions had come to stay. The following table would provide a brief idea about the progress of the Trade Union movement:

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of Strikes and lockouts</u>	<u>No. of working people involved</u>	<u>No. of working days lost.</u>
1921	396	6,00,351	6,984,426
1922	278	4,33,434	3,972,727
1923	213	3,01,044	5,051,764
1924	133	3,12,462	8,730,918
1925	134	2,70,423	12,578,129
1926	128	1,86,851	1,097,478

The wave of strikes which began immediately after the end of World War I reached its peak in 1921. It began to decline in

151. Jha, Shiva Chandra. The Indian Trade Union Movement - An Account and an Interpretation, Firma KL Mukhopadhyaya, Calcutta, 1970, p. 110.

1922 when the short phase of war prosperity came to an end. From 1922 to 1927 there is a progressive decline in the Trade Union movement due to the adventitious circumstances to some long-drawn-out and widespread strikes.

The Trade Union movement became militant due to the theses of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern. In 1928, the number of workers involved increased to 5,06,851 and the number of working days lost was 3,16,47,404. In 1929, the number of workers involved in strikes were 5,32,016 and the number of working days lost were 1,21,65,691. The militancy of the Trade Union movement is evidenced from the fact that at the AITUC Annual Session held at Nagpur in 1929, the Congress was compelled to adopt a number of resolutions such as the denunciation of the Round Table Conference, Nehru Report. The Congress also decided not to participate in the conferences of Indian Labour Organisations. The decisions of the AITUC session were 'too strong a pill for moderates'¹⁵² which ultimately resulted in the rupture and the formation of NFTU by reformist Congress leaders.

The Trade Union movement in the country reached a new height only after the Seventh Congress of the Comintern. Ever since the Seventh Congress, there was a progressive rise in it.

An analysis of the Trade Union movement in the country reveals that the results of strikes are closely connected with

152. Ibid, p.138.

the economic condition. More of them are successful when the economy is prosperous. During days of depression they usually result in failures. The number of unsuccessful strikes during the period 1920-30 is about fifty per cent. Cotton textile industry accounts for the largest percentages of strikes. Again, Bombay and Bengal had the largest number of strikes account for about ¹⁵³ 66 per cent of them.

In the end, it may be pointed out that notwithstanding the work and success of the CPI, it did not become an effective political instrument till 1930. The emigrant CPI founded in 1920 and later the CPI founded at Kanpur 1925 brings out that the CPI was only de jure founded. It had a Constitution and an Executive Committee. However, the effective foundation of the CPI as a viable organisation was yet to take place. The CPI was not having even a formal functioning during the period unlike its counterpart, the Communist Party of China, founded in 1921. The 'plenum' of the CPI was held only after the release of some of its leaders arrested in the Merrut Cases. Even in the regional centres e.g. Bengal, it was only in February 1931, after Abdul Halim came out of jail, that a formal committee named the ¹⁵⁴ Calcutta Committee of CPI was formed. And even within CPI, a split occurred in the later part of 1931. A rival party styled the Bolshevik Party of India was formed. This, of course, died

153. Karnik, V.B. Strikes in India, Manktalas, Bombay, 1967, p. 404.

154. Sen, Ranen. The Marxist Miscellany, op. cit., p. 4

a natural death soon. Besides, there was a small group called Samyraj Party formed in 1930 and continued upto 1933. Still another Party called the Indian Proletarian Revolutionary Party consisting of mainly ex-terrorists, was formed in 1930 and merged with the Calcutta Committee in 1933.¹⁵⁶

The sectarian decisions of the Sixth Congress were also partially responsible for the ineffectiveness of the CPI. 'It was an ultra left line'.¹⁵⁷ On the Trade Union front, the resolution of the Sixth Congress stated 'In the trade unions, the Indian communists must mercilessly expose the national reformist leadership and carry on a decisive struggle for conversion of trade unions into genuine class organisations of the proletariat and for the replacement of the present reformist leadership by consistent revolutionary representatives from the mass of the workers'.¹⁵⁸ The resolution on India passed at the Sixth Congress stated 'The communists must unmask the national reformist of the Indian National Congress and oppose all the phrases of Swarajists, Gandhists etc about passive resistance... It must be remembered that under no circumstances can the communists relinquish their right to open criticism of the opportunist and reformist tactics of the leadership of those

156. Ibid, p.7.

157. Overstreet Gane D. & Windmiller, Marshall, op. cit, p.47.

158. Jha, Shiva Chandra, op. cit., p. 135.

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mass organisations in which they work.'

The Sixth Congress thus marked a radical departure from the policies adumbrated at the Second Congress by Lenin who had asked the communists not to work in opposition. A CPI leader wrote in retrospect 'It was a tragedy that in 1930, we contraposed ourselves against Gandhi, against the National Congress and practically against the mass civil disobedience movement launched by it, though, of course, with the sincere desire to liberate the Indian masses from reformist, compromising, Gandhian influence and unleash a genuine revolutionary national freedom movement under the leadership of the working class.' This extremist, militant policy was ultimately reversed by the Seventh Congress. It was only from 1935 that a centralised all-India Communist Party came into existence and that the CPI began to acquire the position of an effective political instrument on a national scale.

159. Ghosh, Shankar. Socialism and Communism in India, op. cit., p. 448.

160. Sardesai, S.G. 'Gandhi and the CPI' in The Mahatma, A Marxist Symposium, 1969, p. 30.

CHAPTER - II

THE NATIONAL AND COLONIAL THESES ADOPTED AT THE SECOND
WORLD CONGRESS: CONTROVERSY BETWEEN LENIN AND ROY

The Second Congress of the Communist International adopted the Theses on the National and Colonial Question presented by Lenin and also the Supplementary Theses on the same question, the original draft of which was prepared by M.N. Roy.

Roy in his Memoirs gives a description of his discussion with Lenin on the draft theses and says how he disagreed with Lenin's draft, how then Lenin asked him to prepare the supplementary theses.¹

The account given by Roy is substantiated by Overstreet and Windmiller² and E.H. Carr.³ Their account is incredible

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1. According to Roy, he 'had only two typed copies made. One of them I personally delivered to Lenin. He read the document with the keenest interest and suggested some verbal alterations, which I readily accepted'. The document was further discussed in the Commission of which Roy gives the following version:
"...Lenin created a sensation by declaring that prolonged discussions with me had made him doubtful about his own theses. Therefore he proposed that both the drafts should be considered together as the greatest possible approximation to a theoretically sound and factually valid approach to the problem".
Roy, M.N. Memoirs, Allied Publishers, Delhi, 1964, p.381.
 2. Overstreet, Gane D & Windmillar, Marshall. Communism in India, University of California Press, Los Angeles, 1959, pp.26-33.
 3. Carr, E.H. The Bolshevik Revolution, Vol.III, Pelican Books, Macmillan, 1953, pp.251-259.

since the source of both is the same viz. verbatim report of Second Congress of Comintern (Russian 1934) and the Memoirs of M.N. Roy. However, a more reliable account is given by A. Reznikov,⁴ a Soviet scholar who besides studying the above mentioned documents consulted original sources i.e. the initial text of Roy's theses on which Lenin worked and made his cuts and first amendments in English and also the minutes of the Colonial Commission preserved in the Central Party Archives of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism.

Lenin's Theses

Before proceeding with the study of Roy's supplementary colonial theses, it is desirable to discuss Lenin's theses on this problem first. The actual text is given in the Collected Works, Vol.31 and reprinted in 'Selections from V.I. Lenin and J.V. Stalin on National Colonial Question'⁵ It was before the opening of the Second Congress that Lenin submitted his 'Preliminary Draft' Theses on the National and Colonial Questions' and requested comrades to express themselves on the same. Several delegates sent in their comments and materials which were considered by the author. The colonial

4. His two detailed articles in KOMMUNIST, the theoretical organ of Communist Party of Soviet Union, deal with this. These articles are 'Lenin on the National Liberation Movement' (No.7, May 1967) and 'Lenin's Struggle against Sectarian Distortions in the National Colonial Question' (No.5, 1968)

Adhikari, G. HCPI-I, p.157.

5. *Calcutta Book House, Calcutta, 1975, pp.56-61.

commission of the Congress, which was presided over by Lenin, carried out a comprehensive collective work. At Lenin's request, the Indian communist M.N. Roy wrote the supplementary theses, which depict the national liberation movement from the viewpoint of situation in India and other asiatic nations.

A close analysis of the National and Colonial Theses by Lenin would reveal:

1) That Lenin for the first time pointed out in his Theses the definition of the contradiction between imperialism and socialism as the basic contradiction of the new epoch. The entire development in the world, said Lenin, is now determined by the struggle of the imperialist states against Soviet Union. 'Unless we bear that in mind', emphasised Lenin, '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. The communist parties in civilised and backward countries alike, can pose and solve political problems correctly only if they make this postulate their starting point'.⁶

11) That he wanted the colonial people not to rely on the experience of other countries, but, while learning from the common struggle of the Russian and other peoples, to constantly evaluate their own experience and thus find answers to the peculiar problems of their revolution.⁷ While presenting

6. Lenin, VI. CW, Vol.31, p.241.

7. Lenin, V.I. The National Liberation Movement in the East, (NLME), Moscow, 1969, p.235.

his theses to the Second Congress, Lenin laid down that the Communist Party 'must base its policy on the national question too, not on abstract and formal principles, but, firstly on an exact appraisal of the specific historical situation and, primarily, of economic conditions and secondly on a clear distinction between general concept of national interest as a whole, which implies the interests of the ruling class. Thirdly, it should be based on an equally clear distinction between the oppressed, dependent and subject nations and the oppressing, exploiting and sovereign nations in order to counteract the bourgeois-democratic lies'.⁸ Lenin was more explicit when he wrote: 'In this age of imperialism, it is particularly important for the proletariat and the Communist International to establish concrete economic facts and to proceed from concrete realities, not from abstract postulates, in the solution of all colonial and national questions'.⁹ Lenin wanted the colonial people to be 'fully alive to the singularity of their position'. He decisively opposed every attempt to contrapose the national freedom struggle in the East to the Socialist revolution in the West. He repudiated as unfounded the assertion that the fate of the West depended entirely on the stage of development and the force of the revolutionary movement in the eastern countries.

8. Lenin, V.I. NLME, p.250.

9. Ibid., p.264.

111) That according to Lenin the nature and character of the national liberation movements was bourgeois-democratic. Lenin wrote in his original theses:

" 11) With regard to more backward states and nations in which feudal or patriarchal and patriarchal-peasant relations predominate, it is particularly important to bear in mind:

'first that all communist parties must assist the bourgeois-democratic liberation movement in these countries, and that the duty of rendering the most active assistance rests primarily with the workers of the country the backward nation is colonially or financially depended on...' (10)

Lenin was quite clear that almost all the national liberation movements were actually bourgeois-democratic movements in terms of both leadership and programmatic content, inspite of their customary socialist protestations.

'Every line of Sun Yat-Sen's platform breathes a spirit of militant and sincere democracy'.¹¹ Lenin called Sun Yat-Sen ' a revolutionary democat endowed with the mobility and the heroism of a class that is rising, not declining, a class that is not fearful of the future but believes in it'.¹²

Lenin also analysed the hiatus between the structural meaning and their phenomenal superstructural appearance-- the distance between the actuality of historical processes and the ideological reflections of them in men's minds. Lenin calls it 'subjective socialism' which went along very well with, in fact,

10. Lenin, V.I. CW, Vol.31, p.149.

11. Lenin, V.I. NLME, p.57.

12. Ibid., p.58.

was an ideological reflex of objective capitalism.

'The dialectics of social revolution in China reveals itself precisely in the fact that while sincerely sympathising with socialism in Europe the Chinese democrats have transformed it into a reactionary theory, and on the basis of this reactionary theory of 'preventing capitalism' are championing a purely capitalist, a maximum capitalist agrarian programme'.(13)

He also pointed out that the tendency of these movements in creating national states in Asia is in fact helping in the development of capitalism. Lenin's conclusion was that 'In Asia and Eastern Europe, the period of bourgeois-democratic revolutions did not begin until 1905'.¹⁴ To start with, Lenin identified the colonial question with the question of subject nationalities of Europe. According to Lenin, the bourgeois national liberation movements had a very positive role to play in Asia; and this for several reasons. The bourgeoisie in Asia was still young, vigorous, rising and capable of fighting militantly for its own interests and therefore for democratic demands. Secondly these revolutions had the historic task of introducing radical agrarian reform i.e. the necessity of destroying feudalism in all its forms and manifestations. Thirdly the bourgeoisie were arousing millions of popular masses to intense political activity and struggles, and lastly, most of these movements fight against the main enemy of the

13. Ibid., p.60.

14. Ibid., p.95.

people of the world - imperialism. In seeing the positive aspects of colonial nationalism, Lenin, of course, did not ignore its class character and went on to say that 'after the experience both of Europe and Asia, whoever now speaks of non-class politics and of non-class socialism simply deserves to be put in a cage and exhibited alongside of the Australian Kangaroo'.¹⁵ Lenin emphasised in his theses that the policy on the national question must be based, among other things, 'on a clear distinction between the interest of the oppressed classes, of the toilers and exploited, and the general concept of national interests as a whole, which implies the interests of the ruling class'.¹⁶

iv) That one of the basic questions dealt with by Lenin was that of the attitude to be adopted by the communists and the international communist movements towards the bourgeoisie in the course of the bourgeois democratic national liberation movement. Tied with this was the preliminary question of defining the role of the bourgeoisie and the peasantry in these movements.

The entire concept of the progressive role of the bourgeois democratic national liberation movements is linked with Lenin's theory of development of revolution by stages. This meant that in a backward capitalist or colonial country the process of revolution is to be clearly demarcated into two states -

(1) the stage of bourgeois democratic or anti-colonial, anti-

15. Ibid., p.55.

16. Ibid., p.250.

feudal revolution (ii) the stage of socialist revolution. Lenin opined that the socialist revolution could 'follow on the heels of the nationalist revolution depending on the correlation of political forces on the national as well as the international planes'.¹⁷ Seen in this light, the bourgeois democratic or national revolution may serve as a preliminary step towards, or a prelude, though an essential one, to the socialist revolution'.¹⁸ According to Lenin, the extent of the time-gap between the two stages of the revolution was not theoretically determined; it depended on the practice of the revolutionary classes and parties and on the manner of activity of the socialist revolutionaries in the first-democratic stage of the revolution. The basic questions here were: how thoroughly had the masses been aroused in the struggle for democratic demands? To what extent had the peasantry been stirred up? Whether proletarian leadership of the revolutionary movement had been firmly established or not?¹⁹

Lenin held that the colonies and semi-colonies were in the first, historically progressive phase of capitalism -- the period of ascendancy of capitalism when its struggle against feudalism and absolutism leads it to create mass national movements drawing in all classes of the population politics,

17. Lenin, V.I. CW, Vol.23, p.295.

18. Ibid., p.317.

19. Lenin, V.I. CW, Vol.33, p.52.

particularly the largest section of the population, the peasantry. In these colonies, on the one hand, capitalism buoyancy of a class was on the rise and on the other hand, it was oppressed by imperialism. Moreover capitalism comes into conflict with imperialism in its efforts to create a nation-state in which it could flourish best. In several colonial countries, the bourgeoisie was also in conflict with local feudal and medieval forces which acted as a barrier to capitalism and with which imperialism was allied. This led the colonial bourgeoisie to come closer to the people.

Lenin at the same time also noted the tendency of the colonial bourgeoisie in particular cases to vascillate and compromise with imperialism and feudalism, or some of its sections to even go over to imperialism and to use nationalist slogans to deceive the workers.²⁰ Lenin's view of the colonial bourgeoisie, therefore, stressed its vascillating role, with both positive and negative possibilities rather than put a one-sided emphasis on its 'ingeneral radical' or 'ingeneral reactionary' character. The first emphasis would glorify the role of the bourgeoisie, make it 'respectable' and tend to make the proletariat tail behind it; while the second would lead to the total negation of the role of the bourgeoisie in the colonies, and produce the tendency to follow purely adventurous tactics in the national movement. Another important

20. Lenin, V.I. CW, Vol.22, p.148.

constituent of Lenin's approach lay in his seeing the role of the peasantry as the heart of the bourgeois democratic revolution in the colonies and semi-colonies. So far as the communist work in the colonies was concerned, work among the peasants was to play an important role. In his Preliminary theses, Lenin stressed the need to give special support to the peasant movement and urged the communists to strive to lend the peasant movement the most revolutionary character.²¹

Lenin firmly held the view that in view of the progressive role of the bourgeoisie in the colonies and semi-colonies and because their revolutions were yet at the bourgeois-democratic stage, the communists should support and participate in the existing bourgeois democratic liberation movements and should ally, howsoever temporarily, with all bourgeois elements taking active part in these movements.²² In other words, the national liberation movement should be seen as an anti-imperialist united front of all those who were willing to fight against imperialism.

v) That Lenin was not for unqualified support to the bourgeois democratic revolutions. He urged the communists to support only those movements which were 'genuinely revolutionary' and on the other hand urged them to 'combat the reformist bourgeoisie'.²³

21. Lenin, V.I. NLME, p.255.

22. Lenin, V.I. CW, Vol.22, p.151.

23. Lenin, V.I. NLME, p.266.

He said:

'The Communist International should support bourgeois-democratic national movements in colonial and backward countries. The Comintern must enter into a temporary alliance with bourgeois democracy in the colonial and backward countries, but should not merge with it, and should under all circumstances uphold the independence of the proletarian movement even if it is in its most embryonic form'.(24)

The first touchstone of a genuine revolutionary was its opposition and struggle against imperialism. The second test of the revolutionary character of a national movement was the role of the masses and the extent of the mass activity in the movement. Another condition of support, prescribed by Lenin, to the national liberation movement was in connection with the role of the people. It must not oppose the communist effort of 'educating and organising the peasantry and the broad mass of the exploited in a revolutionary spirit'.²⁵ In other words, the communists were not to appease the colonial bourgeoisie by keeping the peasant and mass movements under bourgeois control or within limits acceptable to the bourgeoisie. Hence a bourgeois democratic movement should be supported only if it enabled the proletariat and the communists to make preparations for, to open the way to, the next stage of revolution.

Lenin also pointed out the tasks of the communist elements in the oppressed countries must be to create revolutionary

24. Lenin, V.I. CW, Vol.31, p.150.

25. Lenin, V.I. NLNE, p.266.

parties and not just communist parties in name only.

'The Comintern should support bourgeois democratic movement in colonial and backward countries only on condition that in these countries the elements of the future proletarian parties, which will be communist not only in name, shall be brought together and educated to understand their special tasks viz. to fight the bourgeois movements within their own nations'. (26)

He told the communists of the East: 'You will have to base yourselves on the bourgeois nationalism which is awakening, and must awaken, among those peoples and which has its historical justifications'.²⁷ ✓

Lenin's Preliminary Theses Opposed

Lenin's Preliminary Theses were opposed by some. For example, Serrati (Italy) and Sultan-Zade (Persia) asserted that the national movements in which the bourgeoisie participate are not revolutionary. Serrati opined that the support to the national liberation movement led by the national bourgeoisie can only lead to the weakening of the proletarian class-consciousness. Speaking at the Plenary Session of the Congress, Serrati held that 'in general, no act of the national liberation carried out by bourgeois democratic groups - even if the methods of insurrection are employed -- as a revolutionary act'.²⁸ He opposed any support to or alliance with bourgeois

26. Lenin, V.I. Preliminary Draft Theses on the National + Colonial Question (Text reprinted in - Selections from Lenin and Stalin on National & Colonial Question), Calcutta Book House, Calcutta, October 1975, p.60.

27. Lenin, V.I. CW, Vol.30, p.162.

28. Schram, Stuart R and Encausse, d' Helene Carrere, Marxism and Asia, Allen Lane The Penguin Press, London, 1969, pp.165-66.

democrats, not even with those 'who are said to be revolutionary'.²⁹ Similarly Roy (India) expressed the view that in the colonies and in the dependent countries, the movement of the indigeneous bourgeoisie for national independence and the movement of the workers and peasants against exploitation stood in sharp contrast to each other and could not develop together. Presenting his case before the Comintern on the National and Colonial question, Roy maintained that the Indian masses 'are not fired with a national spirit. They are exclusively interested in problems of an economic and social nature'. Consequently, they 'have no interest whatsoever in bourgeois-nationalist slogans; only one slogan - 'land to the tillers' - can interest them'. Furthermore, 'as far as the broad popular masses are concerned, the revolutionary movement in India has nothing in common with the national-liberation movement'. Hence Roy urged for the deletion of para 11 of the Preliminary Theses which asked the communists to support the bourgeois democratic liberation movements.³⁰ Roy maintained that 'in India the Communist International should assist the creation and development of the communist movement alone, and the Communist Party of India should occupy itself exclusively with organising the broad popular masses to fight for their own class interests'.³¹

29. Bipin Chandra, Lenin on Wars of National Liberation, Lenin Centenary Commemoration Seminar, Indian Council of World Affairs, February 1970, p.38.

30. Schram, Stuart and d'Encausse, Helene, op.cit., pp.150-51.

31. Bipin Chandra, op.cit., p.37.

Roy went on to declare:

'The elements exist in India for creating a powerful Communist Party. But as far as the broad popular masses are concerned, the revolutionary movement in India has nothing in common with the national liberation movement'.(32)

Lenin Asks Roy to Draft Supplementary Theses

It is well known that Roy disagreed with Lenin at the Second Congress of the Comintern. Roy gives the following account about his differences with Lenin:

'Lenin's Theses on the National + Colonial Question reiterated the principle of self-determination. I disagreed with his view that the nationalist bourgeoisie played a historically revolutionary role and therefore should be supported by the communists. The Polish communists of the Luxemburg school used to remark in joke that I was a true communist, while Lenin was a nationalist'.(33)

This account not only speaks of Roy's arrogance, but also his rejection of Leninist policy of self-determination. He has in fact distorted Lenin's position. Further Roy was contraposing the spontaneously developing workers' and peasants' economic struggles to the general national liberation movements.

Though Lenin had a full grasp of the problems of the colonial peoples, yet he was not willing to 'legislate' or 'decree' for the colonial people or prepare a blue-print for them to follow. He knew well that he was far away from the scene of the colonial revolutions, and did not have the time

32. Chattopadhyay, Gautam. Communism and Bengal's Freedom Movement, PPH, Delhi, 1970, p. 32

33. Roy, M.N. Memoirs, op. cit., p. 355.

to study their problems in detail. Lenin of course opened the doors of revolution to the people of the colonies, but he also taught them that concrete application of his ideas was the task of the people actually engaged in revolution. The people of each country had to make their revolutions in the particularity of their own situations. He wanted the colonial people to avoid copying Russian tactics and to 'analyse the reasons for their peculiar features, the conditions that gave rise to them, and their results'. In the end he wanted the colonial people to 'apply not the letter, but the spirit, the essence, the lessons of the experience of 1917-21'.³⁴

When Lenin met the Asian revolutionaries for the first time in the Second Congress of Comintern, before them he was all modesty. Knowing the utter shallowness of their understanding of Marxism, yet he treated them and their opinions with respect for they came from the colonial lands and were, therefore, repositories of direct knowledge concerning them.³⁵ Lenin was extremely patient and he tried every conceivable method to win over Roy and the other inexperienced comrades of the East to his point of view. The following description of a French Communist delegate to the Congress, on the one hand substantiates the above point, and on the other hand it brings out the correctness of Lenin's analysis of the communist movement

 34. Bipin Chandra, op.cit., p.7.

35. Ibid., p.9.

in India:

'Patiently Lenin replied to Roy explaining that for a longer or shorter period of time, the Indian Communist Party would be a small party with but few members, having only weak resources, incapable of reaching, on the basis of its programmes and by means of its own activities, a substantial number of peasants and workers. On the other hand, on the basis of demands for national independence, it would become possible to mobilise large masses...' (36)

This foresight of Lenin, can, by no way, be diminished by the subjective and distorted account of Roy: 'Lenin's answer to my question appeared to me to be based on ignorance of the relation of social forces in the colonial country. In our discussion, he frankly admitted his ignorance of facts...' ³⁷ Lenin agreed to make some changes in his own draft. For example, Lenin bent backwards in accommodating M.N. Roy and his ideas at the Congress, even though in this case his modesty led him to make a mistake in so far as he did not criticise these ideas publicly and he let some of them to remain as the supplementary theses moved by Roy and accepted by the Congress. ³⁸

Roy's Supplementary Theses

Roy paid a tribute 'to the kind and tolerant' attitude of Lenin for asking him to draft the supplementary theses, when

36. Chattopadhyay, Gautam, op.cit., pp.33-4.

37. Roy, M.N. Memoirs, op.cit., p.379.

38. Bipin Chandra, op.cit., p.9.

he wrote in the Memoirs:

'It was perhaps the most valuable experience of my life until then. I had the rare privilege of being treated as an equal by a great man, who proved his greatness by doing so. He could refuse to waste his precious time in discussing with a young man of no importance. I would have no chance to make myself heard in the International Congress.' (39)

The salient features of Roy's supplementary theses can be summed up as:

- i) Without the breaking up of the colonial empire, the overthrow of the capitalist system in Europe does not appear possible (Thesis No.4). Roy had earlier pointed out that the 'fountain head from which European capitalism draws its main strength is no longer to be found in the industrial countries of Europe, but in the colonial possessions and dependencies' (Thesis No.2). Hence Roy wanted the Comintern to widen the sphere of its activities to help revolutionary forces which are working for the overthrow of imperialism in the countries subjected politically and economically.
- ii) The revolutionary movements in the colonies are essentially an economic struggle. The bourgeois democratic nationalist movements are limited to the small middle class which does not reflect the aspirations of the masses. Without the active support of the masses, the national freedom of the colonies will

39. Roy, M.N. Memoirs, op.cit., p.380.

never be attained. But in many countries, especially in India, the masses are not with the bourgeois nationalist leaders -- they are moving towards revolution independently of the bourgeois nationalist movement...It would be a mistake to assume that the bourgeois nationalist movement expresses the sentiments and aspirations of the general population... The masses distrust the political leaders who always lead them astray and prevent them from revolutionary action (Thesis No.7).

iii) The real strength of the liberation movement in the colonies is no longer confined to the narrow circle of the bourgeois democratic nationalists. In most of the communist parties, in close relation to the mass movement. The relation of the Comintern with the revolutionary movement in the colonies should be through the medium of these parties or groups, because they are the vanguard of the working class in their respective countries...and reflect the desire of the masses. (Thesis No.8)

iv) The supposition that, owing to the economic and industrial backwardness, the peoples in the colonies are bound to go through the stage of bourgeois democracy is wrong. The events and conditions in many of the colonies do not corroborate such a supposition...It does not necessarily follow that the leadership of the revolution will have to be surrendered to the bourgeois democrats (Thesis No.9).

v) The bourgeois national democrats in the colonies strive for the establishment of a free national state, whereas the masses of workers and poor peasants are revolting even though in many cases unconsciously, against the system which permits such brutal exploitation. Consequently, in the colonies, we have two contradictory forces; they cannot develop together. To support the colonial bourgeois democratic movements would amount to helping the growth of the national spirit which will surely obstruct the awakening of class consciousness; whereas to encourage and support the revolutionary mass action through the medium of a communist party of the proletarians will bring the real revolutionary forces to action which will not only overthrow the foreign imperialism, but lead progressively to the development of the Soviet power, thus preventing the rise of a native capitalism in place of the vanquished foreign capitalism, to further oppress and exploit the people (Thesis No.10).

vi) To initiate at as early a stage as possible the class struggle in the colonies means to awaken the people to the danger of a transplanted European capitalism which, overthrown in Europe, may seek refuge in Asia, and to defeat such an eventuality before its beginning (Thesis No.11).

Theses Adopted By The Congress

Despite Roy's claim that his original draft with 'some verbal alterations' was added to Lenin's Preliminary Draft as

a corrective, it is well known that Roy's draft was drastically amended and brought into consonance with the main general line of Lenin's draft. Roy's viewpoint that the Comintern and the Communists should not support the national liberation movement but should exclusively concentrate their efforts to organise communist parties and to develop revolutionary workers and peasants movement (see Theses 10 and 11 of Roy's original draft) were fully deleted and were substituted as follows:

'On the contrary, the proletarian parties must carry on vigorous and systematic propaganda of the Soviet idea and organise the peasants' and workers' Soviets as soon as possible. These Soviets will work in co-operation with the Soviet republics in the advanced capitalist countries for the ultimate overthrow of the capitalist order throughout the world' (Thesis 9 of the Adopted Text).

There were of course, some changes in Lenin's Preliminary Draft e.g. in Section A of para 11, the term 'bourgeois democratic' was replaced by 'national revolutionary'. There was a similar change in Section E of para 11. Moreover, a new sentence was inserted in the Section A that the form of support to national liberation movements 'should be discussed with the Communist Party of the particular country, if such a party exists'.⁴⁰ Subsequently, there have been intensive debates on exactly how to interpret this change: whether it was

40. Adhikari, G. HCPI-1, p.203.

a mere terminological change or a more basic analytical shift. The Soviet economist, Varga, writing in the late sixties thought that it was merely a verbal change. It did not, in any case change the formulation, fundamentally it was nothing more than a terminological manoeuvre to get round Roy's objection. All colonial movements were led by the bourgeoisie or at least the two most important ones of that period, in China and India were. On Varga's interpretation the two concepts 'national revolutionary' and 'bourgeois-democratic' were interchangeable.⁴¹ This change only made explicit what was implied in Lenin's stand. In presenting the report of the Commission, Lenin made it clear that the purpose of the change was not to negate his entire understanding of the bourgeois democratic character of the national liberation movements or of the policy of supporting them or collaborating with them.⁴² The change was made to specify the types of bourgeois democratic movements with which the communists could ally. Lenin wanted to demarcate the reformist and the pro-imperialist sections and aspects of these movements from the revolutionary sections and aspects. He wanted to safeguard the proletariat, even in the colonies, from the evil consequences of such vacillations and even betrayals. The threefold tasks

41. Kaviraj, Sudipta. The Marxist Argument - A Trend Report in the Survey of Research in Political Science, ICSSR (to be published).

42. Bipin Chandra, op.cit., p.36.

of the communists in the colonial and backward liberation movements viz. (i) that they have to support the national liberation movement (ii) that they have to fight against the bourgeois democratic (compromising) tendency in the same and (iii) that they have to build and strengthen the independent proletarian movement and base, were thus made more explicit through this change of the term. Lenin himself explained the change of the term as follows:

'I should like especially to emphasise the question of the bourgeois-democratic movement in backward countries... As a result of our discussion, we have arrived at the unanimous decision to speak of the national revolutionary movement rather than of the bourgeois-democratic movement. It is beyond doubt that any national movement can only be a bourgeois-democratic, since the overwhelming mass of the population in the backward countries consist of peasants who represent bourgeois-capitalist relationships... There has been a certain rapprochement between the bourgeoisie of the exploiting countries and that of the colonies, so very often, perhaps in most cases, the bourgeoisie of the oppressed countries, while it does support the national movement, is in full measure accord with the imperialist bourgeoisie i.e. joins forces with it against all revolutionary movements and revolutionary classes... Hence we decided that the only correct attitude was to take this distinction into account and, in nearly all cases, substitute the term 'national revolutionary' for the term 'bourgeois-democratic'. The significance of this change is that we, as communists, should and will support bourgeois-democratic movements in the colonies and semi-colonies when they are genuinely revolutionary and when, their exponents do not hinder our work of educating and organising in a revolutionary spirit the peasantry and the masses of the exploited... The distinction I have referred to has been made in all the Theses with the result, I think, that our view is now formulated much more precisely'.(43)

43. Lenin, V.I. CW, Vol.31, p.241-2

Second Congress and National +
Colonial Theses Summed Up

Dr. G. Adhikari⁴⁴ had drawn the following conclusions about the controversy between Lenin and Roy on the National + Colonial Question discussed at the Second Congress:

1) That Roy made a positive contribution when he drew the attention of the compromising tendency in the bourgeois democratic liberation movement in the colonies and backward countries and raised a valid question as to how the Comintern and the communists were to develop the revolutionary movement in the colonies. He raised another fundamental question as to how the people in these colonies were to avoid the capitalist stage in their march towards socialism, after independence. However, Roy's own answer to these questions given in the original draft contained a dogmatic and sectarian outlook.

ii) That Roy's claim made in his Memoirs that his original draft was accepted by Lenin with only 'verbal alterations' and adopted by the Congress as a corrective to Lenin's Preliminary Draft, is false and unjustifiable. What actually happened at

44. Adhikari, G. HCPI-I, pp.166-7.

the Congress has been correctly described by A. Reznikov.⁴⁵
 From this it is clear that Roy's original draft was drastically amended so as to eliminate all dogmatic and sectarian formulations which contradicted with Lenin's Preliminary Draft.

iii) That the main dogmatic and sectarian formulations of Roy contained in his original draft were: (a) contraposition of the national liberation movement to the rising revolutionary workers' and peasants in the colonies; (b) the proposition that

45. Under the subheading 'Report of Comrade Roy (India)', Reznikov quotes the position taken by Roy regarding national liberation movement, its opposition and contradiction by Lenin and Comrade Quelch of the British Communist Party. Reznikov describes that Roy began with his assessment of the national liberation movement in India '...since the 1880's the nationalist movement in India has begun to assume more or less definite forms and has found its expression in the National Congress... In the course of its development the movement...has not struck a response among the masses. The masses of India are not infected by the national spirit... Ever since British capitalism entrenched itself in India, 80% of the country's population who draw their subsistence from agriculture have lost their property and turned into agricultural labourers... The industrial proletariat of India is small but the trade union movement is swiftly spreading among these workers... India has elements for the creation of a strong communist party.' Reznikov then states that "proceeding from this analysis, Roy arrived at the conclusion that...the Comintern should help solely to create and develop the communist movement in India and the Communist Party of India must concern itself only with organising the broad masses to fight for their class interests...He also defended the idea that the fate of revolutionary movement in Europe entirely depended on the course of the revolution in the East...'

(Footnote continued on next page)

the Communist International and the communist parties should not support the national liberation movement but instead support the communist parties and develop the workers' and peasants' movement; (c) the proposition that without breaking up the colonial empire in the East, the overthrow of capitalism in Europe is not possible. Lenin's amendment of the original draft of Roy rejected these sectarian formulations. Lenin rejected the dichotomy between the national and class movements of the people in the colonies and made clear how the support to the national liberation movement has to be combined with the fight against the bourgeois democratic compromising tendency, and to fight for building an independent class movement and of the communist parties.

iv) That while Roy raised correctly the question of possibility

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Reznikov further states that 'Comrade Quelch of the British Communist Party replied to Comrade Roy and proved that the communists must help any movement against imperialism... 'Comrade Lenin also challenged Roy's viewpoint. 'In Russia we supported the liberal liberation movement during the attack on tsarism. Communists of India must support the bourgeois democratic movement without merging with it. Comrade Roy went too far, alleging that the fate of the West depended solely on the degree of development and strength of the revolutionary movement in the eastern landless peasants, India had 5 million proletarians and 37 million landless peasants, Indian communists so far had not succeeded in founding a communist party in the country and for this reason alone the views of Comrade Roy were largely unsubstantiated'. Adhikari, G. HCPI-I, pp.161-3.

for the people of the colonies to pass over to socialism, without going through the stage of capitalism, after independence, his own solution contained in the original draft was an oversimplification viz. sole concentration on the building of the communist party and workers' and peasants' movement to the exclusion of any support to the national liberation movement. Lenin, in amending Roy's draft, introduced the fruitful idea that the young communist parties must carry on vigorous and systematic propaganda of the soviet idea. Lenin made clear the distinction between reformist and revolutionary tendencies in the national liberation movement and urged to fight against the former. He also urged the adoption of the Soviet idea to the specific tendencies in the national democratic revolution in these countries. Lenin also indicated, through his amendment of Roy's draft, how the revolution can pass over to socialist revolution avoiding the capitalist stage.

Looking back at the colonial debate in the Second Congress one, however, may not be so sure. Lenin's preliminary theses were manifestly meant to be tentative. Lenin specifically asked for more empirical material for the construction of a theoretically valid and empirically correct colonial thesis for the guidance of the Comintern.⁴⁶ Roy's theses were offered, partly in reply to Lenin's request, though they implied a thoroughly different strategy for colonial movements based on a radically different

46. The opening statement of the Preliminary Draft reads: '...I would request all comrades, especially those who possess concrete information on any of these very complex problems, to let me have their opinions, amendments, addenda and

understanding of the historical conjecture, the specificity of the structuring of contradictions in a colonial society. Roy's original draft implied a total theoretical alternative to Lenin's theses, not just a 'supplementary' footnote as it was rather innocuously called.⁴⁷ It distinguished two trends in the colonial liberation movement-- the 'reformist' movements under bourgeois leadership, and the more consistent revolutionary stream under the leadership of the proletariat, expected to be the hegemonic force in the close future. Roy expected the bourgeoisie to betray the national revolution and to go over to the side of imperialism. For him, it was a predetermined certainty, just a matter of time. The economic interests of the exploiting classes-- of the imperialist and colonial bourgeoisie-- were similar. Roy was to bring out the assumptions and implications of his theory in a more transparent way later, in the mid twenties. Even the short-term profile of the colonial revolution seemed to be in Roy's favour. In 1920 the bourgeoisie was in the colonial movement every where, infact,

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concrete remarks in the most concise form...'

Selection from V.I.Lenin and J.V.Stalin on National+ Colonial Question, Calcutta Book House, Calcutta, 1975, p.56.

47. Kaviraj, Sudipta. The Marxist Argument, op. cit.

leading it. By 1926, however, it seemed to be everywhere on the retreat, preparing for its final betrayal.

Lenin's correction on Roy's draft were due to his theoretical oversimplicity and factual incorrectness. But it was, in a way, a commentary by Lenin on a particular tendency in communist theory, adopted wholesale by Stalin later on. Strange enough, even this reversal by Stalin was done on the plea of being true to Lenin's direction.⁴⁸ Again, paradoxically, the Comintern took a swing to the variation of Roy's line of Second Congress, in 1928 at the Sixth Congress when Roy himself had already abandoned it.

Retrospectively, the two theses make an interesting contrast. Most of what Lenin said about colonial revolution came off, with unforeseen involutions in one case: China. Roy's theses, on the contrary, proceeding from a more doctrinaire familiarity with the empirical details of the Indian movement and generalising that into universal 'path' of colonial revolutions, did not materialise though the whole model came very near to coming off in China around 1927.⁴⁹

Ultimately, one significant point arose, in the Second Congress, communist appreciation and political policy was to fluctuate endlessly on this question for close to forty years.

48. The 'Theses on the revolutionary movement in the colonies and semi-colonies' adopted at the Sixth Congress, open with a formal declaration, actually quite misleading, of continuity with theses adopted at the Second Congress.

Sobolev, A.I. and others, OHCI, p.284.

49. Kaviraj, Sudipta. The Marxist Argument, op.cit.

Lenin, in the final analysis, broadly expected the colonial democratic bourgeoisie to lead their national revolution;⁵⁰ Roy did not.

50. Lenin's analysis should not, however, be dogmatized to mean that the proletariat should not have taken over hegemony if opportunity arose.

CHAPTER III

THE COMINTERN (THIRD INTERNATIONAL)
CONGRESSES AND THE CPI (1920-30)

The Inaugural Congress of the Third International was held between 2 and 6 March 1919. It was attended by 52 delegates from 35 proletarian organisations from 21 countries of Europe, America and Asia. 19 organizations had a vote and 16 a voice but no vote. The delegates represented the communist and left socialist parties.¹ It had no representative either from the emigre Communist Party of India or of Indian revolutionaries present at the congress. But the representatives of the oppressed peoples of Persia, China, Korea and Turkey participated for the first time as full delegates at such an international conference. The First Congress remained busy with discussion of the general problems.

The Second Congress was held between 19 July and 7 August 1920 attended by 217 delegates from 67 organizations of 37 countries. Communist parties and groups and some syndicalist organisations were represented in the Congress.² M.N. Roy and Allen Roy have been listed as its stenographic reports as delegates from the Communist Party of Mexico. Abani Mukerji and Acharya attended as delegates, without decisive vote, from India.

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1. Sobolev, A.I. and others, Outline History of the Communist International, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1971, p.51
 2. Ibid., p.76

The Third Congress opened on 22 June 1921 in Moscow with delegations from communist parties from 48 countries, from 28 youth organisations and other proletarian organisations. In all there were 605 delegates from 103 organisations from 52 countries. The Congress lasted till 12 July 1921.³ It is not clear from the proceedings of the Congress whether India was one of the represented countries or not. In the book 'Third Congress of the Communist International Stenographic Report'⁴ there is a statement: 'Indian Communist group to be invited, without vote'. According to the same source, at the Congress itself there were '4 delegates from India (Communist Party)' yet in the proceedings only the name of M.N. Roy appears. The Communist International recognised the emigre Communist Party formed at Tashkent in October 1920 as the Communist Party of India. M.N. Roy was even elected to the presidium of the Third Congress of the Communist International.

The Fourth Congress of the Communist International was held from 5 November to 5 December 1922. The Congress was attended by 58 communist parties and a number of labour parties and labour organisations with a total of 408 delegates from 66 parties and organisations from 58 countries. The

3. Ibid., p.115.

4. Adhikari, G. Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India, Volume One (1917-22), PPH, New Delhi, 1971, p.262.

total membership of the communist parties at the time was estimated at 1253000 of which 825000 were in the ranks of communist parties in the capitalist countries. 17 communist parties did not give any information about their membership etc.⁵ From the proceedings of the Congress, one gathers that four delegates were invited from India but only one came and he was admitted to the Congress with the right to vote. In the report of the Credentials Committee submitted by Eberlein to the Fourth Congress it is stated:

'The CP of India cannot represent membership since its work is entirely illegal. Four delegates were invited, one has come and has been admitted to the Congress with a right to vote'.(6)

It is likely that M.N. Roy attended the Congress as a member of the ECCI and as a member of its 'Eastern Section' and the 'one delegate' who was not straight from India was probably either Santokh Singh or Rattan Singh, who had gone to Moscow at the end of 1922 to attend the Fourth Congress. This seems to be correct since it has also been mentioned by Kaye.⁷ Besides, Dr. B.N. Dutta⁸ also states that both Santokh Singh and Rattan Singh attended the Fourth Congress and one of them was a delegate with a right to vote.

5. Sobolev, A.I. and others, OHCI, p.159

6. Adhikari, G. HCPI-I, p.527.

7. Kaye, Cecil, Communism in India, 1919-24, Editions India, 1926, p.50.

8. Dutta, B.N. Aprakashit Rajnitik Itihas (Bengali), Calcutta, 1953, pp.349-50.

The Fifth Congress of the Comintern took place in Moscow from 17 June to 8 July 1924. It was attended by 504 delegates from 49 communist and workers' parties, one revolutionary peoples' party and 10 international organisations. At the time of Fifth Congress, the communist party had a membership of 1319000, slightly less than in 1922. This was due to the defeat of the working class in the battles of 1923, to the difficult conditions of the underground in which a number of communist parties in capitalist countries were obliged to work, and to the defection of unstable elements who joined the reformist.⁹ According to the report published in the Imprecor,¹⁰ M.N. Roy was elected to the presidium of the Congress and to the Political and Programme Commission on the National and Colonial question. He was also one of the three¹¹ comrades from India who were elected to the Commission on the National and Colonial question. From the Vanguard¹² ? one gathers: 'Invitations have been issued to the affiliated parties and groups of all countries. The Communist Party of India is entitled to send delegates'. In a report prepared by Pyatnitsky on the organisational question of the communist

 9. Sobolev, A.I. and others, OHCI, p. 210.

10. Imprecor, Vol.4, No.34, 18 June 1924.

11. The three were M.N. Roy, Clemens Dutt and Mohammad Ali - these three formed "the foreign buro" of the CPI described and defined in a later Constitution of the Party (1927)

Adhikari, G. HCPI-II, p.349.

12. Imprecor, Vol.4, No. 9, 1-15 April 1924.

parties, circulated at the Congress, India was listed but no membership figures were given for her and in the remarks column against India, it was written 'illegal'.¹³

The Sixth Congress of the Communist International took place from 17 July to 1 September 1928 with 532 delegates representing 57 communist and workers' parties and organisations. According to the information of the Credentials Committee there were 1799000 communists in the world of whom 1211000 were members or candidate members of Communist Party of Soviet Union (Bolshevik). The communist and workers' parties from all parts of the world were represented at the Congress.¹⁴ According to Dr. G. Adhikari¹⁵ who in turn depends on various issues of the Inprecor, six Indian delegates spoke at the Sixth Congress (3 with decisive votes and 3 others) - Sikandur Sur (in fact Shaukat Usmani), Raza (Mohammad Shafiq), Narayana (S.N. Tagore), Mahmud (Mohammad Ali), Clemens Dutt and Luhani. Though the CPI did not send any official delegate to the Congress, yet Shaukat Usmani alongwith three other muhajir communists left India secretly and without the knowledge of the party. Some of them were even admitted to the Congress as delegates from India. The three delegates with decisive vote at the Sixth Congress seem

13. Inprecor, Vol.4, No.57, 12 August 1924.

14. Sobolev, A.I. and others, OHCI, p.273.

15. Adhikari, G. The Comintern Congresses and the CPI, Marxist Miscellany, No.2, PPH, New Delhi, 1971, p.30.

to be Shaukat Usmani, Mohammad Shafiq and Luhani while those with consultative vote were probably Clemens Dutt, Mohammad Ali and S.N. Tagore. This was not an official delegation, as stated above, and had no mandate from the Party. This became known in Moscow only after the Congress had ended and Shaukat Usmani had left for India. On his return, Usmani admitted his mistake, surrendered to the Party discipline and began to work under the Party. However, he was later arrested and sentenced heavily in the Merrut Communist Cases.¹⁶

Roy's Evolution in the Comintern

Though M.N. Roy attended the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920 as a delegate of the CP of Mexico, yet he soon came to occupy an important place in the communist movement. Roy made his mark at the very first conference he attended in 1920. 'At that Congress he crossed swords with Lenin, the accepted leader of the world communist movement'.¹⁷ Thereafter Roy's rise in the world communist movement was rapid and dazzling. He was elected a candidate member of the Executive Committee of Comintern in 1922 and a full member in 1924. He took a prominent part in the world Congresses as well as in the ordinary and plenary meetings of the Executive Committee. In June 1923, he became a full member of the Eastern Commission. He was the man chosen by

16. Ibid., p.41.

17. Roy, M.N. Memoirs, Allied Publishers, Delhi, 1964, p.575 (Concluding remarks by V.D. Karnik).

G.D. Parikh writes in Roy's Memoirs, 'Roy soon won the confidence and admiration of Lenin who described him, "as the symbol of revolution in the East".

Introduction by Parikh, p.vi, Roy's Memoirs.

the Comintern to propagate and guide the communist movement in India.

In 1926, M.N. Roy reached the apogee of his career in the international communist movement. It was in February 1926 that he was appointed to the editorial staff of the Comintern, the authoritative multi-language journal which had been published since the birth of the Comintern. At the time of Sixth Plenum of ECCI (February-March 1926), Roy was elected to presidium and named chairman of Eastern Commission.¹⁸ He was a member of the ECCI Orgburo and Secretariat.¹⁹ Following the Seventh Plenum, he was elected to membership of the British and Agrarian Commissions and he alongwith Petrov were chosen to serve as the joint secretaries of the Chinese Commission. Shortly after Roy joined the political secretariat of the ECCI when it was formed by combining the functions of Orgburo and the Secretariat. Thus by 1926, Roy had attained membership of all the four of the official policy making bodies of the Comintern - the Presidium, the Political Secretariat, the ECCI, and the World Congresses.²⁰

The Comintern Congresses and National + Colonial Question

The preliminary discussion at the inaugural session of the First Congress of the Third International stated: 'A new

18. Inprecor, Vol.6, No.17 (1926) p.255.

19. Inprecor, Vol.6, No.93 (1926) p.1646.

20. The story of Roy's break with the Comintern and his subsequent return to India has been discussed separately in this work - Chapter IV.

era had dawned, the era of collapse of capitalism, of its internal break up. The era of the communist revolution of the proletariat.'²¹ The Congress adopted two documents. These documents contained the theses presented by Lenin on bourgeois democracy and dictatorship of the proletariat as well as the guidelines of the Communist International outlining the tasks of the communist parties. Though the Congress did not adopt any document on the national + colonial question, yet it considered the question in detail and even stated in the guidelines of the Comintern:

'The Comintern considers it its obligatory task to establish a permanent and close bond between the struggle of the proletariat in the imperialist countries and the national liberation movement of the oppressed peoples in the colonies and semicolonies and to support the struggle of the oppressed peoples to facilitate the final breakdown of the imperialist world systems'. (22)

Thus, the main task of the Comintern during 1919-20 which was also the period of widespread European revolutions, was to help found communist parties in the countries of Europe, Asia and America. It was realised that in the absence of the communist parties outside Soviet Union, based on principles of Marxism-Leninism and the correct organisational tenets, it was difficult to transform imperialism in these countries into socialism. Hence after the First Congress, the world communist movement took a big stride forward. In May 1919 the Bulgarian

21. Sobolev, A.I. and others, OHCI, p.52.

22. Adhikari, G. HCPI-I, p.105.

Tesnyak Party was recognised into a communist party. Between 1919-20, communist parties were formed in Yugoslavia, U.S.A., Mexico, Denmark, Spain, Indonesia, Iran, Great Britain, Turkey, Uruguay and Australia.²³

This was at the Second Congress of Comintern that there was a detailed discussion on the national-liberation movement and National + Colonial theses were adopted by the Comintern.²⁴ The theses adopted at the Congress bring out the correlation of the general with the specific, the national with the international. These theses advocate a special regard for specific local conditions in each colonial and backward country and no blind imitation to the bolshevik tactics. The creation and strengthening of proletarian parties of a new type was a key issue at the Congress. The sum total of ideological, tactical and organisational principles of the proletarian parties of a new type were briefly summarised in the document known as the '21 Conditions of admission to Communist International'. Some of these were: recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat and a consistent, systematic struggle to secure it; a complete break with the reformists and centrists and their expulsion from the party; combining legal and illegal methods of struggle; systematic work in the countryside, the army, the reformist trade unions and bourgeois parliaments. The parties of the Comintern were to be built on the principle of democratic centralism. All decisions of the Congresses of the Comintern and its executive were binding upon all parties affiliated to the Communist International. It was held that 'the building

23. Sobolev, A.I. and others, OHCI, p.63.

24. This has been discussed earlier in Chapter II.

up of the Comintern into an ideologically monolithic organisation was impossible without such a document'.²⁵ The Second Congress emphasised that the Communist International and its executive were bound to take into consideration 'the variety of conditions under which the different parties have to work and struggle, and generally binding resolutions should be passed only on such questions upon which such resolutions are possible'.²⁶ The Congress also resolved to work for the emancipation of the workers, not as a local or national but as an international problem. Hence efforts were made at the Congress to bring a closer alliance between the working class and the peasantry.

The Third Congress took place at a time when the international conjuncture was characterised by the fact that the situation in the capitalist countries remained objectively revolutionary but 'the open revolutionary struggle of the proletariat for power is at the present moment slackening and showing down in many countries'.²⁷ The Congress was meeting against the background of the victory of the counter-revolution in Hungary (1919), of the failure of the 'March Action' in Germany and the subsequent putting forward by the United German Communist Party of its famous 'Open Letter' calling upon the Social-Democratic Party to join in an effort to build a broad

25. Sobolev, A.I. and others, OHCI, p.79.

26. Ibid., p.81.

27. Adhikari, G. HCPI-I, p.263.

united front of the working class to fight for the urgent demands of the workers and toiling people.

At the Third Congress, Lenin directed the preparations for and the activities of the Congress. He was elected its Honorary Chairman, took part in drafting all the key resolutions, spoke in defence of the Comintern's tactics, and on the Italian question.²⁸ The theses of the Congress stated:

'The chief task of the communist party in the present crisis is to direct the defensive struggles of the proletariat to broaden and deepen them, to link them together and, in harmony with the march of events, to transform them into decisive political struggles for the final goal'. (29)

At the Congress, Lenin emphasised the need to study the concrete developments of the class struggles in the capitalist countries when the working class was already organised in mass trade unions. He called for putting an end to the 'left' illusions that the original stormy tempo of the world revolution continues uninterrupted and that the victory of the revolution depends exclusively on the will of the communist parties and their activities. "If the Congress is not going to wage a vigorous offensive against such errors, against such leftist stupidities, the whole movement is doomed. This is my deep conviction".³⁰ The Congress called upon the communists to increase their influence in the trade unions, to bring pressure

28. Lenin, V.I. CW, Vol. 32, p. 560.

29. Degras, Jane. Communist International, 1919-1943, Vol. I, Documents, Oxford University Press, London, 1936, p. 239.

30. Lenin, CW, Vol. 32, p. 468.

on parties which base themselves on the working class masses, and to strive to unfold the joint struggle for the immediate demands of the working class.

The most important work before the Third Congress related to the tactics and organisations of the communist movement. The Third Congress stressed the need for unity of communist parties and party discipline; decisions collectively made and adopted by the Comintern were binding upon all parties who belong to it. The tactics recommended by Lenin for adoption in Europe were: 'We must win the majority of the working class in Europe where almost all the proletarians are organised. Anyone who fails to understand this is lost to the communist movement'.³¹ The Third Congress defined the following tasks of the communist parties:

"... to win predominating influence over the majority of the working class, and to bring its decisive strata into the struggle... participation in the struggle of the working masses, the direction of this struggle in communist spirit and the creation in the course of this struggle of experienced, large, revolutionary mass communist parties'. (32)

The Congress rejected the theory of going over to the offensive and emphasised that the impatient and politically inexperienced revolutionary elements should not be encouraged to resort to the most extreme methods. This, the Congress felt, contained elements of the most dangerous adventurism and might, if

31. Lenin, CW, Vol.32, p.470.

32. Adhikari, G. HCPI-I, p.264.

employed, frustrate for a long time the genuinely revolutionary preparation of the proletariat for the seizure of the power.³³ The Congress thus led the communist parties to lay the foundation stone of a new stage in the international communist movement -- the stage of the struggle to create a proletarian united front. The communist parties were asked to win over the proletariat, semiproletarian and petty-bourgeois sections of the people, small peasantry and other sections of petty-bourgeoisie to build a broad general democratic front against the offensive of capitalism.³⁴

The question of the national liberation struggle of countries oppressed and enslaved by imperialism was not specifically placed on the agenda of the Congress. Roy, therefore, made a short protest against the noninclusion of the eastern question in the agenda of the Congress and called upon the Congress to entrust the question once again to a properly constituted commission to consider it with all the seriousness it deserved.³⁵ The national liberation movement was, however, discussed as a part of the world situation and the relevant passage on the national liberation movement and on the situation in India and China read:

"The vigorous development of capitalism in the East, particularly in India and China, has created new social bases there for the revolutionary struggle. The bourgeoisie in these countries having tightened its bond with foreign capital has become an important instrument of imperialist rule. Its struggle against

33. Adhikari, G. HCPI-I, p.265.

34. Ibid.,

35. Ibid., p.267.

foreign imperialism is essentially half-hearted and feeble. The growth of the indigenous proletariat paralyses the national revolutionary tendencies of the capitalist bourgeoisie, but at the same time the vast peasant masses are finding revolutionary leaders in the person of the conscious communist vanguard... The popular revolutionary movement in India and in other colonies has now become an integral part of the world revolution as the uprising of the proletariat in the capitalist countries of the Old and New World".(36)

Rajni Palme Dutt, about the first three world Congresses of Comintern, observes that they were 'decisive formative Congresses for the formation of foundations of communist programme, policy and tactics, and the initial shaping and development of the newly found communist parties on this basis'.³⁷

The Fourth Congress of the Comintern adopted 'Theses on the Eastern Question'. These theses asked the young communist parties and groups fighting in the ranks of national liberation movement in the backward countries to come forward as active builders of broad united anti-imperialist front. The Congress met against the background of 'declining tempo of the revolutionary upsurge of the working class in Europe and of the rise of fascism in Italy on the one hand and still continuing tempo of the national liberation struggles of the oppressed peoples and nations of Asia and Africa against imperialism on the other.'³⁸ During the period of the Third and Fourth Congresses, some West European communist parties had underestimated the importance

36. Ibid., p.266.

37. Dutt, Rajni Palme, The Internationale, p.164.

38. Adhikari, G. HCPI-I, p.520.

of a united proletarian front. During this period, it became necessary to defend democracy and the rights of the working class against the attempts of Mussolini's fascist movement in Italy, to seize state power with the support of the bourgeoisie and the landlords. Though the young communist party in Italy had fought actively against fascism yet it was unable to prevent Mussolini and his fascist regime from coming to power in October 1922.

The tactical slogans, therefore, emerging from the deliberations of the Fourth Congress were - firstly, the united working class front against capitalist offensive and against the rise of fascism, and the slogan of a workers' government for the countries of Europe and America, and secondly the anti-imperialist united front and the fight for national independence for the freedom movement of the peoples of the oppressed countries of Asia and Africa. Its programme stood for winning an independent republic, abolishing all feudal rights and privileges, introducing an agrarian reform and progressive labour legislation and democratising the political system etc. i.e. carrying out an anti-imperialist, anti-feudal and democratic revolution.³⁹ These tactics provided general guidelines to the rising communist and militant working class movements in Europe and to the growing national independence movement in the dependent countries of Asia and Africa. The two

39. Sobolev, A.I. and others, OHCI, p.170

aspects of these tactics are, however, inseparably linked together.

One notices an obvious shift in the policy and programme of the Comintern in the Fourth Congress from its stand in the Second Congress. In the Fourth Congress, it was thought that the national bourgeoisie was a vacillating ally since it had not yet acquired the confidence of being able to take the place of foreign imperialist and to preserve law and order and in the country in case ~~the~~ imperialism is overthrown. The national bourgeoisie has become compromising with foreign imperialist for fear of a period of anarchy, chaos and disturbance, of civil war not conducive to the promotion of their class interest, in case the imperialist rule comes to an end due to the development of revolutionary upheaval.⁴⁰ The Congress, therefore, stressed that the labour movement in the colonies and semi-colonial countries must first of all secure for itself the position of an independent factor in the common anti-imperialist front. Only on the basis of recognition of this independence and maintenance of complete independence, a temporary agreement with bourgeois democracy is permissible and necessary.⁴¹ It was considered necessary by the Congress to develop broad peasant masses in the revolutionary movements in the colonies to make them a success. The agrarian programme put forward by the communist in the countries of the East called

 40. Adhikari, G. HCPI-I, p.537.

41. Sobolev, A.I. and others, ONCI, p.171.

for the complete abolition of feudalism and its survivals.⁴²

The Comintern resolution adopted at the Fourth Congress though supported all national revolutionary movements against imperialism yet it advocated unreserved break with all reformists and compromising tendencies, to lead the oppressed masses to victory.⁴³

The Congress resolved that the communist parties in the East 'which are still in a more or less embryonic stage, must take part in every movement that gives them access to the masses; that the working class of the colonies and semi-colonies can assume the role of revolutionary leaders only by way of struggle against imperialism and that the economic and political organisation of the working class increases the revolutionary scope of this struggle'.⁴⁴ The Congress made it clear that an important task of the communist parties in the backward countries was to make use of the progressive tendencies among the national bourgeoisie of these countries in the interest of fighting imperialism and feudalism. Hence, the Congress recommended that the nationalist revolutionary movement in the backward countries must free themselves economically and politically from imperialism before they can progress further and that these movements would not be a success if they remain under the leadership of the bourgeoisie.⁴⁵ The Congress opined that the communist parties in backward countries though

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.

44. Adhikari, G. NCPI-I, p.534.

45. Ibid., p.541.

are nothing more than nuclei for the present, are destined to play a big role and shall assume the leadership of the national liberation movements when the bourgeoisie deserts and betrays these struggles.⁴⁶

In the course of discussion on the Eastern and Colonial Question, Radek, referring to the awakening of the working class in the East said:

'The Indian party has already performed excellent spiritual (ideological?) work. All legal possibilities must be utilised in India. Here the path will also be long and difficult. The main watch-words for the orient are: First the winning over of the working masses, then of the peasants and artisans. The communist parties in the East must become real parties of the people'. (47)

Outlining the general tasks of the Communist parties in the East, the theses on the Eastern Question remarked:

'The communist and working class parties in the colonies and semi-colonies countries are confronted by a twofold task: on the one hand to fight for the most radical solutions of the problems of the bourgeois democratic revolutions directed to the conquest of political independence and on the other to organise the workers and peasants to fight for their special class interests and to take advantage of the antagonism existing in the nationalist bourgeois democratic camp'. (48)

The Fifth Congress outlined the basic aims of the communist movement as the organisation of the proletarian ranks and their communist vanguards. The Congress condemned the Right - wingers

46. Ibid., p.542.

47. Ibid., p.529.

48. Ibid., p.554.

who believed that the communist parties were in a position to lead the workers into battle any moment though they have not become mass parties. On the other hand, the Congress also firmly repudiated the views of the ultra-left who maintained that the idea of the united front was fallacious.⁴⁹ The basic conditions and prerequisites for transforming the communist parties into mass organisations held by the Congress were: a reorganisation that would make the party cells at the factories the foundation of the party; proper communist work within the trade unions, a correct policy towards the peasantry.⁵⁰ The basic features of a truly Marxist-Leninist party were defined as follows at the Congress:

'The party must be really a mass party maintaining the closest and unseverable ties with the mass of the workers both in legal and illegal conditions and serve as the expression of their needs and aspirations. The Party must follow a flexible tactic free from dogmatism or sectarianism, it must be able to draw on all strategic reserves to fight the class enemy. It must essentially be a revolutionary, Marxist Party, undeviatingly and under all circumstances working towards its main goal, that of bringing nearer the victory of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie. It must be a centralised party with a strict discipline that is not merely mechanical but expresses the unity of party will and party action'. (51)

The Fifth Congress also took important decisions to secure the unity of the trade-union movement. Lozovsky's report on this question said that 'without winning the trade unions it is impossible to win the masses'.⁵² A resolution adopted

49. Sobolev, A.I. and others, ONCI, p.212.

50. Ibid., p.215.

51. Ibid., p.216.

52. Ibid., p.221.

at the Congress stressed need for fighting for unity with the trade unions since it was considered that 'the trade union movement is the best means and method of winning the masses'.⁵³⁾

The report on the national and colonial question discussed at the Fifth Congress was prepared by Manuilsky. It was stated in the report that in order to win over the people of the colonial and semicolonial countries there must be a 'further development of the direct contact of the executive (ECCI) with the national movement for emancipation'.⁵⁴ Roy moved an amendment to this stating that while generally keeping in touch with the national-liberation movement as a whole, direct contact must be maintained with 'the revolutionary element of the same'. The amendment was rejected in the Congress since it was not in line with Lenin's theses adopted at the Second Congress which had stated: 'All communist parties must support by action the revolutionary liberation movements in those countries. The form which this support should take should be discussed with the communist party of the country in question, if there is one'. In the course of his speech on the national and colonial question, Roy did not agree with the idea of according overall support to the national-liberation movement without reservations. He argued: '...a movement which might have had a revolutionary significance in 1920 is not in the

53. Ibid., p.222.

54. Adhikari, G. HCPI-II, p.351.

same position in 1924. The classes which might have been allies of the revolutionary proletariat in 1920 will not be allies in 1924. Here is the danger of rigid formul...we must rectify this fundamental error'.⁵⁵ The essence of Roy's argument is that once again in 1924 he has reverted quite strangely to his position of 1920 adopted at the Second Congress and is contraposing the national liberation movement to the rising revolutionary workers' and peasants movements in the colonies. He has quite conveniently forgotten that even the Fourth Congress, which adopted a detailed theses on the question in the light of actual experience of the national-liberation movement in the eastern countries, had clearly repudiated this contraposition and worked out the tactic of united anti-imperialist front. Roy, it seems, has deliberately forgotten what he himself stated in his report on the Eastern Question at the Fourth Congress:

'This leads us to the question of the united anti-imperialist front. Side by side with the united labour front in the western countries we must organise the united anti-imperialist front in the colonial and semi-colonial countries'.(56)

? The Colonial Theses adopted at the Fourth Congress had stated that the above tactic had enabled the revolutionary elements particularly the communists to counteract the vacillating and compromising policies of the national bourgeois leadership

55. Ibid., pp.358-9.

56. Adhikari, G. HCPI-I, p.545.

and to develop the independent organisational strength and striking power of the workers' and peasants' movement. Roy, strange enough, once again reverted to the dichotomy and to the contraposition noted above, in the course of his speech at the Fifth Congress when he said: 'The direct contact of the Comintern must be with the social class which is most revolutionary, and the separate conditions of each country must be analysed from this point of view'.⁵⁷ This was, however, not a correct position and was therefore chided by Manuilsky at the Congress:

'In regard to the colonial question Roy reflects the nihilism of Rosa Luxemburg. The truth is that a just proportion should be looked for between the social movement and national movement. Can the right of self-determination be in contradiction to the interest of revolution? Had Roy put the question in this manner, one could discuss with him'. (58)

It may also be noted that the Comintern had always been in the spirit of Lenin, viz. to support the national-liberation movement as a whole in as much as it acts and struggles against foreign imperialist rule but at the same time striving to keep direct contact with the revolutionary elements in the task of building the broad united anti-imperialist front ensuring final victory. Despite Roy's wrong formulation, it may be pointed out the communist policy is based on a co-ordination of the two movements viz. the national liberation movement and

57. Adhikari, G. HCPI-II, p.363.

58. Ibid., p.364.

movement for socio-economic changes, which Roy was proposing in his speech at the Fifth Congress. It is only when the working class is in close alliance with the vast mass of peasantry that the revolutionary democrats come forward to make the greatest sacrifice in the national liberation movement while simultaneously fighting for their own demands and for those of their allies. It can then become a dominant force in the struggle and be able, after political independence is achieved, to ensure that further development towards economic independence does not take place along capitalist lines but along new democratic lines so that the growing over of the bourgeois-democratic revolution into a socialist revolution is rendered possible.

The period between the Fifth and Sixth Congress of the Comintern (1924-28) was a period of partial stabilisation of capitalism and the development of socialism. The dominant conditions have been summed up by R.P. Dutt: 'The uneven development of the world socialist revolution, with zigzags, with ups and downs, with variations in the tempo and in the conditions in different countries, brings corresponding problems for the international working class movement.'⁵⁹ This has been due to the fact that the United States had emerged from the war as creditor nation...of a new type. Unlike the United Kingdom, the United States combined its new creditor position with a large surplus of exports. The impoverished world after the war was in debt to the wealthy American capitalism, and at the same time America was pouring

59. Dutt, Rajni Palme, op.cit., p.176.

out a surplus of goods on the world which increased the debt... From the second half of 1924 loans and credits, governmental and industrial, *including* the Dawes Loan was in full swing. In the first half of 1924 the net gold import into America was 450 million dollars; in the second half there was a net gold export of 170 million dollars. The dollar exchange began to climb down closer to sterling. The restoration of the gold standard followed in Britain in 1925.⁶⁰ At about the same time, on the insistence of the ruling circles of the United States and Britain, who were interested in creating an anti-Soviet force in the centre of Europe, the Dawes Plan was adopted under which reparation payments by Germany were considerably reduced. On the contrary, Germany received Anglo-American loans to restore her military economic potential. The Dawes Plan, which temporarily softened the antagonism between Germany and the victor countries, was designed also to turn the Soviet Union into a market for Germany's industrial goods and wreck the Soviet Union's plans of industrialisation.⁶¹

This partial stabilization of capitalism helped to restore partially bourgeois influence over the working class ideologically and politically. However, the stabilisation was not durable since it was taking place under the conditions of general crisis of capitalism, the chief index of which was the victory

60. Dutt, Rajni Palme, World Politics, Adher Prakashan, Patna, p.76.

61. Sobolev, A.I. and others, OHCI, p.206.

of October Revolution, the cleavage of the world into two systems and the narrowing spheres of imperialism. The fluidity of stabilisation was due also to the growing unevenness of development of the different countries, which inevitably led to a further aggravation of interimperialist antagonisms. The economic power of the United States, Japan and Germany was increasing while Britain's share in the world economy declined and France was practically at standstill. New intricate knots of interimperialist contradictions were formed.⁶² Class struggle taking place in these conditions was often bitter. In Italy there was an anti-fascist strike in July 1924 in which nearly half a million people were involved, the mass demonstrations and strikes took place in France in October 1925, in Britain there was a general strike in May 1926, there were barricades in the streets of Vienna in July 1927, there were working class movements in Germany, Czechoslovakia and other European countries. The colonial world was also in ferment awakened by the October Revolution of 1917 and embarked on a determined struggle for national liberation. There were anti-imperialist uprisings in Syria, Morocco and Indonesia. The years 1925-27 saw revolutionary movement in China advancing new heights, the people of Latin America also rebelled against the US and British imperialism. All these movements, both in the

62. Ibid., p.207.

European and the colonial world, were directed against capitalist stabilisation which was hence inevitably bound to be non-enduring.⁶³

The Sixth Congress of the Comintern had met at a time when the communist movement in China had recently suffered a setback and it naturally forced the colonial question into the notice of the Communist International. At the Congress the national and colonial question was taken up for general discussion particularly in view of Trotsky's criticism of the Comintern understanding particularly in dealing with the Chinese revolution. Though it may look paradoxical, yet the fact remains that the Sixth Congress formally stuck to Lenin's terminology and held: 'The Sixth Congress of the Communist International declares that the theses of the National and Colonial Questions drawn 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,'⁶⁴ and yet the Sixth Congress theses implied that the conditions had sufficiently altered to make a 180° turn from Lenin's position of the Second Congress. These changed conditions, as summed up in a CPI publication,⁶⁵ point out that the whole perspective of development of the colonial peoples is bounded by a new framework in the epoch of imperialism, of wars, and of revolution, an

63. Ibid., p.207.

64. Ibid., p.284.

65. * Comintern and National + Colonial Question, CPI Publication, New Delhi, p.59.

epoch in which is born the proletarian dictatorship. Since the analysis of the contemporary world economy does not lead to the perspective of a new prolonged period of flourishing capitalism, but on the contrary to the inevitability of the overthrow of the capitalism, there is a process of disintegration of the capitalist path which is giving place to the proletarian dictatorship. Thus the possibility of growing over of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in the leading colonies into the proletarian socialist revolution, with the aid of the victorious proletarian dictatorship in the other countries, is emerging.

Though the Sixth Congress formally repeated the term 'national revolutionary' yet the concept was almost entirely altered. The class forces which were taken to make this revolution were radically realigned. While Lenin had thought of the proletariat, the peasantry, the petty-bourgeoisie and even a section of the national bourgeoisie to be a part of movement, the Sixth Congress considered only the proletariat and the peasantry worthy of the task. Even the petty-bourgeoisie was dropped as hopeless. Naturally, this altered perspective of the revolution included the hegemony of the communist party as a political precondition of the national revolution. In Otto V. Kuusinen's report on revolutionary movement in the colonies, it was deplored that in most colonies and semi-colonies including the important ones, there were yet no real

communist parties. Kuusinen held that the foremost task of the Communist International in dependent areas was the formation of the communist parties. He did not agree with those who considered the peasant and labour parties as a substitute for real communist parties. He opined that these multi-class parties with their large petty-bourgeois component actually serve as a barrier rather than as a channel of communications between the communists and the downtrodden classes. The Sixth Congress no longer considered the revolutionary credentials of the bourgeoisie seriously. The Congress theses noted that the hegemony of the proletariat in the national-revolutionary movement finally impelled the native bourgeoisie into the camp of reaction.⁶⁶ Analysing the role of bourgeoisie in the national liberation movement in the colonies, the Theses held:

'The national bourgeoisie in these colonial countries does not adopt a uniform attitude in relation to imperialism. A part of such bourgeoisie, more especially the trading bourgeoisie, directly serves the interests of imperialist capital. In general, it more or less, consistently defends the anti-national imperialist point of view directed against the whole nationalist movement, in common with the feudal allies of imperialism and more highly-paid native officials. The remaining portions of the native bourgeoisie, especially the portion reflecting the interests of native industry, support the national movement and represent a special vacillating compromising tendency which may be designated as national reformism...'(67)

This analysis was in the wake of the Chinese question which

66. Ibid., p.61.

67. Ibid., pp.82-3.

figured in the theses in a big way and because all colonies were actually being translated into the language of the Chinese politics. Later on, the agrarian revolution in China, observed the Theses, forced the petty-bourgeoisie into reactionary fold.⁶⁸ All these were welcomed as positive developments, since the bourgeoisie was trying to contain the revolutionary movement.⁶⁹

The Sixth Congress Theses expected Chinese event to be repeated everywhere particularly in India. The Theses, more detailed than the 1920 Theses, contained a section specifically on India. The analysis of these Theses corresponded to what Roy had argued in 1920 against Lenin and ironically the analysis was made only a few months after Roy's expulsion from the Comintern. The theses pointed out that the first great anti-imperialist movement in India (Non-cooperation Movement) ended in the betrayal of the cause of national revolution by the Indian bourgeoisie, mainly due to the terror caused in its mind owing to rising wave of peasant insurrections and workers' movement against native employers.⁷⁰ The theses saw 'the collapse of the national-revolutionary movement and gradual decline of bourgeois nationalism'⁷¹ and held that 'the real threat to British domination comes, not from the bourgeois camp, but from the growing mass movement of the Indian workers' and in the

68. Ibid., p.61.

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid., p.62.

71. Ibid., p.63.

maturing of an agrarian revolution, a forcing of Indian reality into the Chinese pattern: a literal Chinese translation of Indian politics.

The Sixth Congress Theses were not without their failings. The analysis given in the theses was more of an imposition of a preconceived plan, a reading of the inevitable line of history of all colonies in the frustrations and possibilities of the Chinese revolution, a strangely unilinear theory of the future. It overlooked, in the process, the basic reality of the Indian movement. The national movement was far from finished and presented a much more complex picture here in terms of the class-patterns of leaders and the led. The movement was, no doubt, a mass movement which was under the leadership of the bourgeoisie and the masses provided the ordinary cadre. It was potentially unreasonable, in the Indian case, to think of a textbook division between the bourgeois movement and the mass movement. Actually the bourgeois movement had a mass following; the mass movement had a bourgeois leadership. It was one movement, not two.⁷²

The main argument of 1928 theses was full of theoretical paradoxes. The theses recognised the low level of development of productive forces, with strong precapitalist and feudal survivals. The stage of the revolution had a curious definition:

72. Kaviraj, Sudipta. The Marxist Argument - A Trend Report in the Survey of Research in Political Science, ICSSR, New Delhi (to be published)

'We have to deal with the bourgeois-democratic revolution i.e. of the stage signifying the preparation of the prerequisites for proletarian dictatorship and socialist revolution'⁷³ - a telescoping that was possible only if the colonial revolution was in exact terms a repeat performance of the Soviet revolution. The content of such bourgeois-democratic make an interesting reading: 'emancipation of the country from the yoke of imperialism; overthrowing the power of the exploiting classes at the back of which imperialism stands; establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry (presumably even inside that)'consolidation of the hegemony of the proletariat);⁷⁴ nationalisation of the land (not, remarkably land to the tiller); widespread trade union activity; securing equal fights for nationalists, sexes etc.'⁷⁵ The theses anticipated that 'part of these tasks would be carried into effect only by the socialist revolution'. So the theses provide for a sort of simplifying miracle - first Indian revolution to be collapsed into Chinese revolution. This line of argument, implicitly denied Lenin's basic theory of a differentiation of levels leading to differentiated models of political action for social change.⁷⁶

73. Ibid., p.80.

74. Ibid.

75. Ibid.

76. Kaviraj, Sudipta. op.cit.

An Appraisal of 'Decolonisation' Theory

The term 'decolonisation' for the first time appeared officially in a document prepared by M.N. Roy in April 1928, for the Sixth World Congress. Roy, on his return to China, was asked to draft a resolution on the Indian question for discussion at the Sixth Congress of Comintern and the term 'decolonisation' appeared for the first time in his draft resolution, Section I, entitled 'The Position of Imperialism and the Characteristic of Indian Economy'.⁷⁷ The relevant passage reads:

'...Imperialism must proceed cautiously in this new path which is as likely to lead out of the postwar crisis as to destruction. The implication of this new policy is a gradual 'decolonisation' of India which will be allowed to evolve out of the state of 'dependency' to 'dominion status'...India is in the process of 'decolonisation' in so far as the policy forced upon British imperialism by the postwar crisis of capitalism abolishes the old antiquated forms and methods of colonial exploitation in favour of new forms and new methods'.(78)

It has been a popular opinion so far that Roy was the only person who held the above view, that it was he who originated the theory. This has, however, been contradicted by some, mainly G. Adhikari, who quotes the contemporary writings and speeches of communists to disapprove the popular belief. Dr. Adhikari opines that the idea of 'decolonisation' was first put in modified form by Stalin who stated that a

77. Adhikari, G. The Question of Industrialisation and the Role of the National Bourgeoisie in the Independence Struggle at the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern (1928), Marxist Miscellany, PPH, New Delhi, December 1975, p.23.

78. Ibid., p.24.

section of the Indian national bourgeoisie has already come to an understanding with imperialism. This is in the germ-form the theory of 'decolonisation' which Roy as well as some other international marxists including R.P. Dutt were putting forward in varied forms.⁷⁹

Explaining the policy of gradual 'decolonisation' of India by the British, Roy said that 'the Indian bourgeoisie, instead of being kept down as a political rival will be granted partnership in the economic development of the country under the hegemony of imperialism. From a backward agricultural colonial possession India will become a modern industrial country - a member of the British commonwealth of free nations'.⁸⁰ Two implications follow from Roy's above explanation, firstly the unavoidable process of gradual 'decolonisation' has in it the germs of destruction of the empire,⁸¹ and secondly this industrialisation will satisfy the ambitions of national bourgeoisie because they will become joint partners in exploitation and thus a compromise between imperialism and nationalism will be sealed and the fight for complete independence and democratic freedom will have to be waged by the remaining classes led by the working class.⁸² Thus what Roy and others saw in the imperialists move and concession towards a measure of industrialisation was 'its strategem to win the national bourgeoisie as a junior partner in the exploitation of Indian

79. Adhikari, G. HCPI-II, p.697.

80. Adhikari, G. Marxist Miscellany, op.cit., p.24.

81. Haithcox, John Patrik. Communism & Nationalism in India - M.N. Roy & Comintern Policy 1920-39, Oxford Univ. Press, Bombay, 1971, p.112.

82. Adhikari, G. HCPI-II, p.697.

masses, under dominion status, and thus suppress the rising revolutionary struggle of the workers, peasants and revolutionary democrats for complete independence.⁸³

This theory of 'decolonisation' which was later to be considered an anathema⁸⁴ came in for sharp criticism in Kuusinen's report⁸⁵ at the Sixth Congress of Comintern. In his report Kuusinen admitted the industrial development of India having taken place in last 20 years but criticised those (mainly Roy, R.P. Dutt and Rathbone)⁸⁶ who in it saw the prospect of a 'decolonisation' of India by British imperialism. Kuusinen called 'decolonisation' a dangerous term.⁸⁷ Kuusinen was quite quick to point out that this alleged 'industrial policy' of the British had not in fact concluded the conflict between the Indian people and British imperialism, but these concessions of 'industrialisation' were designed to win over the national bourgeoisie to the counter-revolutionary camp sooner or later. Hence the real question at the Sixth Congress was not of colonisation of 'decolonisation' but whether or not a certain measure of industrialisation was taking place in India under the aegis of British imperialism and as a consequence

83. Adhikari, G. Marxist Miscellany, op.cit., p.21.

84. Haithcox, John Patrick, op.cit., p.112.

85. Inprecor, Vol.8, No.68, dated 4 October 1928, pp.1225-28.

86. Adhikari, G. Marxist Miscellany, op.cit., p.22.

87. Ibid.

a certain rapprochement between the Indian bourgeoisie and British imperialism was taking place or not?⁸⁸ The 'Theses on the revolutionary movements in colonies and semi-colonies' adopted at the Sixth Congress brought an end to the discussion. The salient features of these Theses can be summed up as follows:

- (a) That there has been industrialisation of India, in a direction which strengthens the dependence of colonial economy on the finance capital of imperialist country.⁸⁹
- (b) That the contradiction of interests between the national bourgeoisie of the colonial country and imperialism is objectively of a radical nature. In this respect imperialism demands capitulation on the part of the national bourgeoisie.⁹⁰
- (c) That there exists oppositionism between imperialism and the national bourgeoisie, though without deep foundation. It may, however, under certain conditions indirectly serve as the cause of the unleashing of even greater revolutionary mass action.⁹¹
- (d) Though R.P. Dutt has been named in Kuusinen's report, having been associated with the 'decolonisation' theory, yet his own explanation does not confirm it. In a private letter in June 1970 to Mohit Sen⁹² Dutt wrote:

'I wrote Modern India in order to combat Roy's conception of confining the path forward to the role of narrow illegal revolutionary groups...

88. Ibid., p.24.

89. * Comintern and National + Colonial Question, op.cit., p.70.

90. Ibid., p.83.

91. Ibid., p.91.

92. Adhikari, G. Marxist Miscellany, op.cit., pp.26-7.

to indicate the possibilities of developing broad mass organisation of workers and peasants... In the course of presentation I made the mistake in seeking to expose the strategy of imperialism to endeavour to draw a section of Indian bourgeoisie into co-operation into political field through dyarchy...in the industrial field by British monopoly capitalist interests with Indian bourgeois elements as junior partners...In about 1928, it became obviously fantastic to imagine that imperialism could carry through industrialisation in a colonial country. Hence the necessary correction was made at the Sixth Congress... But I had presented the conception of industrialisation as a form of intensified imperialist exploitation. In the debates of Sixth Congress Roy's theory of 'decolonisation' and my erroneous theory of industrialisation got mixed up, with a failure initially to take account of difference of viewpoints....'

It seems R.P. Dutt still thought that his explanation of the British industrial policy was not enough and hence when he wrote India Today (first English edition 1939) he completely reversed his 1926 position. R.P. Dutt then described the 'real picture of India on the eve of Second World War as one of 'deindustrialisation' and said: 'The conclusion is inescapable. The picture of industrialisation of India under imperialist rule is a myth'.⁹³

In all fairness, due notice should be taken of Roy's position explained by him in his document "My Crime" in September 1929. This document is available in Merrut Case records.⁹⁴ In this Roy wrote:⁹⁵

'To revert to the theory of 'decolonisation' the

93. Dutt, Rajni Palme. India Today, Manisha Granthalya, Calcutta, 1970 (Second Edition) - First Edition in 1939, p.136.

94. Adhikari, G. Marxist Miscellany, op.cit., p.27.

95. Ibid., pp.27-9.

fatherhood of which is the ostensible cause of my victimisation. While I was away in China, a comrade came from India to Moscow...and emphasised on the rapid development of modern industry in India (which all along I had pointed out as a basic feature of post-war India). This produced two tendencies...firstly the sharpening class antagonism inside the national movement and secondly, the compromise between the nationalist bourgeoisie and foreign imperialism...The nationalist united front tends to break up and a new united front of the native bourgeoisie with foreign imperialism is formed as against the working class...'

'...It is obvious that the term 'decolonisation' is used tentatively by way of indicating a tendency and relatively only in connection with the bourgeoisie, who constitute a very small fraction of the entire population. Much less is it even implied that there is the least possibility of the Indian people being free with the sanction of imperialism...'

'...All these factors taken together determine the character of the Indian nationalist bourgeoisie. They are no longer a revolutionary force...it is no longer a bourgeois revolution, because it can and will succeed only by breaking the bounds of capitalist society.'

In fact the viewpoint that the theory of industrialisation under imperialist aegis, would eventually lead the national bourgeoisie to compromise with imperialism was incorrect. The conflict between the two rather sharpened on this point. The Indian National Congress under the impact of growing mass movement, particularly the class movement of workers and peasants no longer remained a bourgeois organisation but tended to become a united national front against imperialism ultimately leading to the termination of alien rule in the country.⁹⁶

96. Ibid., p.30.

The Colonial Question and the Conflict
within the CPSU (Communist Party of Soviet Union)

Outlining of the colonial policy of Comintern depended, among other factors, also on the internal theoretical struggles inside the CPSU. Among those who were responsible for deciding the formulations of the Comintern till 1930 as leaders of the CPSU, were Lenin (till his death on January 21, 1924) and later J.V. Stalin. These architects of Comintern's policy were not without their rivals and the conflict between Lenin and later Stalin, on the one hand, and their rivals on the other, was on basic and fundamental questions including National + Colonial Question. Lenin's opponents were mainly Kautsky, Left-wing leaders including Trotsky, while Stalin's opponents apart from Trotskites included Zinovievites.

Even before the first congress of the Comintern, Lenin had to take up his pen to give battle to international Centralism. Lenin wrote an article and then a book under the same title of 'The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky'⁹⁷. In this Lenin exposed the sophistries of Kautsky who suggested that the Bolsheviks had opportunely seized upon the term 'proletarian dictatorship' for their own purpose. Lenin promptly pointed out that Bolshevism can serve as a model of

97. Sobolev A.I. and others, OHCI, op. cit., p. 43

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tactics for all. Similarly Lenin also criticised Kautsky's arguments about 'democratic socialism' and 'pure democracy' and showed the historical limitations of bourgeois democracy and its inevitable replacement by the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Lenin was against a priori method and reasoning and wrote in 1914 'Marxist theory absolutely requires that every social question be examined within definite historical limits, and if it refers to a particular country, then due account be taken of the specific features distinguishing that country from others within the same historical epoch'. Here Lenin met ⁹⁹ opposition from Rosa Luxemburg and therefore wrote his polemic in 1914 wherein he urged that an answer must be sought 'by making a historical and economic study of national movements'. His complaint against Rosa Luxemburg was that she did not do so when discussing the national programme for the Russian socialist movement. Lenin wrote 'We are discussing the national programme of the Marxists of a definite country - Russia - and in a definite period - the beginning of 20th century. But does Rosa Luxemburg examine what historical period Russia is passing through, what are the concrete features of the national question and the national movements of this particular country in this particular period?' ¹⁰⁰

98. Lenin, V.I. CW, Vol. 28, p.292

99. Lenin, V.I. The National Liberation Movement in the East, (NLME) Moscow, 1969, p. 70

100. Ibid., p.71.

Some of Lenin's rivals in the CPSU though apparently agreed with him and thus sympathised with the oppressed people of the colonies and demanded their liberation, yet they tended to ignore the existing national liberation movements or to take an attitude of indifference towards them. Their estimation of the strength of the colonial people differed greatly with that of Lenin. A major reason for this indifference was their tendency to see the colonial people as politically passive, incapable historically of playing an active role in their own liberation or in the emerging world revolution. The colonial movements were seen as historically insignificant. The very liberation of colonies they felt was to be in the main the work of successful socialist revolutions in the advanced capitalist countries. This thinking is best reflected from this passage of 'Junius' pamphlet by Rosa Luxemburg 'Only from Europe, only from the oldest capitalist nations, can the signal come, when the hour is ripe for the social revolution that will free humanity. Only the English, French, Belgian, German, Russian and Italian workers together, can lead the army of the exploited and enslaved of the five continents. They alone, when the time comes, can call capitalism to account for centuries of crimes committed against all the primitive peoples, and for its work of destruction around the globe; they alone can exact revenge! Lenin differed radically from this approach. He put forward the view that the people of the colonies were fully capable

101. Schram, Stuart and d' Encausse Helene Carrere. Marxism and Asia, Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1969, pp.143-44.

of liberating themselves of making revolutions in their lands and of playing an active and independent role in the world revolutionary process. He was the first to note that the people of the colonies have already, since the beginning of the 20th century, embarked on the path of revolution. In 1908, in his well-known article 'Inflammable Material in World Politics' Lenin hailed the people of Asia for awakening from deep slumber, for rising up against capital and the capitalist colonial system, and declared that they were entering the tormenting school which will teach them how to conduct civil war and how to carry the revolution to victory. In 1912, writing on 'Democracy and Narodism in China' Lenin took note of the immense spiritual and revolutionary enthusiasm of the Chinese people and the 'deep-going revolutionary movement of the hundreds of millions' and declared that the Chinese people were 'capable not only of bemoaning its age-long slavery and dreaming of liberty and equality, but of fighting the age-long oppressors of China'¹⁰². In 1913, in the article 'The Awakening of Asia' Lenin took note of the spread of the national liberation movement to Turkey, Persia, China and the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia). In 1916, replying to Rosa Luxemburg's 'Junius' Pamphlet, quoted above, Lenin asserted 'National wars waged by colonies and semi-colonies in the imperialist era are not only probable but -----

102. Lenin, V.I. NLME., p.43.

inevitable...The national liberation movements in these colonies are either already very strong, or are growing and maturing'.¹⁰³ In a message dated 5 May 1922 to the Pravda on its Tenth Anniversary, he confidently predicted that the people of India, China and rest of Asia were 'inexorably and with mounting momentum...approaching their 1905'.¹⁰⁴ And Lenin's vision was crystal clear when on 2 March 1925 he predicted 'In the last analysis, the outcome of the struggle will be determined by the fact that Russia, India, China etc. account for the overwhelming majority of the population of the globe, And it is precisely this majority that, during the past few years, has been drawn into the struggle for emancipation with extraordinary rapidity, so that in this respect there cannot be the slightest shadow of doubt what the final outcome of the world struggle will be. In this sense, the complete victory of socialism is fully and absolutely assured'.¹⁰⁵

An important constituent of Lenin's theory of revolution was the concept of uninterrupted revolution by stages and it demarcated him sharply from the Mensheviks. Lenin wrote in 1916, 'The socialist revolution is not a single act, it is not

 103. Lenin, V.I. CW., Vol.22, p.310.

104. Lenin, V.I. NLME, op.cit., p.297.

105. Ibid., p.315.

one battle on the front, but a whole epoch of acute class conflicts, a long series of battles on all fronts i.e. on all questions of economics and politics, battles that can only end in the expropriation of the bourgeoisie'.¹⁰⁶ Thus the socialist revolution could follow on the heels of the nationalist revolution depending on the correlation of political forces on the national as well as the international planes. Seen in this light, the bourgeois democratic or national revolution may serve as a preliminary step towards, or a prelude -- though an essential one -- to the socialist revolution. Thus, as Lenin put it in 1921, 'the first develops into the second. The second, in passing, solves the problems of the first. The second consolidates the work of the first'.¹⁰⁷ Unlike Mensheviks who would let the bourgeoisie lead the bourgeois democratic revolution and then wait for capitalism to develop and mature before the task of overthrowing it was begun, Lenin set the task before the revolutionaries in backward countries, to shorten the transition between the two stages, even more to enable the first to grow into the second. Lenin confidently predicted in 1922 that 'in the coming decisive battles of the world revolution, this movement of the majority of the world's population, originally aimed at national liberation, will turn

 106. Lenin, V.I. CW., Vol.22., p.144.

107. Lenin, V.I. CW., Vol.33., p.54.

against capitalism and imperialism and will, perhaps, play a much more revolutionary role than we have been let to expect'.¹⁰⁸

The difference of opinion between Lenin and Trotsky was for the first time reflected on the issue of Trade Unions which according to Lenin was broadly 'on the methods of approaching the masses, of winning the masses, of contact with the masses'.¹⁰⁹ While the watchword of the Trotskyists was that the Trade Unions be immediately 'governmentalised', be turned into appendages of State machinery,¹¹⁰ Lenin was quick to point out that they are not organisations of the State... they are organisations of education, schools of communism... to provide link between the Communist Party and the masses.¹¹¹

Another point of contradiction between Lenin and Trotsky was the New Economic Policy adopted at the Tenth Party Congress held between March 8 and March 18, 1921. Lenin thought that 'The essence of NEP is the alliance of the proletariat and the peasantry; it is a union of the vanguard of the proletariat with the broad peasant masses'.¹¹² This was essential, according to Lenin, to achieve the supreme

108. Lenin, V.I. NLME, op.cit., p.290.

109. Lenin, V.I. CW., Vol.32. p.5.

110. Rothstein, Andrew (ed), History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Foreign Languages, Moscow., 1960, p.347.

111. Lenin, V.I. CW., Vol.32., p.2.

112. Lenin, V.I. CW., Vol.33, p.145.

principle of the dictatorship of the proletariat which in turn would contribute to the successful building of socialism in Soviet Republics and inspire the peoples of the colonial and dependent countries to fight for national liberation. The implementation of this policy was hindered by two deviations - dominant national chauvinism and local nationalism. The Trotskyists and other opportunist groups, by conducting a factional struggle and demanding freedom of factions and groups were driving the Party towards a split. The CPSU, however, under the leadership of Lenin expressed severe condemnation of the Syndicalist and anarchist deviations in the Party and adopted a resolution on Party unity, ordering immediate dissolution of all factions...to keep a watch to prevent outbreaks of factionalism...and immediate expulsion of a member in case of non-observance of the above decision'.¹¹³

Taking advantage of Lenin's acute illness, Trotsky, resumed his fight against Lenin and in October 1923 he addressed a letter to the Central Committee, vilifying its work. He also mustered all his supporters for a fight against the Central Committee. In October 1923 again, after Trotsky's letter, the Central Committee received a statement known as the Declaration of Forty Six, signed by Trotskyist and other

113. Rothstein, Andrew (ed)., op.cit., p.357.

opportunist factions which sought to secure the annulment of Tenth Party Congress decision banning and ruling out factions in the Party.¹¹⁴ The 13th Congress of the Party which met in January 1924 strongly condemned the factional struggle of Trotskyists and saw in it '...not only a direct departure from Leninism but also a clearly expressed petty-bourgeois deviation.'¹¹⁵ Lenin's letter to the 13th Party Congress, the last to be held in his life time, contained a characterisation of some members of the Central Committee. Lenin in this letter mentioned the 'non-Bolshevism' of Trotsky, thereby warning the Party of his extremely dangerous relapses into Menshevism and added that Trotsky 'has too enterprising self assurances and excessive enthusiasm for the purely administrative side of the work'.¹¹⁶

Comintern theories on the colonial question reflected the shake of in the CPSU(B) in 1927, particularly in the controversy between Stalin and Trotsky.¹¹⁷ Trotsky's theory of 'permanent revolution' was essentially a denial to the entire theory of socialism in one country. Trotsky held that the theory of socialism in one country was a plain

114. Ibid., pp.381-2.

115. Ibid., p.383.

116. Lenin, V.I. CW., Vol.36., p.554.

117. It was a debate between two totally divergent theoretical positions. Both sides understood this perfectly. Most of the official criticism is collected in the anthology Against Trotskyism (Moscow 1971). Trotsky had made effective answers to most of the points against him in The Third International After Lenin, (New York, 1971). Kaviraj, Sudipta. The Marxist Argument, op. cit.

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betrayal of the programme of the Comintern. 'Bukharin's programme is a bad programme of a national section of the Comintern, and not a programme of a world communist party.'¹¹⁹

Trotsky's theoretical position on the colonial situation was a logically extension of his theory of 'permanent revolution'. He had a fairly symmetrical typology constructed on the logic of Marx's famous analysis of late capitalism in Germany and the corresponding 'regression' of the bourgeoisie. As a consequence, Trotsky believed that the development of the capitalism represented a structured process...that it was not random...that the capitalist revolution tended to be inconclusive and indecisive where it arrived late. The bourgeoisie in such late capitalist countries faced two contradictions - one with the feudal classes and other with the proletariat. The bourgeoisie here tended to shift between these two contradictions - fighting the feudal classes with the help of the proletariat and to fight against the proletariat with the help of the feudal classes and ultimately the bourgeoisie remained antagonised with the proletariat and made up his contradiction with the feudal classes. The bourgeoisie, therefore, would have a short 'revolutionary' period...and later the development, the quicker the exhaustion of the revolutionism of the bourgeoisie.^{119-A}

118. Trotsky, Leon. Third International after Lenin, New York, 1971, Section 1 - The Draft Programme of Comintern.

119. Ibid., p.4.

119-A. Kaviraj, Sudipta, The Marxist Argument., op.cit., 120.

His theory of revolution was basically an overgeneralisation of this theory of structured historical process in capitalism. Its weakness was that though Trotsky was fully aware of 'the law of uneven historical development' in theory, he did not develop the necessary logical concomitants of this theory, most significantly he did not allow for the dialectical possibility of a non-application of the logic of lateness to conditions of structurally qualitatively different types of backwardness. Consequently the conclusions one draws from the above may be true in the European countries, but certainly not in the colonial world, where the indigencous bourgeoisie was broadly progressive.¹²⁰

His theory of permanent revolution involved two related processes. Firstly, despite the structural backwardness of Russia, the revolution could transfer power to the proletariat.¹²¹ Secondly, 'the way out of these contradictions which will befall the proletarian dictatorship in a backward country surrounded by a world of capitalist enemies, would be found on the arena of world revolution'.¹²² Needless to say that his theory of revolution was logically consistent with his expectations of the Russian Revolution.

Trotsky specified the law of uneven development as the main and almost all determining law of capitalist development.¹²³ Capitalism tends to break-up this inherited unevenness,

120. Ibid.,

121. Trotsky, Leon. Third International After Lenin, p.40.

122. Ibid.

123. Ibid., p.18.

flattening it out and altering it.¹²⁴ 'It brings about their reprochment and equalises the economic and cultural levels of the most progressive and the most backward countries'.¹²⁵ Trotsky makes a casual comment about the 'industrialisation of colonies and the diminishing gap between India and Great Britain'.¹²⁶

Like Lenin, Stalin had been an ardent critic of Trotsky. At the time of Lenin's death, Stalin was the General Secretary of CPSU and in Lenin's letter to the 13th Party Congress, referred to above, Lenin made a pleas to remove Stalin from Party's post due to his having 'concentrated boundless authority in his hands'.¹²⁷ However the Party decided for the continuation of Stalin as General Secretary, on the condition, that he would mend his policy in keeping with Lenin's criticism, and taking into account Stalin's uncompromising struggle against Trotskyism and other anti-Party factions.

The first encounter between Trotsky and Stalin took place,

124. Ibid., p. 19

125. Ibid.

126. Ibid.

Trotsky's views specifically on the Chinese Revolution of 1925-27 and conflict with Stalin on this question has been dealt in Chapter IV.

127. Rothstein, Andrew (ed), op. cit., p. 387

immediately after the death of Lenin - when in autumn of 1924, Trotsky published an article 'The Lessons of October' in which he pointed out that Bolshevism became a consistent trend in 1917 and only after it had borrowed the Trotskyist idea of 'permanent revolution'. Trotsky also claimed that the leading role in October Revolution had been played by him and not by the Party or by Lenin.¹²⁸ Though Trotsky never dared to parade these ideas in Lenin's life time yet he renewed his opportunist method now.

Stalin played a great part in exposing Trotskyism through his works Trotskyism or Leninism? and The October Revolution and the Tactics of Russian Communists. He showed Trotsky as a malignant disrupter and said '... It is the duty of the Party to bury Trotskyism as an ideological trend'.¹²⁹

Stalin had rivals in Zinoviev and Kamenev, members of the Political Bureau of Central Committee, besides Trotsky. Till 14th Conference of CPSU, they had opposed Trotskyism but soon after the Conference, they had taken side of Trotskyism and became to assert that it would be impossible to build socialism in USSR, without a socialist revolution in the West. This, so called 'New Opposition' thus aimed at breaking up of the alliance of the working class and the working peasantry, for they regarded peasantry as a reactionary force fighting

128. Ibid., p. 390.

129. Stalin, J.V. SW, Vol. 6, p. 373.

against socialism. They were sowing defeatist ideas among the workers. Stalin took up the challenge against 'New Opposition' in his book Problems of Leninism published in January 1926, and defended Leninism against the attempts of 'New Opposition' to distort it in favour of Trotskyism. It was, however, at the 7th Enlarged Plenum of the ECCI (November 22 - December 16, 1926) which demonstrated the complete isolation of the Trotskyists. Stalin's report on the situation within CPSU(B) stated 'The most urgent question in our Party today is that of building of socialism in our country. Lenin was right when he said that the eyes of whole world are upon us, upon our economic construction, upon our achievement on the front of constructive work. But in order to achieve successes on this front, the principal instrument of the dictatorship of the proletariat, our Party, must be ready for this work, must realise the importance of this task, and must be able to serve as the lever of victory of socialist construction in our country.' It was at this Plenum that Zenoviev was relieved of his duties as Chairman of Executive Committee of Comintern, consequent to the passing of a resolution by the Presidium that '... The Presidium considered Zinoviev's further work in the Comintern undesirable'. To put an end to the anti-Party activity of Trotskyists, Trotsky and Zinoviev were

 130. Rothstein, Andrew (ed). op. cit., p. 398.

131. Sobolev, A.I. and others. ORCI, op. cit., p. 245.

132. Ibid., p. 247.

expelled from the Central Committee in October 1927. In November 1927 they were expelled from the Party by the Central Committee and Central Control Commission. This marked the ideological and political defeat of Trotskyism - an important landmark in the history of international communist movement. A serious obstacle in the way of general line of the Comintern was removed.

133. Rothstein, Andrew(ed), op. cit., p. 412.

CHAPTER - IV

THE COMINTERN AND THE CHINESE QUESTION:
M.N. ROY'S EXPULSION FROM THE COMINTERN

The failure of the communist movement in China where Roy was sent in 1927 is one of the important reasons of his expulsion from the Comintern in September 1929.¹ Before dealing with the other causes of Roy's expulsion from the Comintern, let us consider the China episode in Roy's career in the Comintern.

The Chinese Revolution, 1925-27

The genesis of the Chinese revolution should be traced as far back as 1912 when the Kuomintang was founded by Sun Yat-Sen for the purpose of fighting for a republic and for national independence of the country. It was, Lenin, who for the first time in the Second Congress of the Comintern attached great significance to the National + Colonial Question. Lenin was quick to notice the anti-imperialist role of the colonial bourgeoisie was, in fact, the raison d'etre

1. 'Roy's mission in China was not successful...that undermined Roy's position and eventually led to his expulsion from the Comintern'.
Ghosh, Shanker. Socialism and Communism in India, Allied Publishers, Delhi, 1971, p.161

of the policy of extending support to it.² The colonial bourgeoisie, Lenin pointed out, became reactionary only when he abandoned his anti-imperialist struggle.³ This anti-imperialist aspect of the struggle of colonial people was time and again emphasised by Lenin. The Comintern repeatedly emphasised this during Lenin's life time and the National + Colonial Question was discussed whether on the agenda or not, in all the Congresses of Comintern held during Lenin's life time.⁴

Even before the national-liberation question was ceremoniously discussed in the Comintern Congresses, Lenin had ardently advocated it. Judging from his criterion - the extent to which a movement awakened the masses, mobilised them, brought them into policies and released their latent energy through mass action against imperialism - Lenin was for all praise for Sun Yat-Sen in 1913 when he wrote 'Revolutionary bourgeois democracy represented by Sun Yat-Sen is correctly seeking ways and means of 'regenerating' China through maximum development of the initiative, resoluteness

2. Chandra, Bipin. Lenin on Wars of National Liberation, Lenin Centenary Commemoration Seminar, Indian Council of World Affairs, February, 1970, p.40.
3. Lenin, V.I. The National Liberation Movement in the East, (NLME), Moscow, 1972, p.234.
4. Degras, Jane. Communist International, 1919-1943, Documents, Vol.1, Oxford University Press, London, 1956, p.385.

and boldness of the peasant masses in implementing political and agrarian reforms.⁵ In 1912 Lenin again referred to 'the international significance of the revolutionary struggle of Chinese people as one that brings liberation to Asia and undermines the domination of the European bourgeoisie.'⁶ In 1913, Lenin's entire article 'Democracy and Narodism in China' was an analysis of the revolutionary movement in China under the leadership of Sun Yat-Sen. In particular, the movement was praised because 'it squarely posed the question of the conditions of the masses, of the mass struggle'.⁷ In 1915, in his major article, Socialism and War, Lenin noted that the national liberation movement in China, India and other dependent countries were rousing hundreds of millions of people in the fight against foreign oppression.⁸

Though China was represented in the Second Congress of the Comintern, the decisions of the Second Congress regarding collaboration with bourgeois revolutionaries appear to have no influence whatsoever in China at that time. On the contrary, the First Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in July 1921 adopted a resolution declaring that the new party should stand on behalf of the proletariat, and should allow no relationship with the other parties or groups'.⁹

5. Lenin, V.I. NLNE., op.cit., p.47.

6. Ibid., pp.39-40.

7. Ibid., p.42.

8. Ibid., p.101.

9. Schram, Stuart & d'Encausse Helene Carrere, Marxism and Asia, Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1965, p.51.

Since Sun Yat-Sen was a national revolutionary fighting against foreign imperialism and because Kuomintang led by Sun Yat-Sen was a movement against imperialism in China which also enabled the communists to get organised and to work among the masses,¹⁰ Lenin and the Comintern encouraged the the CCP to go beyond uniting with Sun Yat-Sen and the Kuomintang and to join the latter as individuals, retaining at the same time their separate party identity.¹¹ 'It was in August 1922 that the Comintern imposed on the CCP a policy without precedent in the history of the world communist movement, according to which the members of the CCP were to join the Kuomintang as individuals, while retaining their own organisation. After discussion with Sun Yat-Sen and his friends, this policy was effectively put into practice on a large scale beginning with the First Congress of Kuomintang in January 1924'.¹²

Accordingly, Chinese communists had collaborated with Kuomintang since Lenin's time because Kuomintang was proceeding along Sun Yat-Sen's leadership and reciprocated

10. Following the spirit of Second Congress Theses, the CCP laid down in 1922 'If we communists wish to work successfully in the Southern Chinese trade unions...we must maintain the most friendly relations with the Southern Chinese nationalists'.

Carr, E.H. The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917-23, Vol.III, Macmillan, Penguin, 1953, p.527.

11. Schwartz, Benjamin I. Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao Mass, Cambridge, 1966, Chapter III.

12. Schram, Stuart & d'Encausse Helene Carrere, op.cit.,p.52.

this friendship. In 1924 the CCP joined the Kuomintang and thus helped to convert the latter into a mass peoples revolutionary party. The Kuomintang thus became the party of a bloc of several oppressed classes that had their own party organisation.¹³ In the first stage of development of the Chinese revolution of 1921-1925, the Kuomintang was 'an anti-imperialist party which was waging a revolutionary struggle against imperialists and their agents in China'.¹⁴ The revolution was anti-imperialist, of a united all-national front led by Kuomintang, having the proletariat, the urban and rural petty-bourgeoisie and a section of the national bourgeoisie in its fold.

The Comintern's policy during the period of Chinese revolution was based on the principle of rallying all the anti-imperialist forces. Immediately after the outbreak of revolution (May 30, 1925) in China in the shape of anti-imperialist action of Shanghai workers and students, the Presidium of ECCI suggested to the communist parties in the capitalist countries to take all necessary steps to draw the masses' public opinion in favour of the struggle of Chinese people. The decision of the ECCI helped to draw hundreds of thousands of people into the movement for rendering

13. J. Stalin on Chinese Revolution, New Book Centre, Calcutta, 1973, p.41.

14. Ibid., p.43.

aid to the Chinese people. The Sixth Enlarged Plenum of ECCI noted that 'a tremendous general-national movement under the slogans of national independence and a people's government',¹⁵ was building in China. The Plenum decision was that the communists supported the Kuomintang so far as it fought 'against the imperialists and the whole militant-feudal order for the independence of the country and for a single revolutionary democratic government'.¹⁶ The ECCI pointed out the exceptionally important role which the peasant millions of China were called upon to play in shaping the Chinese revolution.

The Seventh Plenum of the ECCI described the Chinese revolution as an anti-imperialist, bourgeois democratic revolution to liberate the Chinese people from the foreign yoke. The ECCI considered that the Chinese revolution was passing through a general national phase, that the bourgeois democratic revolution in China was merely in the initial stage of its development and that its motive forces were the masses who formed the anti-imperialist bloc.¹⁷ The Plenum also stated that the Chinese State created as a result of the victory of revolution would not be a purely bourgeois-

15. Sobolev, A.I. and others, Outline History of the Communist International, Progress, Moscow, 1971, p.249.

16. Ibid., p.250.

17. Ibid.

democratic state. It will 'represent democratic dictatorship of the proletariat, peasantry and other exploited classes'.¹⁸

The Seventh Plenum met at a time when the national revolutionary armies were winning victory after victory over the troops of the militarists - the mainstay of imperialist influences in China. The remarkable militancy displayed by the Chinese working class was chiefly due to their cruel oppression by the imperialists, indirectly enabling them to develop into a powerful fighting force.¹⁹ The significance of the Chinese revolution of 1925 can be noticed in the following speech of the Chairman of the Comintern in 1925:

'The events in China will doubtless have a tremendous revolutionizing significance for the other colonies and the countries dependent on imperialist England. Just as in its day the Russian revolution of 1905 had the greatest revolutionising influence on Turkey, Persia and China, the present great movement in China will, without doubt, have a tremendous influence in Indo-China, India etc. The enormous contingents of oppressed humanity who live in the East, numbering hundreds of millions, will greedily seize on every item of news from revolutionary China and will concentrate their thoughts on how they themselves can organise and revolt against the oppressors, the imperialists... China has revolted today; tomorrow Indo-China and India will rise, Shanghai, Hongkong, Peking and Canton have revolted today, tomorrow Calcutta and Madras will rise'. (20)

18. Inprecoor, Vol.7, No.11, February 3, 1927, p.231.

19. Po-Ta, Chen. Mao Tse-Tung on the Chinese Revolution, New Book Centre, Calcutta, 1950, p.15.

20. Petrie, David. Communism in India, 1924-27, Editions Indian, Calcutta, 1972, p.188.

The Chinese revolution was seen as a stepping stone to India. It was believed that China would not only provide moral inspiration for Indian revolutionaries, but also serve as a strategic base to provide direct assistance. The Comintern slogan was now 'Via revolutionary China to the Federal Republic of the United States of India'.²¹

Despite the success of Chinese revolution, the Seventh Plenum lost no time in noticing that imperialist intervention in China was increasing. This depicted the contradiction between the revolution and the national bourgeoisie. This only meant that the national bourgeoisie, while supporting the revolution, attempted to utilise it for its own purpose.²² It also observed that the revolution developed amidst peculiar conditions which radically distinguished it from other classical bourgeois revolutions in Europe and also from 1905 Russian revolution.²³

The Plenum also pointed out to the swift process of regrouping of social forces in the national-revolutionary movement in China and the inevitability of the big capitalist bourgeoisie passing over to the side of counter-revolution. Hence the Plenum outlined a concrete programme of drawing 'the bulk of the working class into the movement', to win over the peasantry over to the revolution...to wage a

21. Ibid., p.187.

22. J. Stalin on the Chinese Revolution, op.cit., p.24.

23. Sobolev, A.I. and others. OHCI, op.cit., p.252.

systematic and resolute struggle against the Right leaders of Kuomintang who were to turn the Kuomintang into a party of bourgeoisie and landlords, and to cooperate with the Left wing of Kuomintang.²⁴

Roy was sent to China as a representative of the Comintern to help implement the policy in whose formation he had shared. It was at the Seventh Plenum of Enlarged ECCI where Roy alongwith Bukharin had drafted the thesis on the Chinese revolution adopted by the Seventh Plenum.²⁵ The Comintern had also charged him with the responsibility of promoting disaffection among Indian troops stationed in China by working closely with the Ghadr Party and the Sikh groups already operating in China. These groups were already quite active in their anti-imperialist activities which caused anxiety to the British intelligence.²⁶

Roy and his companions arrived in Canton in February 1927. In December 1926, however, the seat of national government in China had been transferred from Canton to Wuhan. It was hence necessary for Roy to reach Wuhan as early as possible and Roy planned to travel by plane. The plane's arrival in Canton, however, was delayed. When it arrived, engine trouble developed. After waiting impatiently in Canton for

24. Ibid.

25. North, Robert C. Moscow and the Chinese Communists, Stamford University Press, Stamford, 1963, p.90.

26. Petrie, David. op.cit., p.187.

about two weeks, Roy engaged some bearers and set out overland. It was a strenuous journey and another weeks passed before he finally reached Howcow.²⁷

At about the time Roy reached Howcow, the situation formulated by him at the Seventh Plenum about China has changed dramatically. In March 1926, there was the attempted counter-revolutionary coup in Kwangchow, which revealed the anti-communist colour of the national revolutionary armies. However the ECCI of the Seventh Plenum had assumed that sooner or later Chiang-Kai Shek would strike at the revolutionary forces of China. The leadership of the Kuomintang at the time it was acting in league with the CCP, stressed the fact that 'the Kuomintang should maintain closest contact with the general staff of the world revolution' and that 'the Kuomintang stands in need of guidance of the Comintern'.²⁸

However, on April 12, Chiang-Kai Shek launched a coup against his communist allies which resulted in the death of thousands. Events in Shanghai were duplicated in several other major Chinese cities. The Chinese communists had been urged to support Chiang's northern expedition with the argument

 27. Letter dated 23 March 1966 from Louise Geisser to Haithcox. Luise was a Swiss citizen and a parliamentary stenographer of the Comintern Congresses between 1920 and 1926. She accompanied Roy to China in late 1926. Haithcox, John Patrick. Communism and Nationalism in India, M.N. Roy and Comintern Policy 1920-1939, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1971, p.310.

28. Sobolev, A.I. and others. ONCI., p.252.

that the revolution should first be broadened before it was deepened. The Comintern policy in April 1926 was 'to keep the CCP within the Kuomintang'. The policy was directed towards further development of the revolution, close cooperation between the Lefts and the communists in Kuomintang and within the national government, strengthening the unity of the Kuomintang and at the same time exposing and isolating the Kuomintang Rightists'.²⁹ The fall of Shanghai, which Bukharin had labeled 'the workers' Petrograd for China'³⁰ had the site of a powerful labour organisation under communist control, but also China's chief centre of banking, commerce and industry, with the city in his hands, Chiang was able to strike a deal with the representatives of its Western and native-owned banks, firms and commercial associations. In return for their financial support, he agreed to strike a blow against the communist movement -- which was viewed as a threat to their common interests.³¹

However, the odds were still in favour of the Kuomintang which was only yesterday a revolutionary organisation. Even many of the army's commanders were under the influence of

29. Stalin on Chinese Revolution, op.cit., p.23.

30. Haitcock, John Patrick., op.cit., p.64.

31. Ibid., p.65.

Kuomintang leadership. The CCP was not able to deal effectively with the counter-revolutionary coup, supporters of military dictatorship and a cruel enemy in Chiang. So when, following the coup, Chiang called a meeting of his supporters in the Central Committee of the Kuomintang in Nanking, it signaled a break between Chiang and his followers on the one hand, and Wang Ching-wei, the Kuomintang Left wing in Wuhan, and its communist supporters on the other hand. Wang had recently returned from exile. The Wuhan faction of the party, now known as the Left Kuomintang, reacted on April 17 by expelling Chiang-Kai Shek from the party. However, at the same time plans were laid for a military advance towards Peking to be able to bargain with Chiang at a later date from a position of strength.³²

Examining the new situation in China, the Eighth Plenum of the ECCI (May 1927) adopted a resolution on China which declared that 'recent events have entirely confirmed the point of view of the Communist International concerning the Chinese Revolution, and are a brilliant confirmation of Lenin's predictions as to its international role'. Chiang's coup d'etat and the establishment of a separate government at Nanking by the Right wing of the Kuomintang were interpreted

32. Ibid.

as the inevitable desertion of the 'united national revolutionary front by the bourgeoisie'. Although it was acknowledged that the 'bourgeois revolutionary coup' represented at least a 'partial defeat of the Chinese revolution and a real acquisition of strength by the counter-revolution', it was claimed that this was more than offset by the fact that the revolution had advanced to a 'higher stage of development'. The CCP was advised to preserve its alliance with the Hankow government and the Left Kuomintang, which was characterized as 'a revolutionary bloc of the urban and rural petty-bourgeois masses with the proletariat'. It was believed that the Left Kuomintang government in Wuhan was capable of playing a revolutionary role provided it shaped a firm course towards the masses. Thus the CCP was desired to participate in the work of Left Kuomintang government, to organise powerful mass pressure which would impel this government along a revolutionary path. It was assumed that Wuhan would become the centre of revolutionary activities and that the Wuhan government would be in a position to repulse the usurper Chiang-Kai Shek, who had established a military dictatorship. This called for a new tactical line - a policy of resolutely expelling the Rights from the Kuomintang, policy of concentrating all power in the hands of a revolutionary Kuomintang, a Kuomintang that is a bloc between the Kuomintang Left and the communists. It also followed that while fighting in the same ranks as the revolutionary

Kuomintang, the CCP must more than ever before preserve its independence, as an essential condition for ensuring the hegemony of the proletariat in the bourgeois-democratic revolutions.³³ The Comintern held out the hope that the CCP might be able to secure the hegemony of the Left Kuomintang by entrenching itself among the peasantry through the pursuance of a more radical agrarian programme in the territories of the Harkow regime. The programme included 'the abolition of rent paid to the rich, the redistribution of land, radical reduction of taxation...(and) the mass arming of the workers and peasants'.³⁴

This agrarian programme, however, was to be pursued under the aegis of the Left Kuomintang government, not in defiance of it. Otherwise the policy of close cooperation between the Left Kuomintang and the communists - without which, Stalin declared, the victory of the revolution would be impossible, would have been jeopardized. It was emphasised at the Eighth Plenum that to divorce the class struggle in China from the national liberation movement was to invite its defeat.

? | The above stated policy was impractical. When in April, the second northern expedition got under way the Chinese

33. J. Stalin on the Chinese Revolution, op.cit., p.28.

34. Imprecor, Vol.7, No.35, pp.737-741, reproducing the text of the 'Resolution on the Chinese Question'

communists and their Russian advisers in Hankow decided to support the expedition. Borodin felt that such a course of action was necessary to avoid a split with the Left Kuomintang. Once troops movements had begun, the Wuhan government adopted a policy of restraining the peasant and labour movements in the interests of united support to the revolutionary army. Borodin's attitude to this policy was one of acquiescence. Roy disagreed. Rather than declare a moratorium on workers' and peasants' demands, he wanted to intensify the revolution in the area under the control of the Wuhan government. Such a policy, Roy argued, would force the resignation of the more reactionary of the military and political leaders in Wuhan and smooth the way to the goal of capturing the nationalist organisation.³⁵ Borodin obviously felt what would be left would not be worth capturing. Among the Russian advisers, only General Oberst Galen (Vasili K. Blucher) supported Roy's position.³⁶

At first the majority of the Central Committee of the CCP sided with Roy. On April 16 this body resolved that 'military operations aimed at territorial expansion to the

35. Roy, M.N. My Experiences in China, Renaissance Publishers, Calcutta, 1949, pp.30-41.

Haithcox is of the opinion that this book first appeared in India in early 1930s under the title 'China in Revolt' and Roy adopted the nom de plume, S.K. Vidyarathi. This book was first published in Bombay by Vanguard Publishing Company.

Haithcox, John Patrick. op.cit., pp.310-11.

36. Letter from Louise Gessler to Haithcox.

Haithcox, John Patrick. op.cit., p.311.

North must be preceded by a consolidation of the base of the revolution in those regions which are already under the control of the Kuomintang...in accordance with the suggestions made in Comrade Roy's speech'.³⁷ But two days later the resolution was retracted and assurances of immediate support were extended to the military expedition.³⁸

The conflict between Doy and Borodin over revolutionary tactics was again in evidence during the proceedings of the Fifth Congress of the CCP, which commenced on April 27, 1927. The 'Theses on the Political Situation and the Tasks of the Chinese Communist Party' adopted at this meeting, reflect an effort to compromise their differences. The resolution called for supporting Wuhai's military venture and preserving the alliance with the Left Kuomintang, on the one hand, and creating a mass base through the support of peasant demands and the arming of the peasants, on the other hand. Under the circumstances these were contradictory goals. However a few weeks after the Fifth Congress, a Wuhai general staged a coup d'etat in the capital of Huai, replaced the provincial government and suppressed local communist organisations with a display of great brutality and inhumanity. An estimated 20000 persons were killed before

37. North, Robert C. & Eudin, Kenia J., M.N. Roy's Mission to China (Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1963, pp.176-77.

38. Ibid., p.177.

the terror had run its course. Roy had called for a test of strength between the armed peasantry and the military and disapproved of Borodin's efforts to secure a negotiated settlement. Rather than capitulate to the will of the Left Kuomintang leaders, he felt it was now time for a confrontation. Roy referred this question to Moscow. Stalin's telegraphed reply arrived in Hankow on June 1. The reply tried to reconcile the irreconcilable striking a balance between the views of Roy and Borodin. The Chinese communists were advised to support T'ang's military offensive and, at the same time, to develop the revolution in the territories of the Wuhan government. Both Roy and Borodin knew that this was not possible.³⁹

When Stalin's telegram arrived, the situation was desperate. Chiang's coup in April 1927 had already tipped the balance decisively against the communists. The Wuhan government was little more than an empty shell. Roy felt that the only hope of preserving the Wuhan regime as an independent political entity, and with it the Left Kuomintang CCP alliance, lay in unleashing the power of the estimated three million members of the peasant unions and playing on Wang Ching-Wei's political ambitions. Roy felt that an army of workers' and peasants should be formed and suggested that

39. Brandt, Conrad., Stalin's Failure in China, 1924-27, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1958, p.135 gives the details of Borodin's reactions. Roy, M.N., My Experiences in China, op.cit., p.45, gives the details of his reactions.

this army could be placed under the command of a general upon whom Wang could rely. But this proposal had come too late. The Comintern and the CCP had neglected for too long the essential task of building an independent power base. The CCP was unwilling to make a bold bid for peasant support for fear of incurring the wrath of the Wuhan regime. At the meeting of the Central Political Bureau of the CCP held in June, Roy urged that the party should propose to the Wuhan government to follow the policy of land expropriation. Members of the bureau were unanimous in rejecting this advice on the grounds that to make such a proposal to the Left Kuomintang 'was like playing a lute to entertain a fox'.⁴⁰ For this they were later rebuked by the Comintern.

Roy considered Wang 'the leader of petty-bourgeois radicalists' but perhaps 'opportunist' would have been a more fitting description.⁴¹ In July 1927, the Wuhan government headed by Wang Chin-Wei broke with the communists, prosecuted them and split the anti-imperialist front in China.⁴² This completed the conversion of Kuomintang, so far a national revolutionary party, into a body controlled by the bourgeois militarist faction. This transformation of Kuomintang was

40. Haithcox, John Patrick, op.cit., p.40.

41. Ibid., p.73.

42. Sobolev, A.I. and Others, OHCI, op.cit., pp.253-54.

accompanied by a savage reign of terror against the working class people, chiefly the communists. In bombarding Nanking and presenting an ultimatum, the imperialist desired to make it known that they were seeking the support of the national bourgeoisie for a joint struggle against the Chinese revolution. Chiang-Kai Shek, on the other hand, in firing upon workers' meetings and engineering a coup, was in fact, replying to the call of imperialists and saying that he was ready to make a deal with them together with the national bourgeoisie against the Chinese workers and peasants.⁴⁵ It led the Comintern to conclude that the national bourgeoisie in the oppressed countries did not count as a force of active opposition to imperialism.⁴⁶ Roy and Borodin along with other Russian advisers of the CCP, were obliged to return to Moscow. Roy left Hankow in early August. Together with a small party, he travelled by car across the Gobi Desert to Lake Baikal where he took the Trans-Siberian Railway to Moscow.⁴⁷

Controversy on the Chinese Revolution
in the Comintern

About the Chinese Debacle and Roy's responsibility towards the same, various views have been expressed. In an

45. J. Stalin on the Chinese Revolution, op.cit., p.26.

46. Sobolev, A.I. and Others, OHCI., op.cit., p.254.

47. Letter from Louise Geissler to Haithcox.

Haithcox, John Patrick, op.cit., p.311.

interview with Mao Tse-Tung, Edgar Snow asked the Chinese communist leader who he thought was most responsible for the failure of the CCP in 1927. In his response Mao placed the greatest share of the blame on Chen Tuhsiu, the General Secretary of the CCP at that time. The next man responsible for the debacle, according to Mao, was Borodin. On Roy's role, Mao remarked that he 'stood a little to the left of both Chen and Borodin, but he only stood'. Snow summed up Mao's opinions in this way 'He thought that Roy had been a fool, Borodin a blunderer, and Chen an unconscious traitor'.⁴⁸ Earl Browder, who accompanied Roy to China and who had disliked Roy from his early days, giving his opinion says that the situation in China when he arrived there was 'hopeless' and in retrospect, Browder felt, that 'probably the cleverest and well-devised proposals would not...have changed the overall outcome'.⁴⁹

Roy in his approach to the Chinese problem was nearer to Trotsky than to Stalin, and the Comintern policy in China was one of the central issues in the power struggle between Stalin and Trotsky. Both Roy and Trotsky would have preferred to deepen the revolution before broadening it. Both favoured strengthening the agrarian revolution in Wuhan to extending

48. Snow, Edgar. Red Star Over China, Penguin Books, London, 1972, p.147.

49. Halthcox, John Patrick, op.cit., p.311.

the territory under Left Kuomintang control. Finally, both saw the Chinese civil war primarily as an opportunity to promote communism in Asia; whereas for Stalin, China was another battleground in a world-wide contest with the Western powers.

Trotsky, although, almost always began with a ritualistic invocation of Lenin, he reached just the opposite conclusions in the case of China. Trotsky wrote '...the conduct of the Chinese bourgeoisie in relation to imperialism, the proletariat and the peasantry, was not more revolutionary than the attitude of the Russian bourgeoisie towards czarism, but if anything, viler and more reactionary.'⁵⁰ Needless to point out that Trotsky's estimation of the Chinese bourgeoisie was more accurate than Lenin or Stalin. However the defect with Trotsky's analysis was that he absolutised one phase of Chinese experience into a general law 'the further East we go, the lower and viler becomes the bourgeoisie, the greater are the tasks that fall upon the proletariat. This historical 'law' fully applies to China as well.'⁵¹ Like many others in the Comintern between 1925 and 1935, Trotsky developed a theory of inevitability on the experience of China.

50. Trotsky, Leon. Third International After Lenin, Newyork, 1971, p. 174.

51. Ibid., p. 179.

This determinist approach of Trotsky, however, appears curious since he was always emphasising the unevenness of development all the time.⁵² Later on, however, China turned to be an exception and not the rule.⁵³ Further in Trotsky's view, the revolution in China continued to develop uninterruptedly or permanently from a bourgeois-democratic to socialist state.⁵⁴ It was still another vindication of the theory of permanent revolution.⁵⁵

J. Stalin took all pains to defend the Comintern's actions in the Chinese Revolution. Speaking at the Chinese Commission on November 30, 1926, of the ECCI, Stalin pointed out that though Lenin had said that the Chinese were going to have their 1905, it was not a 'replica' of the Russian event. The Chinese revolution was surely a bourgeois-democratic revolution but it was a bourgeois-democratic revolution under colonial conditions.⁵⁶ There were also other specific dissimilarities. The Chinese bourgeoisie was weaker compared to Russia in 1905. So its anti-imperialist tendency was much greater and on a qualitatively different level than the Russian bourgeoisie which was imperialist,⁵⁷ that the future government will be a 'democratic dictatorship of the proletariat

52. Kaviraj, Sudipta. The Marxist Argument, op. cit.

53. Trotsky, Leon. Third International After Lenin, op. cit., p. 179.

54. Kaviraj, Sudipta, op. cit.,

55. Ibid.

56. J. Stalin on the Chinese Revolution, op. cit., p.5.

57. Ibid.

and peasantry...a government transitional or more exactly, a socialist development of China'.⁵⁸ Stalin therefore advised the Chinese communists to 'remain in the Kuomintang and intensify their work in it'.⁵⁹

It is evident from the above that Stalin's characterisation of the Chinese Revolution stated above did not contain even a hint of the strategic disaster that followed less than a year later.

Things changed drastically strongly afterwards. Writing for the journal Derevensky Kummunist on May 15,⁶⁰ 1927, Stalin posed the question of two alternative routes with great theoretical accuracy and listed the specificities of the Chinese situation clearly in the same text.⁶¹ While talking to the students of the Sun Yat-Sen University, on May 13, 1927, Stalin pointed out why ^{he} thought a 'Kemalist revolution' was not possible in China.⁶² On 24 May 1927 in his speech to the ECCI, Stalin pointed out what the Comintern held 'was not the policy of supporting the national bourgeoisie, but a policy of utilising the national bourgeoisie so long as the revolution in China was the revolution of an all-national front and they later replaced that policy by a policy of armed struggle

58. Ibid., p.13.

59. Ibid., p.14.

60. Ibid., p.37.

61. Ibid., pp.32-37.

62. Ibid., pp.54-56.

against the national bourgeoisie when the revolution in China became an agrarian revolution and the national bourgeoisie began to desert the revolution.⁶³ Stalin also tried to answer Trotsky's criticism in his speech, to the ECCI. 'The basic error of Trotsky', Stalin stated, 'was that he under estimated the agrarian revolution in China, did not understand the bourgeois democratic character of revolution, denied the existence of the preconditions for an agrarian movement in China embracing many millions and under-estimated the role of peasantry in the Chinese revolution'.⁶⁴ Section III of Stalin's speech bears the title, 'The Right Kuomintang in Nanking which massacres communists and the Left Kuomintang in Wuhan which maintains in alliance with the communists'.⁶⁵

Stalin's difference of the two wings of Kuomintang proved to be extremely shortlived. It was in July 1927 when the Left Kuomintang also expelled the communists, thereby completing all the preconditions of the theoretical inversion.

Despite Stalin's defence of Comintern's policy in the Chinese revolution, the confusion surrounding the events were not easily cleared. While Stalin has put all blame on

63. Ibid., p.67.

64. Ibid., p.73.

65. Ibid., p.75.

CCP for the ^a failure of Chinese revolution. Halthcox on the contrary emphasises that the fault lay in the fundamental policy of the Comintern - 'that the principal aim of the Comintern in China was the elimination of the imperialist influence, especially British influence, rather than the promotion of communism.'⁶⁶ Comintern's strategy for China was devised keeping in view the Soviet Union's world war struggle against Western imperialist powers. Halthcox's criticism is not without base; because when the leadership of the Kuomintang, being supported by the Comintern, proposed that 'the Comintern should be joined by Kuomintang', the Comintern rejected it. The Comintern though provided support to the Kuomintang, then a national revolutionary body, decided against Kuomintang's joining the Comintern on the ground that 'it was not a communist organisation'.⁶⁷

A similar view is expressed by d'Encausse and Schram, '...Stalin's Chinese policy was nothing more than a tactical manoeuvre in the framework of his foreign policy. He attached no value whatsoever to the nation as such - unless it be Russian nation...By pushing the CCP in close collaboration with Kuomintang and acting as its subordinate, Stalin thus contributed to opening a Pandora's box which his successors

66. Halthcox, John Patrick., op.cit., p.60.

67. Sobolev, A.I. & Others, OHCI., p.252.

have still not succeeded in closing'.⁶⁸ Commenting on Stalin's May 1927 speech to the students at the Sun Yat-Sen University, referred to above, these authors ridicule 'Stalin's endeavour to demonstrate with incomparable ponderous casuistry, that the Comintern had foreseen everything two years earlier'.⁶⁹ These authors point out that again in August 1927, when the Left Kuomintang had broken with the communists, Stalin's advice to promote collaboration with the remnants of the 'revolutionary Kuomintang', had 'naturally once again presented the history of Chinese revolution as a ballet perfectly planned in advance by Comintern'.⁷⁰ These authors hold that even Trotsky, despite his criticism of Stalin's Chinese policy, had little understanding of the specific problems of the Chinese revolution, and in particular of the importance of the national factor.⁷¹ They, hence, opine that Trotsky was no more capable than Stalin of leading Chinese revolution to victory. Stalin sacrificed the Chinese revolution to the security of Russia's frontiers. Trotsky would have brought about an equally great disaster by attributing to the Chinese proletariat a force which it did not possess...the true solution was to be found by

 68. Schram Stuart and d'Encausse, Helene Carrere, op.cit. p.63.

69. Ibid., p.55.

70. Ibid.

71. Ibid., p.56.

certain of the Chinese communists who were the most profoundly rooted in the life of their own country.⁷² There was a change in the Chinese assessment of the Comintern and Stalin's role in the Chinese revolution of 1925-27, after Stalin's death. This has been brought out by Schram and d'Encausse who wrote 'Fifty years later, even as they (the Chinese leaders) defended Stalin against Khrushchev's attacks, they recalled that they had led the Chinese revolution to victory despite the 'errors' of the Soviet leaders.⁷³

Chen Po-Ta, writing in 1930, has tried to prove that the ultimate success of the Chinese revolution under the celebrated leadership of Mao Tse-Tung has been made possible by applying Marxism - Leninism in the problems of Chinese revolution. It was a basic Marxist-Leninist appraisal and analysis that 'the Chinese revolution is a part of the proletarian socialist world revolution'.⁷⁴ By using the teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Chen Po-Ta holds 'Mao developed this basic viewpoint and led the Chinese revolution in the correct direction'.⁷⁵ Considering the weakness of the Chinese bourgeoisie, when Stalin wrote in 1926 '...it follows from this that the role of initiator and guide of the Chinese revolution, the role of leader of the Chinese peasantry must

72. Ibid., p.56.

73. Ibid.

74. Po-Ta, Chen., Mao Tse-Tung on the Chinese Revolution, New Book Centre, Calcutta, 1975, p.25.

75. Ibid., p.28.

inevitably fall on the Chinese proletariat', Mao Tse-Tung also said '...History has proved that the Chinese bourgeoisie is unable to fulfil this responsibility, which consequently cannot but fall on the shoulders of the proletariat.'⁷⁶

Mao applied to semi-colonial China the law governing the uneven economic and political development in various capitalist countries, as expounded by Lenin and Stalin, and by making a right analysis of concrete conditions he drew a series of comprehensive conclusions - that the economic and political development of China was extremely uneven which gives unevenness in the development of revolution, that it was possible for the revolution to take advantage of the weakness of the enemy to victory first in the rural areas, and that it was possible to establish long-term revolutionary basis there.

Mao regarded the opinion held by the Comintern in 1927 that the character of the Chinese revolution remained bourgeois democratic as 'completely correct',⁷⁷ and said 'the struggle which we have gone through verifies the truth of the opinion of the Comintern'. Mao, like Lenin and Stalin, advocated the theory of continuous development of revolution and not the Trotskyite theory of permanent revolution'.⁷⁸ The process

76. Ibid., p.31.

77. Ibid., p.77.

78. Ibid., p.78.

through which Mao has integrated Marxism-Leninism with the concrete practice of Chinese revolution is also the process through which the Communist Party of China have been increasingly Bolshevised. Mao has often said that without a Bolshevised party of the Lenin-Stalin type, the victory of the Chinese revolution would be impossible.⁷⁹

The shift in the Comintern's policy came officially in the Sixth Congress which would seem to have a paradoxical relation with Trotsky's line, despite Trotsky's criticism of the tactics adopted by the Sixth Congress, in which he 'saw a door far too freely opened to collaboration with the bourgeoisie, despite all the precautions taken in the formation of the thesis'.⁸⁰ Presenting his report at the Sixth Congress Bukharin summed up the point of view of the Comintern:

'Here we can in retrospect deal once again with some of the major problems of the Chinese revolution. The Communist Party of China, as all of you know, has suffered a severe defeat. This is a fact. The question arises, was this defeat a result of the wrong tactics pursued by the Comintern in the Chinese revolution? Perhaps it was indeed inexpedient to have entered into a bloc with the bourgeoisie; perhaps that was the original sin, the basic error, which determined the other errors and gradually, step by step, brought about the defeat of the Chinese proletariat?' (81)

79. Ibid., p.84.

80. Schram, Stuart and d'Encausse, Helene Carrere, op.cit. p.59.

81. Claudin, Fernando. The Communist Movement, Penguin Books, London, 1975, pp.274-5.

Bukharin's answer to the question raised at the Sixth Congress was also in his report, as follows:

'On the whole, it is not the main line of tactics that was at fault, but the political actions and the practical application of the line pursued in China. Firstly, at the beginning of the Chinese revolution, in the period of collaboration with the Kuomintang, our mistake was that we did not sufficiently criticize the Kuomintang. Instead of being an ally, our party was at times an accessory of the Kuomintang. Secondly, the Communist Party of China failed to understand the change that took place in the objective situation, the transition from one stage to another. Thus, it was possible for a time to march together with the national bourgeoisie, but at a certain stage of development it was necessary to foresee imminent changes...Thirdly, our party at times acted as a brake on the mass movement, a brake on the agrarian revolution, and a brake on the labour movement. These were fatal blunders and, naturally they helped to bring about the defeat of the Communist Party and of the Chinese proletariat. After a whole series of defeats the party set to work resolutely to rectify its opportunist blunders. But this time, as frequently happens, some comrades fell into the other extreme. They did not prepare uprisings with sufficient care, they displayed glaring putschist tendencies and adventurism of the worst type.' (82)

This is an excellent summary of the political mistakes which led to the defeat of the Chinese revolution of 1925-27. Claudia however, inserts two corrections in this (a) that the mistakes lay in the Comintern's main line of tactics and not in the practical application of the line (b) that the *term* 'Chinese Communist Party' should be read as the 'leadership of the Comintern' in Bukharin's report at the Sixth Congress. 83

82. Ibid., p.275.

83. Ibid.

As a result of the Sixth Congress Theses, the national bourgeoisie was, for all practical purposes, dropped from the revolutionary bloc, though for the time being, and considered an enemy. Proletarian hegemony was now considered a premise of success. But there was still a big difference. It was about the nature and content of the revolution. The Comintern line believed that the stage of revolution was still bourgeois-democratic, though the bourgeoisie itself had scuttled from it, as it had done in other cases. Not so for Trotsky. He considered the stage itself as one of Socialist revolution.⁸⁴ The theses also noted that 'the hegemony of the proletariat in the national-revolutionary movement finally impelled the native bourgeoisie into the camp of reaction.'⁸⁵ Later on, the agrarian revolution forced even the petty-bourgeoisie to do so.⁸⁶ This analysis was more of an imposition of a pre-conceived plan, a reading of the inevitable line of history of all colonies in the frustrations and possibilities of the Chinese revolution, a strangely unilinear theory of the future.⁸⁷

84. Mao's understanding of the Chinese Revolution of 1925-27 is just the opposite of Trotsky.

85. * Comintern and the National + Colonial Question, CPI Publication, New Delhi, p.61.

86. Ibid.

87. Kaviraj. Sudipta, The Marxist Argument - A Trend Report in the Survey of Research in Political Science, ICSSR, New Delhi(to be published)

Roy's Expulsion from the Comintern

Roy's expulsion from the Comintern in 1929 was related to Stalin's offensive against Bukharin and the Right opposition rather than to Trotsky's demise.⁸⁸ Although persons close to Roy at that time have indicated that Stalin was displeased with Roy's work in China, yet it is not correct to conclude as North & Eudin have done⁸⁹ that this was the principal cause of his expulsion. North and Eudin have suggested that Roy was possibly sacrificed by Stalin 'as a major scape-goat for the China debacle. Some one had to assume the responsibility for Comintern failures and although in these circumstances Stalin was undoubtedly as much at fault as any one, Roy was held accountable.'⁹⁰ To make this hypothesis plausible, these authors suggest that 'soon after Roy's return from China, the Comintern salary to Roy was suddenly cut off.'⁹¹ However this view has been criticised by Haithcox⁹² due to Roy's claim that a joint commission of the Presidium of the ECCI and the Political Bureau of the CPSU 'appointed him to receive a report of the happenings of China' on his return, 'passed a resolution

88. Haithcox, John Patrick, op.cit., p.77.

89. North, Robert C. & Eudin, Xenia J. op.cit., p.128.

90. Radical Humanist, 12 July 1959, p.332.

91. North, Robert C. & Eudin, Xenia J., op.cit., p.126.

92. Haithcox, John Patrick, op.cit., p.77.

which did rather credit to me (Roy)'. It is, of course, not possible to check the veracity of this claim, but his (Roy) challenge 'to produce one single sentence from any official document of the Communist International' censuring his role in China has never been met'.⁹³

After China, it might well have been possible for Roy to continue to serve the Comintern, albeit in a less major role, had it not been for subsequent events. It should be remembered that although Borodin returned from China in disgrace, he managed to salvage his career. He later served in a succession of government posts until 1945, when he fell victim to Stalin's postwar purge.⁹⁴

Thus Roy was not immediately expelled from the Comintern after the Chinese debacle. Publicly Stalin defended his China policy and placed the blame for the catastrophe in China entirely on the shoulders of the Chinese communists for allegedly failing to implement Comintern directives urging them to promote agrarian revolution. Even Bukharin's report at the Sixth Congress referred to above did not put any blame on Roy. At the Sixth Congress, Bukharin also put all blame on CCP for the failure of Chinese revolution. The CCP was 'accused of having first gone too far in the direction

93. Roy, M.N. My Experiences in China, op.cit., p.53.

94. Borodin was given a life sentence in a concentration camp. He died in 1951, presumably while serving his sentence in a Siberian labour camp.
Haitcox, John Patrick, op.cit., p.77.

of an alliance with the bourgeoisie (overestimating the force of the latter) and then having underestimated the force of the bourgeoisie and indulged in revolutionary adventurism, pure and simple'.⁹⁵ However, on his return from China to Moscow, Roy was not received hospitably. Roy had been certain that he could explain his actions in China to Stalin, but he was denied the opportunity. Stalin refused to receive him. Friends were few at the moment Stalin's favour was withdrawn. Though Roy attended the Ninth Plenum of the ECCI (February 9-25, 1928), yet he, contrary to his expectations, was not allowed to present his views on the question. Also in his absence there had been an 'unofficial conference of all the experts' on China question and this was one of the main items on the agenda of the Plenum.

Though an official cause for the expulsion of Roy from the Comintern has been mentioned as his series of articles on the topic 'The Crisis in the Comintern' which appeared in the Brandler journal, *Gegen den Strom* - the theoretical organ of the German Oppositionists, yet this should not be taken as the real cause of his expulsion. The cause given for his expulsion in the Inprecor reads in part:

'In accordance with the resolution of the Tenth Plenum of the ECCI on the international situation and the tasks of the Comintern, Paragraph 9, and the decisions of the ECCI of 19th December 1928 according to which adherents of the Brandler

95. Schram, Stuart & d'Encausse Helene Carrere, op.cit., p.57.

organisation cannot be members of the Comintern the Presidium of the ECCI declares that Roy, by contributing to the Brandler press and supporting the Brandler organisations, has placed himself outside the ranks of the Communist International and is to be considered as expelled from the Communist International'. (96)

In the 1930 edition of the Bushaia Sovetskaia Entsiklo-pedia stated that Roy was officially designated as a 'renegade'.⁹⁷ As against the above stated official cause of Roy's expulsion, one author⁹⁸ holds that Roy's difference with the Comintern on the role of the bourgeoisie in colonial countries was not new, and his 'contribution to the Brandler press was the result rather than the cause of his estrangement with the Communist International'. He fell into disfavour of the Comintern authorities before his contribution to the Brandler press. At first he was silently dropped without any formal notice of expulsion. Under such circumstances he raised his voice through the Brandler Press which brought about his formal expulsion. As Roy himself wrote:

'I was not declared a 'renegade' and placed outside the pale of the official International so long as I did not speak out my disagreement. The gag of silence was imposed upon me, the all-mighty apparatus depriving me of all the means of expression. In other words, for the unpardonable crime of independent thinking I would have been quietly buried into oblivion, had I not dared raise my voice'. (99)

96. Inprecor, Vol. 9, No.69, p.1470.

97. Haithcox, John Patrick. op.cit.,

98. Bhattacharjee, G.P. Evolution of Political Philosophy of M.N. Roy, Minerva Associates, Calcutta, March 1971, p. 53

99. Roy, M.N., Our Differences, pp.42-3.

Another factor, apart from the Chinese debacle, that might have influenced the attitude of the Comintern towards Roy was the damaging account submitted by S.N. Tagore to the Comintern authority in 1927 about the Communist movement in India. From the account himself stated by Tagore¹⁰⁰ two charges against Roy come into being namely (i) Roy must have misappropriated the Comintern's money and (ii) must have deceived the Comintern authorities by magnifying the number of the Communists in India. There is some question, however, about Tagore's credentials and the credibility of his report. He had left India in April without consulting any of the leaders of the Bengal party or informing the Central Committee of the CPI. Moreover he had a personal motive in minimizing the influence of Roy and the communist movement in India. He hoped to play a large role in communist activities in India and undoubtedly saw his chance when he heard of Roy's

100. 'Piantnitsky, the then General Secretary of the Central Committee sent for Tagore and had a long talk regarding the work of the Communists in India. It was evident from the talk that quite a different picture of the Communist activities in India had been presented to the Comintern by M.N. Roy. Tagore told him that the actual number of Communists in India in those days, did not exceed more than a dozen...That hardly any money had been received in India from the Comintern through Roy and that the growth of the communist movement was tremendously handicapped due to the lack of money and literature'.
Hathcox, John Patrick. op.cit., pp.80-81.

political difficulties. His bias is strongly evident in his booklet, 'Historical development of the communist movement in India', a work which casts considerable doubt on the reliability of its author's testimony. Among his errors are the assertions that as late as 1927 a communist party had not been formed in India and that it was not until after his expulsion from the Comintern that Roy began to raise objections to Stalin's policies. The communist movement in India was a secret movement and Tagore was not in it from the beginning. It is hence likely that he was not aware of all the facts of the Communist movement in India. Muzaffar Ahmed writes that when Tagore left India for Europe, he had no knowledge of the Communist movement in India as a whole though he was somewhat acquainted with the movement in Bengal and that the report submitted by him to the Communist International was 'a figment of his imagination'.¹⁰¹

The communist movement in India, it is true, suffered from lack of funds and there was a good deal of misunderstanding about it between Roy and his comrades in India. But Roy had to work under great difficulties and had to spend a good deal to send communist literature and journals to India through clandestine channels. Also Roy neither saint nor sinner. He had many admirable qualities and some human

101. Haithcox, John Patrick., op.cit., p.83.

weaknesses also. In his Comintern days, he struck many as brilliant, but arrogant, a fact which is regarded as incomprehensible by his associates in India who knew him only after he had mellowed considerably. Nor was his personal conduct always above reproach. In his political activities he was often guided by the maxim that the ends justify the means. Thus he was not fastidious about his source of funds as long as it supported causes in which he believed. Again, the inflation of party figures, as Piatnitsky's reports indicate, was common practice, partly due to the revolutionary zeal and partly to make a good impression. It must be presumed that Roy was not immune to this temptation. Tagore's charges of misappropriation of funds is another matter and difficult to sustain. Therefore, sober students have no other alternative than to accept the conclusion of Overstreet and Windmiller that 'it is not fair to accuse him of misappropriation of funds, on the basis of the evidence presently available'.¹⁰² Also Roy did not lead a luxurious life. His possessions were few, besides books and clothes. From the moment of his break with the Comintern he was without resources of his own, but was dependent upon the support of his friends in Berlin.¹⁰³ Moreover when the occasion required it, he was

 102. Overstreet, Gene D. & Windmiller, Marshall, Communism in India, University of California Press, Los Angeles, 1959, p.98.

103. Letter from Louise Geissler to Haithcox.
 Haithcox, John Patrick., op.cit., p.313.

capable of great sacrifice in the interest of principles and ~~causes~~ he held dear. Thus, in late 1930, he returned to India despite the warnings of his friends that this meant almost certain arrest and imprisonment. After his release from jail, he never achieved any degree of affluence, as visitors to his Dehra Dun residence can attest. The house in which he lived with his wife Ellen from 1936 until his death in 1954 was not owned by himself but by the Indian Renaissance Institute, an organisation formed by Roy and his close political associates.

Tagore's charges, whether true or not, must have influenced the authorities of the Comintern. Tagore's report, regardless of its reliability, must have been welcomed by Piatnitsky for several reasons - it was grist for his mill, and it might be useful in the forthcoming campaign to discredit Bukharin's ideological comrades within the Comintern. Furthermore Piatnitsky and Roy had never been on good terms.

Perhaps Roy's downfall from the Comintern was also related to the power struggle within the CPSU. Roy himself was provided a clue to this when he wrote:

'the victim of some internal intrigue, the history of which had better not yet be written publicly. The desire of the Communist Party of Great Britain to establish its protectorate over the Indian Communist movement had a good deal to do with it. The internal struggle of the Russian Communist Party also contributed to my victimization'. (104)

It was Roy's freely expressed views on India that clashed with Stalin's post 1927 colonial policy and which inadvertently placed him in the camp of Bukharin and other opponents of Stalin within the CPSU. Even during the life time of Lenin, Roy had been ideologically closer to Bukharin, the leader of the Left Communists. Roy described Bukharin as 'the most lovable of all the Bolshevnik leaders'.¹⁰⁵ Both Roy and Bukharin modified their views considerably in the mid 1920s, so that when Stalin adopted a middle position in 1926-27, they represented for this brief period, the dominant viewpoint in the Comintern. Both Bukharin and Roy continued to modify their views in response to external changes, so that after Stalin veered to the left in 1927, they found themselves, for the first time, in the right wing of the communist movement.

After securing the defeat of Trotsky and the Left Opposition, Stalin began an offensive against Bukharin and his group, which represented the last remaining challenge to his authority in the communist party. Roy's expulsion coincided with the eclipse of Bukharin's influence in the communist movement. In addition to supporting the more moderate forces within his party, Bukharin tried to protect the right dissidents in communist parties abroad. He was opposed to the suppression of opinion either within the Soviet Party or the Comintern and reminded his fellow party

105. Roy, M.N., Memoirs, Allied Publishers, Delhi, 1964., p.498.

members of the words which Lenin had once addressed to him and Zinoviev 'If you are going to expel all the not very obedient but clever people, and retain only the obedient fools you will most assuredly ruin the party'.¹⁰⁶ But for the assistance of Bukharin, Roy would not have been able to leave Moscow in 1928. Roy's articles attacking the leftward trend in the Comintern continued to appear in the official organ of the Comintern, the International Press Correspondence, until March 1929, due to Bukharin's support to him and until Bukharin was removed from his post as editor of Pravda.

106. Inprecor., Vol.8, No.70, pp.1267-77.

CONCLUSION

Though the Seventh and the last Congress of the Comintern (July 25 - August 21, 1935) is not within the purview of this study, yet the decisions of the Seventh Congress signified a return to the strategy of broad united fronts advocated by Lenin in the Second Congress. The Congress worked out a new orientation for the communist movement -- the policy of united workers' and broad popular movements for dealing with the anti-fascist tasks and opened up new prospects for advance towards the socialist stage of the revolutionary struggle.

On the National + Colonial Question, the Seventh Congress reversed the sectarian formulations of the Sixth Congress and came to appreciate the role of the national bourgeoisie. It was held at the Congress that for most of the colonies and semi-colonies, the first step of a truly popular revolution would necessarily be the national liberation stage of the struggle spearheaded against the imperialist oppressor. To ensure the success of the anti-imperialist revolution, the communists had to work for an anti-imperialist united front in the oppressed countries. The Congress sharply criticised the views which regarded the national bourgeoisie of the colonies as wholly pro-imperialist and which demanded of the communists that they make the organisations of the national bourgeoisie the main targets of their attack.

The General Secretary of the Comintern, Georgi Dimitrov said in his report on India: 'In India the communists have to extend support and participate in all anti-imperialist mass activities, not excluding those which are under national-reformist leadership. While maintaining their political and organisational independence, they must carry on active work inside the organisations which take part in the Indian National Congress, facilitating the process of crystallisation of a national-revolutionary wing among them, for the purpose of further developing the national-revolutionary movement of the Indian peoples against British imperialism'.

Wang Ming's report at the Congress on the revolutionary movements in the colonial countries also contained a section on India. In his report, Wang Ming stated that the Indian communists committed a mistake by not participating in mass demonstrations organised by the Indian National Congress... that the communists have isolated themselves from the mass anti-imperialist struggle... that they had shown a great lack of understanding of united front tactics by putting demands like 'the establishment of an Indian workers' and peasants' soviet republics, confiscation of all land belonging to zamindars without compensation'. The Report now encouraged the CPI to formulate popular demands which could serve as a platform for a broad anti-imperialist united front--- demands like liberation of all political prisoners, abolition of all extraordinary laws, against the lowering of the wages, against burden-some taxes, against confiscation of peasants'

lands for non-payment of debts and obligation, for the establishment of democratic rights.

The proposals for an anti-imperialist peoples' front, in the spirit of the Seventh Congress, were formulated by Rajni Palme Dutt and Ben Bradley in the famous Dutt-Bradley Theses, which were published in Inprecor on February 29, 1936. These theses revalued the nature of the national bourgeoisie in India and stated 'The Indian National Congress has undoubtedly achieved a gigantic task in uniting wide forces of the Indian people for the national struggle and remains today the principal existing mass organisation of many diverse elements seeking national liberation. Nothing should be allowed to weaken the degree of unity that has been achieved through the National Congress...' The Theses pointed out that the Congress is not yet the united front of Indian people in the national struggle, which it shall become when the mass organisations of workers' and peasants', the trade unions combine together with the National Congress to make a broad united national front capable of developing as a real anti-imperialist peoples' front. For this, the Theses provided the essential minimum programme as (i) consistent struggle against imperialism... for complete independence (ii) active struggle for vital needs of the masses, to forge unity of all forces of National Congress and other mass organisations in a common platform. The Theses linked up the programme of the fight for independence with the immediate political demands of the struggle against

imperialism and with immediate demands of the workers and peasants for their vital needs.

Besides, the CPI also published illegally in 1936 a document on the united national front in which the Party called upon its members to join the Congress and enrol masses under their influence in the Congress. It called for collective affiliation of Trade Unions and kisan organisations to the Congress. It proposed to give a revolutionary direction to the national movement by concrete action of the left forces within the Congress as also by independent mass action outside it.

It is difficult to agree with some critics of CPI who state that the CPI was basically a foreign implantation and worked only at the behest of the Comintern, that it was rather an appendage of the Comintern. It is understandable that the CPI worked under the general guidance of the Comintern tactics, but not in subservience to it. The CPI's main concern was the national politics while the Comintern's main sphere of activity was international politics. The Comintern had link with the CPI only on issues in which the international politics influenced the national politics in the colonial world, including India. Even in that, Lenin has always stressed to take into account the historical specificity in each case. The whole discussion at the Second Congress of the Comintern was dominated by this theme. The failure of the communist movement in India till early 1930s,

can in fact be attributed to the wrong understanding of the Comintern line of the Second Congress by Indian communists, including Roy. Right from the beginning, Roy advocated an ultra-left strategy denouncing the role of the national bourgeoisie, denying completely the anti-imperialist potentiality of the national bourgeoisie and insisting that communist leadership be established over the liberation movement from the very outset. All this was conducive to a rather long-time isolation of the early Indian communists from the National Congress, the masses and rendered impossible the unification of various groups of the Indian revolutionary activists on a single anti-imperialist platform. Roy and his adherents, though, met opposition from Lenin and others at the Second Congress, yet the Comintern did not dictate terms to the CPI. If the CPI had been dictated to by the Comintern, at least the communist movement in India till early 1930s would have had a comparatively greater chance of success. Subjectively, Roy and his adherents were honest and upright people, passionate and staunch fighters against British colonial rule, sincere in their beliefs; they passionately desired to simultaneously overthrow all their oppressors, as the Bolsheviks in Russia had done. Objectively they reached erroneous conclusions. They believed that if this had been achieved in an economically backward country like Russia, where the peasantry predominated, it could be possible in India too. The weakness of the early communist movement

was so transparent that the Three-Party Letter of May 1932 stated 'the rapid formation of the Communist Party is the central task of the Indian revolution'. The significance of the Seventh Congress lay in the fact that it once again proved that Lenin's theses of the Second Congress were of permanent nature though the trend of actual events in India and in other colonies had favoured Roy's sectarian formulations over a short run. Even Roy had realised the weakness of his formulations and after the Sixth Congress, he followed an entirely new and considerably less radical strategy. For the Comintern, however, the reversal of the sectarian formulations of the Sixth Congress and a new continuity with Lenin's line of the Second Congress came only at the Seventh Congress.

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