Comintern, India and The Colonial Question, 1920-37

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To Sambhu and Bulbul with warm affection

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

AITUC	All India Trade Union Congress
CC	Central Committee
CI	Communist International
CSP	Congress Socialist Party
CP	Communist Party
CPC	Communist Party of China
CPG	Communist Party of Germany
CPGB	Communist Party of Great Britain
CPI	Communist Party of India
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CPSU(B)	Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik)
EC	Executive Committee
ECCI	Executive Committee of the Communist International
GRVL	Glavnaya redaktsiya vostochnoi literatury [Main Editorial Board for Oriental Literature]
Inprecor	International Press Correspondence
Izd	Izdatel'stvo [Publishing House]
PB	Politbureau
RCP	Russian Communist Party
RCP(B)	Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik)
WPP	Workers' and Peasants' Party

1

Introductory Observations

THE EXPLORATION of the colonial question, more than thirty five years after the dissolution of the Third International, still remains a most fascinating field of inquiry. Much of the interest lives on because of the apparently uncertain shifts in the Comintern's policy towards the revolutionary movements in the colonies during the momentous period between the Second and the Seventh Congresses and which, in a way, decisively shaped the development of communist movements in the colonies and backward countries. India quite certainly was no exception. However, what needs to be stressed is that in the Comintern's working out of the colonial question India played an especially important role, leading quite often to controversial debates. This happened for a number of reasons. In the first place, almost from the very beginning, India was represented at the Comintern by M.N. Roy, who soon came to occupy an important position in the ECCI acting as one of the few spokesmen of the Comintern on the colonial question for a number of years—during a historically very tempestuous period between the Second and the Sixth Congresses. In a way, Roy's position in the Comintern enabled the latter, almost from the beginning, to establish a close liaison through Roy with the underground communist leadership operating in India. The best evidence of this Comintern-CPI relation is found in the confiscated papers produced in the Meerut trial of 1929, most of which were Comintern documents. Secondly, as a classical colonial country India, except perhaps China, had a tremendous revolutionary potential. The Comintern was particularly exercised over the fact that while throughout the '20s and the '30s massive popular unrest was sweeping the country, the communist movement in India continued to lag behind, failing to take advantage of the revolutionary sentiment of the masses and emerge thereby as an organized force. Objectively, too, India thus became a testing-ground for the application of the Comintern's line on the colo-

nial question. This found expression in the Comintern's repeated pulling up of the Communist Party of India from the mire of either reformism or sectarianism. Thirdly, for the Comintern, an intriguing problem concerning India was the assessment of the vacillating role of the bourgeoisie in the national liberation struggle. Indeed, in India the colonial question had grown particularly complex, unlike in many other countries, because the Indian nationalist bourgeoisie had never *completely* gone over to imperialism. The identification of this dual role of collaboration and conflict and the shifting dimensions thereof in a highly volatile and incredibly complex situation explain, in no uncertain terms, the Comintern's sustained and growing interest in India's problems.

The present study is an attempt to unfold systematically the story of this evolution of the Comintern's policy towards India keeping in mind, in particular, the straws in the wind that have been thrown up by an ever-growing volume of literature on this highly debatable, and rather too political and explosive an issue. Such an analysis requires, admittedly, a study of the working out of the colonial question by the Comintern at its historic Congresses and the ECCI Plenums, ranging from the time of the presentation of Lenin's Colonial Theses at the Second Congress in 1920 to Dimitrov's call for a united front in 1935 at the Seventh Congress. The amassing and scrutiny of the Comintern literature during these fateful years become particularly complex because of the twists and turns in its policy at certain critical junctures of history. The problem of periodization has consequently to be settled by looking at these historical flash points.

It all started with the Second Congress of the Comintern where Lenin with the presentation of his Colonial Theses virtually set the direction of the Comintern's understanding of the colonial question. This has demanded a detailed analysis, especially in view of the never-ending polemics on the Lenin-Roy controversy. The shift in the Comintern's policy began after the death of Lenin in 1924, particularly after Stalin's emergence, and by the time of the Sixth Congress it had assumed a distinct shape. The third shift, and in a way perhaps the most crucial, was the adoption of the new Colonial Theses by the Sixth Congress in course of the great debate on decolonization; this virtually

set the pattern of the Comintern's treatment of the colonial question in the years that now lay ahead. This was followed by a phase of sectarianism, especially in view of the looming shadow of the Great Depression of the '30s and the growing militancy of mass struggles. But sectarianism quite soon led to consequences that were in no way encouraging for the prospects of revolutionary movements in the colonies and the time for a harsh reappraisal was drawing near. The end-result was the endorsement, at the Seventh Congress, of Georgi Dimitrov's united front thesis leading to a shift away from the Sixth Congress line and closer to the position taken by the Comintern at the Second Congress in 1920.

These shifts have quite often been interpreted by western scholars in a rather slipshod manner, giving one hardly any perspective of the changes. To be more precise, the massive literature on the Comintern, being produced with gusto, but unfortunately with a jaundiced vision, notably in Britain and the United States, do not care to tell the readers the incredible complexity that was involved in the precise theoretical identification of the relation between imperialism and nationalism in colonial countries, particularly in a country like India where an organized mass communist party started emerging only in the late '30s. Then there was the problem of estimating the role of an extremely shrewd politician like Gandhi. In a way, his withdrawal at Bardoli, his craving for coming to an understanding with imperialism on the question of attainment of independence by agreeing to accept Dominion Status, his participation in the Round Table Conferences, simultaneously paralleled by his leadership in the Civil Disobedience Movement and by his historic Dandi March, indeed were much too baffling in the context of the mass upsurge and the growing tide of working class movement that were rocking the country. An added factor was the experience of China—of the memories of the initial success of the first United Front in 1925-27 and the nightmare of the Shanghai massacre that drowned it in blood. The complexity grew worse with the growing rifts in the Kuomintang, as manifest for instance in the Fukien incident, together with the problem of countering the offensive of Japanese militarism that began to threaten the country with the onset of the '30s. For the CPC, this historic moment of

trial assumed a new dimension with the beginning of the encirclement campaigns by such a shrewd and cruel enemy as Chiang Kai-shek, ending in the legendary Long March. All these experiences had a much too important bearing on the Comintern's working out of the colonial question.

These introductory paragraphs will clarify the prespective in which the chapters that follow have been framed, the emphasis being on the historical dimensions that worked behind the shifts in the Comintern's theoretical thinking. That is why although the study is primarily concerned with Comintern's treatment of India in course of its exploration of the colonial question, the experience of the CPC, particularly the Comintern's understanding of the CPC's position, has been touched upon at relevant junctures. This will be, it is hoped, a bit refreshing too although the discussion on China admittedly is not claimed, because of the main thrust of the present study, to be exhaustive. This would require a separate work altogether, best left for competent sinologists.

Finally, a word about the period covered by the present study. The Second Congress has been made the point of departure, quite in line with the accepted standard of tracing the roots of the Comintern's understanding of the colonial question to Lenin's Preliminary Draft Theses of 1920. As regards the rationale for not proceeding beyond 1937 there are two explanations. In 1937 the CPI's decision not to oppose the ministries that were formed by the Congress in the provinces was, taking into account the CPI's initial disapproval of this move, the first significant evidence of how the united front tactics, following the Seventh Congress, were being worked out on the question of tackling a basic political issue; secondly, the year 1937 witnessed the formation of united front in a number of colonial and backward countries, as manifest for instance in the founding of the Anti-Japanese United Front in China as a result of the cessation of hostilities between the CPC and the Kuomintang, and constituted thereby a turning point for the colonies.

2

The Birth of a Doctrine :

Lenin, the Colonial Theses and the Second Congress

I

SINCE its very inception, the colonial question occupied a central place in the life of the Communist International. However, this also led to serious differences of opinion and heated ideological debates among the representatives of different communist and workers' parties. The differences primarily centred around two issues, namely, the assessment of the revolutionary potential of the colonial bourgeoisie and the tactical line of action to be pursued by the embryonic communist movements in the colonies towards this bourgeoisie in the struggle against imperialism. In other words, theoretically speaking, these were fundamental questions of strategy and tactics of revolution in the colonies which decisively shaped the political destiny of the toiling masses in these countries.

It is quite customary to trace the founding of the Comintern's theoretical line on the colonial question to Lenin's Colonial Theses at the Second Congress of the Third International, and this certainly requires a thorough discussion, particularly when some of the recent interpretations have considerably beclouded the whole issue. Such an analysis, however, should be preceded by a careful scrutiny of the validity of such claims made by a galaxy of Western scholars that Lenin's theoretical interest in the colonial question, which became manifest at the time of the Second Congress in 1920, was the result of a kind of bland disillusionment of the Bolshevik Party with the prospects of socialist revolution in the West. It is contended, for instance, that the defeat of the November Revolution in Germany, the collapse of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, the liquidation of Soviet regimes in several countries which were formerly members of the Tsarist Empire, such as Finland and the Baltic States, had resulted in the decline of revolutionary ardour

throughout Europe, and discovering that revolutionary prospects in the West were at a low ebb, Lenin turned his attention towards the East.[1] As regards this sudden 'infatuation' of Lenin for the colonial countries, one scholar has discovered at least two very positive circumstances that favoured his position. One was the defeat of Kolchak and Denikin, which made it possible for Lenin's Russia to bring under control the eastern borderlands which had declared their independence immediately after 1917. This provided an excellent opportunity, the argument continues, for Soviet Russia to find herself contiguous with such Asian states as Iran, Afghanistan and Turkey and what was then needed was simply to draw the revolutionary masses of the Asian countries into an alliance with the workers and peasants of revolutionary Russia. The other reason was that the Asian continent was actually seething with discontent in the '20s and Lenin above all grasped this truth immediately, which explains the shift of Lenin's attention.[2] While the scholar putting forward this line of argument explains Lenin's interest in the colonial question in the '20s in terms of a sudden 'opportunistic' shift, another not so virulently anti-Bolshevik opinion is in favour of describing Lenin's concern for revolution in the colonies as a result of the very powerful impact of the October Revolution on the anti-imperialist struggle of the people in these countries. This, in other words, was gradually helping the maturation of revolutionary struggles in the colonies which in turn did not escape the political attention of Lenin.[3]

These interpretations, howsoever scholarly they might appear, rather carefully fail to mention that Lenin's 'interest' in the colonial countries of the East in the '20s was not precipitated by the sudden collapse of revolutionary opportunities in the West but was in direct continuation of his preoccupation with colonial problems for quite a long time. As early as 1907, in commenting on the deliberations on the colonial question at the Seventh

Congress of the Second International at Stuttgart, Lenin had severely castigated the unalloyed opportunism of Van Kol of Holland who predominated the Colonial Commission by framing a Draft Resolution to the effect that the Stuttgart Congress did not in principle oppose colonial policy as such, for even under socialism the colonial policy had a civilizing role to play.[4] It was Lenin along with Rosa Luxemburg and others of the German Left Social Democrats who defeated this Draft Resolution initiated by Van Kol, Vollmar, Bernstein and others, by exposing their blatant bourgeois chauvinism and their utter disregard for the interest of the colonial people.[5] It is again in this spirit that in 1916 in his critique of the thesis of Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin sharply criticized her position for her failure to understand that in the era of unbridled imperialism national wars waged by the colonies and semi-colonies were not only probable but inevitable and that such battles for national liberation would ultimately take the form of national wars against imperialism.[6] Methodologically speaking, Lenin's writings, even long before 1920, show two distinct features which were further developed, detailed and concretized in his contributions at the time of the Comintern's Second Congress. First, Lenin's central point of emphasis in formulating the question of strategy in colonial countries was the identification of the stage of the revolution. In settling this crucial theoretical question, Lenin's point of departure was the distinction between the oppressed and the oppressing countries. Thus, in the oppressing countries where capitalism had reached the stage of imperialism, the age of bourgeois democratic revolution was over and conditions were maturing for socialism; in the oppressed colonies, on the other hand, because of retarded growth of capitalism with native feudalism as its mainstay objective conditions for a socialist revolution were not mature and hence, in these countries what was awaited was a bourgeois democratic revolution. In his *Right of*

Nations to Self-Determination (1914), and *A Caricature of Marxism* (1916) Lenin repeatedly emphasized this point.

Essentially connected with this question was the issue of determining the motive forces of such bourgeois democratic revolutions in the colonial countries. This is the second methodological question touched upon by Lenin in his writings in the pre-Comintern period. One cannot afford to ignore that Lenin analyzed this question historically, and not just logically. In other words, since the stage of the revolution would be bourgeois democratic in these countries, the motive forces of the revolution would not be necessarily the national bourgeoisie, although the bourgeoisie 'naturally exercises hegemony (leadership) in the beginning of every national movement'. Thus Lenin, while appreciating the fact that the bourgeoisie of the oppressed countries had a positive anti-imperialist role, at the same time insisted on differentiation of the class aims of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in the national liberation movement. In the same breath, Lenin observed,

> The bourgeoisie, which naturally assumes the leadership, at the start of every national movement, says that support for all national aspirations is practical. However, the proletariat's policy in the national question (as in all others) supports the bourgeoisie only in a certain direction, but it never coincides with the bourgeoisie's policy.[7]

Clarifying this position, Lenin stated, in quite explicit terms,

> The bourgeoisie always places its national demands in the forefront, and does so in categorical fashion. With the proletariat, however, these demands are subordinated to the interests of the class struggle. . . . For the bourgeoisie it is important to hamper this development by pushing the aims of its 'own' nation before those of the proletariat. That is why the proletariat confines itself, so to speak, to the negative demand for recognition of the right to self-determination. . . .[8]

Continuing the argument Lenin observed,

> To the workers the important thing is to distinguish the princi-

ples of the two trends. Insofar as the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation fights the oppressor, we are always, in every case, and more strongly than anyone else, in favour, for we are the staunchest and the most consistent enemies of oppression. But insofar as the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation stands for its own bourgeois nationalism, we stand against. . . .

. . . . The bourgeois nationalism of any oppressed nation has a general democratic content that is directed against oppression, and it is this content that we unconditionally support. At the same time we strictly distinguish it from the tendency towards national exclusiveness;[9]. . .

This provides the clue to Lenin's understanding of the dual role of the national bourgeoisie in the colonial countries. While this force plays an anti-imperialist role, and thereby in the struggle against imperialist oppression the national bourgeoisie should not be written off, its action would be marked by backsliding and compromise as soon as the class question would come to the forefront. Accordingly, Lenin emphasized, the working masses while formulating their policy must take into account the ambivalent character of the bourgeois nationalist movement.

It is on this basis that Lenin differentiated between two ways of accomplishing the bourgeois democratic revolution in the colonial and dependent countries of the East. The first is the path of 'national reformism', which is the cherished aim of the national bourgeoisie—a path that regards capitalism as its goal. The other path is that of 'revolutionary democracy', where the peasantry which constitutes the bulk of the working people acts as the main revolutionary force, and which thus avoids the capitalist path.[10] This idea of 'revolutionary democracy', with the peasant masses as its mainstay, becomes strikingly evident in Lenin's numerous writings on China, especially in his analysis of the role of Sun Yat-sen. For Lenin there was a fundamental distinction between the unstable position of the bourgeoisie and the truly revolutionary and democratic elements latent in the peasant masses. Thus in his *Democracy and Narodism in China* (1912) Lenin, while appreciating Sun Yat-sen's struggle against the prevalent feudal production relations in agriculture

and his progressive, democratic ideas as contrasted with feudalism, attacked very sharply Sun Yat-sen's narodism, his reactionary idea of championing a purely capitalist agrarian programme, precisely in the name of 'preventing capitalism'. This, Lenin clarified in his *Two Utopias* (1912), was the other name of generating the democratic upsurge of the peasant masses and holding it back at the same time within the contours of the narodnik ideology of capitalism. To cite Lenin's characteristic expression:

The Narodnik utopia is an expression of the aspiration of the toiling millions of the petty bourgeoisie to put an end altogether to the old, feudal exploiters, but it also expressed the false hope that the new capitalist exploitation can be abolished along with them.[11]

Accordingly Lenin, while warning that being involved in small commodity production the peasants inevitably develop a tendency to vacillate between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, between liberalism and marxism, emphasized that the marxists 'must carefully extract the sound and valuable kernel of the sincere, resolute, militant democracy of the peasant masses from the husk of Narodnik utopias'.[12] Similarly, in *Democracy and Narodism in China* too Lenin specifically said, 'The chief representative, or the chief social bulwark, of this Asian bourgeoisie that is still capable of supporting a historically progressive cause, is the peasant'.[13]

As early as 1913 Lenin, in his *Awakening of Asia*, spoke of the spread of 'the revolutionary democratic movement' to the Dutch East Indies, to Java and other Dutch colonies,[14] and with a feeling of revolutionary optimism observed in *A Caricature of Marxism*,

Now, as always, we stand and shall continue to stand for the closest association and merging of the class-conscious workers of the advanced countries with the workers, peasants and slaves of all the oppressed countries.[15]

In other words, in the world-revolutionary process that had been steadily unfolding even before the October Revolution Lenin had attached crucial importance to the elemental forces of revolution that were lying dormant among the poor and toiling masses in the colonies.

At the same time Lenin, while underscoring this importance of the poor peasant masses in the countries of the East where organized working class movement was still a far cry, warned that the peasant masses would not ultimately succeed in accomplishing the revolutionary tasks in the colonies in the absence of an organized proletariat and a proletarian party. Thus, commenting on the Chinese Revolution of 1911-13, Lenin expressed the apprehension that the peasantry in China, at that time under the complete hegemony of the Kuomintang formed by Sun Yat-sen in 1912, and in the absence of an organized proletariat, perhaps would not be able to sustain itself.

> China's freedom was won by an alliance of the peasant democrats and the liberal bourgeoisie. Whether the peasants, who are not led by a proletarian party, will be able to retain their democratic positions against the liberals, who are only waiting for an opportunity to shift to the right, will be seen in the near future.[16]

In his *Address to the Second All-Russia Congress of Communist Organisations of the Peoples of the East* on 22 November 1919, pointing to the crucial importance of the working class-peasant alliance, Lenin advised the delegates representing the countries of the East that it would be imperative on their part, in the absence of an organized proletariat in their countries, to devise specific forms of alliance with the working class parties of the Communist International, through the embryonic communist cells that were cropping up in the colonies and backward countries.[17]

The basic tenor of Lenin's argument, namely, his emphasis on the toiling poor, the importance of forming communist organizations so as to lay the ground for the working class-

peasant alliance in these countries in the foreseeable future and, above all, the necessity of studying historically the specific conditions of these countries is revealed, though cryptically, in the following note taken by Lenin at the aforesaid meeting on 21 November 1919.

(A) Basic Tasks: Fundamental significance of the Communist Organisations and parties of the East . . . .
(B) Concrete questions of each nation, according to the extent of its development, its special features, etc.
(C) Methods and measures of contact with the poor, with the working people, with the exploited of every nation against its bureaucrats, feudalists, bourgeoisie.[18]

Lenin's concern for the colonial question, therefore, was not something that began to suddenly agitate his mind after the failure of revolutionary seizure of power in Germany, Hungary and other parts of Europe in the wake of the October Revolution.

Rather, it may be surmised that Lenin by his precise identification of the colonial question by relating it to the revolutionary potentiality of the peasant masses in the colonies, opened up an almost hitherto unknown perspective to the question of application of marxism to colonies and backward countries. For Lenin the formulation of the colonial question was an extremely challenging job at least for two reasons. In the first place, in the Second International there had hardly arisen any opportunity to characterize the colonial question in all its dimensions so that before 1920 Lenin had very little scope for providing a systematic exposition of this issue. Secondly, the founders of marxism, in their primary concern for the proletarian revolution in the West, and also for the quite obvious historical reason that the colonial problem against the backdrop of imperialism had not yet fully crystallized, were not in a position to precisely formulate the manifold dimensions of the colonial question. However, it becomes strikingly evident in the later writings of Marx and Engels that in their growing optimism for an impending revolution in Russia they envisaged the possibility of her bypassing the capitalist path and moving towards socialism if, however, a pro-

letarian revolution could successfully utilize the revolutionary potentiality of the peasant masses living in communal ownership of land.[19] This identification of the peasantry as a potential force of revolution in a backward country like Russia and Marx's explicit statement that in a backward country where capitalism had not yet fully developed, the classical West European path of transition from feudalism to capitalism might not be repeated, that in such countries a possibility of bypassing the capitalist path was not ruled out, provide a significant theoretical clue to Lenin's crucial emphasis on the peasant question in his treatment of the problems of revolutionary movement in a backward country like Russia as well as in the colonies.[20]

It may not perhaps be an exaggeration to suggest that Lenin's direct encounter with the peasant question in an incredibly complex post-October period led to his growing conviction that unless due recognition was given to the potentiality of the vast peasant masses constituting the predominant form of social labour the process of socialist transformation would be severely jeopardized in a backward country—a deep theoretical understanding leading to the formulation that the best ally of the proletariat remained the peasantry and that without this alliance the question of socialist transformation would forever remain an enigma in a backward country. This crucial emphasis on the peasant question, as we shall see, was reflected in his formulations on the colonial question at the Second Congress in 1920, and it is precisely on this issue that he had to encounter the stiffest opposition from a number of delegates representing, most interestingly, the colonies and backward countries. Indeed, if we recapitulate the experience of the Bolshevik Revolution

in the post-October period we are reminded of the fact that Lenin had to wage a sharp political battle against the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries specifically on the question of the attitude towards the peasantry.[21] Thus the Bolshevik Decree on Land immediately after the October Revolution which provided, besides the nationalization of land, the right to land tenure to the peasants provided they themselves tilled the land, was vehemently attacked by the Mensheviks led by Plekhanov and Kautsky who accused Lenin of 'peasant deviation' and of capitulation to the peasantry. On the other hand, the Socialist Revolutionaries led by men like S.L. Maslov opposed the peasant's seizure of lands, a movement that had flared up already before the October Revolution and which had now gained momentum after the adoption of the Bolshevik Decree on land. It becomes clear that, unlike Lenin, both the groups were highly sceptical of the potential of the peasantry. In fact, the peasant question in a backward country like Russia agitated Lenin's mind all along. That this remained a most explosive issue and that the problem of socialist transformation was integrally connected with a satisfactory solution of the peasant question became strikingly evident in Lenin's resort to NEP (New Economic Policy) after the somewhat painful and historically inevitable consequences that the Russian peasantry had to encounter during the spell of War Communism.[22]

With this background in mind, let us now turn our attention to Lenin's analysis of the colonial question at the Second Congress of Comintern in 1920.

II

The national-colonial question was put on the agenda of the Second Congress as an independent item of discussion and Lenin

was nominated as the speaker. 'The attitude of the Eastern peoples on this question is important. And they do not trust anyone except Vladimir Il'ich'—this was the opinion expressed by the leaders of the Comintern. On 1 June 1920, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the R.C.P.(B) resolved to nominate Lenin as the speaker on the national question, with a right to organize a preparatory Commission.[23] On the same day Lenin proceeded to prepare a draft plan for this Commission. It was in this plan that he outlined the main problems, of course rather sketchily, which needed to be developed in his *Preliminary Draft Theses on the National and the Colonial Questions*. The perspective of this plan was the world revolutionary process which had set in after 1917 and this was expounded by Lenin in a letter to the Executive Committee of the Communist International, which emphasized the following:

(1) The division of the whole world (both in the sense of international syndicates and cartels, and equally in the sense of the seizure of colonies and semi-colonies) is the basic fact of imperialism, of the economy of the twentieth century . . . .

(4) Explanation, in the briefest way, by characterising . . . .
the colonies
the semi-colonies (Persia, Turkey, China).

(5) Raw material—its exhaustion
industry—its weakening (fuel, etc.)
currencies—their collapse. Debts. Devaluation.
'Dislocation', break-up of the whole system of world economy.

(6) The result—a world revolutionary crisis. The communist movement and Soviet power.[24]

In this perspective, Lenin jotted down the following very significant note in his draft plan which, as stated earlier, constituted the basis of his Draft Theses.

(2) Destruction of Privileges . . . .

(c) Acceptance of the Right for separation of the colonies and nations having unequal rights.
Real guarantees: not only in words but in deed . . . .
Precisely: help in deeds, to revolutionary struggle and uprisings in the colonies.[25]

By 5 June 1920, Lenin had already despatched his Draft Theses for discussion and comments. On 14 June 1920, the Draft was published in *Kommunisticheskii Internatsional*, No. 11. Later, along with several other documents, it was published in a special brochure entitled *Tezisy ko vtoromu kongressu Kommunisticheskogo Internatsionala* (Theses for the Second Congress of the Communist International) (Petrograd, 1920). The brochure was published in Russian, German, English and French.[26] Lenin was particularly careful about the English translation of the Draft Theses. When he later learnt from John Murphy, the representative of the British Committee of Shop Stewards and a delegate at the Congress, in course of a conversation on 7 July 1920, that there were some distortions in the English translation of the Theses, he immediately requested M. M. Gruzenberg to check and edit all the translations of the theses, particularly the English version.[27]

It has now been established, on the basis of exploration of archival materials, that comments on Lenin's Draft Theses were sent by G.V. Chicherin, N.N. Krestinsky, J.V. Stalin, M.G. Rafes, Y.A. Preobrazhensky, N.D. Lapinsky, I. Nedelkov, the representatives of Bulgarian communists, as well as by a number of leaders in Bashkiria, Kirghizia, and Turkestan.[28] Quite obviously the comments were rather brief because Lenin, while he circulated the Draft, asked them to let him 'have their opinions, amendments, addenda and concrete remarks in the most concise

form (no more than two or three pages)'.[29] On the basis of these reviews, Lenin made certain minor changes and made the Draft Theses available to the Comintern press. Going through these comments is quite instructive, particularly for studying how Lenin, a master theoretician of marxism, responded to these comments. But before one engages in such an exercise it would be pertinent to examine the central points of emphasis in Lenin's Draft Theses.

In the first place, the point of departure was the distinction between the oppressed and the oppressor nations keeping in mind, however, 'a clear distinction between the interests of the oppressed classes, of working and exploited people, and the general concept of national interest as a whole, which implies the interests of the ruling class';[30] secondly, with regard to the more backward states and nations which were, according to Lenin, characterized by feudal or patriarchal and patriarchal-peasant relations, the Theses urged 'that all Communist parties must assist the bourgeois-democratic liberation movement in these countries', and that it was necessary to struggle against the vestiges of Pan-Islamism, the clergy and other influential, reactionary and medieval elements in such countries.[31] But, thirdly, this support to the bourgeois democratic liberation movements would be conditional and a determined struggle should be waged 'against attempts to give a communist colouring to these movements'.[32] The Theses stated, moreover in categorical terms that,

> . . . . the Communist International should support bourgeois-democratic national movements in colonial and backward countries only on condition that, in these countries, the elements of future proletarian parties, which will be communist not only in name, are brought together and trained to understand their special tasks, i.e., those of the struggle against the bourgeois-democratic movements within their own nations. The Communist International 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.[33]

It is in these lines that one can discern the perspective of united front tactics in the anti-imperialist struggle in the colonies. In the Comintern, as will be evident in course of this discussion, all subsequent analyses of the colonial question hinged on the correct theoretical application of this highly flexible formulation in the appropriate historical context. The failure to grasp the essentially dialectical character of this observation led on occasions to self-defeating sectarian mistakes or conversely to worst kinds of reformist blunders.

Finally, extremely cautious as Lenin was in estimating the potential of the bourgeoisie in the colonial countries, he had no illusion as to the historical incapacity of the bourgeoisie in these countries to act as the principal motive force of revolutionary struggles. The Theses urged, in line with Lenin's writings in the pre-October period,

to give special support to the peasant movement against the landowners, against landed proprietorship, and against all manifestations or survivals of feudalism, and to strive to lend the peasant movement the most revolutionary character . . . .

The Theses particularly stressed that it was

necessary to exert effort to apply the basic principles of the Soviet system in countries where pre-capitalist relations predominate—by setting up 'working people's Soviets', etc.[34]

Many of those who put forward their comments and observations on the Draft Theses, however, could not correctly appreciate the tenor of Lenin's arguments. Chicherin, for instance, thought that Lenin was actually overemphasizing the role of the bourgeoisie in the colonies. He wrote, rather sceptically,

For the oppressed nations, an alliance with the bourgeoisie proper is quite relevant only where the local feudalism, supported by the bayonets of the oppressing nation, as in Persia, has to be

eliminated. A joint movement of the working people and the bourgeoisie for eliminating the unbearable oppression of the feudals who have sold themselves out to England is of urgency only in case of the Persians. The union with the bourgeoisie in the given case results from internal causes, and not by considerations of national liberation. Union with the bourgeoisie proper for the sake of national liberation in the given historical period must be unconditionally rejected as a general principle.

With regard to these assertions, Lenin observed: '1) Persia is not alone 2) I lay greater stress on the alliance with the peasantry (which does not quite mean the bourgeoisie)'.[35] Chicherin somehow misunderstood the central points of emphasis of Lenin's position. While on the one hand Lenin argued that there were still many such backward and dependent countries as Persia where the foremost task was the destruction of alien oppression, without which neither the liquidation of feudal-patriarchal relations nor the advancement of social progress was possible, on the other hand he stressed in the same breath that the national liberation movement presupposed a differentiated attitude towards its various participants, and that the alliance with the peasant masses far outweighed the alliance with the bourgeoisie.

Then again, there were observations that expressed the passionate zeal for 'revolutionising' the colonies, if necessary by force, as revealed in a letter dated 12 June 1920, written to Lenin by a group of workers from the Soviet Republics of the East, represented by N. Hodzhaev, T. Ryskulov and others who questioned the position of the Draft Theses that the responsibility for giving the most active help to the bourgeois democratic movement in the colonies lay with the proletariat of the metropolitan country on which the backward country depended in colonial and financial matters. This, the authors believed, would seriously restrict the liberation mission of the Russian worker to Turkestan alone (since Soviet Russia had no colonies), for it was forbidding him to 'cross over to India through Afghanisthan'. The letter stated, 'India must be liberated by the Muslim pro-

letariat with the help of Soviet Russia, and definitely before the Revolution in London."[36]

In fact, already in 1919, in reply to the questions of an American journalist, Lenin had explained that the activity of the Soviet Republic in Afghanistan, India and other Muslim countries outside Russia was restricted only to such work as had nothing in common with the coercive plantation of communist ideas and forcible involvement of the Eastern peoples into an immediate socialist revolution.[37]

Interestingly, in this connection one can't help pointing to the comments of Preobrazhensky on Article 12 of Lenin's Draft Theses which emphasized, taking into account their backwardness and age-old prejudices, the voluntary union of the oppressed nationalities (which were members of the former Czarist Empire) in the formation of the Soviet Republic. Disagreeing with the attitude of caution as expressed by Lenin, Preobrazhensky observed, 'After the Revolution the solution of the national question must be subjected to the task of creating a single whole from the socialist republic formed'. Lenin's marginal comment quite significantly reads, 'Cannot simply be subjected to. Cf. my Article 12'. Then, extending the argument a little further, in his characterization of the mutual relations of the republics of the future socialist Europe with economically backward and dependent countries Preobrazhensky continued,

If the possibility of economic agreement with the leading national groups is eliminated, their suppression by force and forcible joining of the economically important areas to the Union of European Republics are inevitable.

To this, Lenin retorted in the form a marginal comment, criticizing thereby the voluntarist position of Preobrazhensky,

This is going too far. It cannot be proved and it is incorrect to say 'suppression by force' is 'inevitable'. Basically incorrect.[38]

However, the most serious challenge to Lenin's position was from M. N. Roy in the form of a set of Draft Supplementary Theses which Roy drew up, because of his sharp disagreement with Lenin, at the latter's request. This constituted the basis of the much-discussed Lenin-Roy controversy which, in a way, shaped the discussion of the colonial question in the Second Congress. Roy presented his views, understandably enough, on the basis of his personal experience of the Indian situation.

III

The Lenin-Roy debate, as the materials pertaining to the discussion of the colonial question in the Second Congress show, was sparked off by certain fundamental theoretical differences between Roy and Lenin. These differences centred around three crucial issues: the assessment of the level of economic development in the colonies; the role of the bourgeoisie in relation to imperialism in the context of the prevailing level of production-relations in the colonies; and, finally, the assessment of the revolutionary potential in the colonies and the tactical line of action to be pursued in relation to the colonial bourgeoisie.

As regards the first issue, Roy, while introducing his Draft Supplementary Theses in the Colonial Commission which was formed under the chairmanship of Lenin to discuss the colonial

question in depth,[39] observed that from the moment British capitalism had been established in India, 80 per cent of the inhabitants of the country living on agricultural labour had lost their property and a class of rural proletariat was thus rapidly growing. Although, compared to the rural proletariat the industrial proletariat was small in India, Roy argued that there were in India up to 5 million workers. Professional movements, he continued, were spreading fast among the workers in India and the strike had already emerged as quite a powerful force. The first significant strike, involving the railway workers, had taken place in 1906 and had assumed the nature of a real uprising.[40] Roy seriously believed that the proletariat in India was rapidly emerging as a viable revoultionary force which alone could pose a challenge to British imperialism. This rise of the proletariat was explained by Roy in terms of what he characterized as the policy of industrialization of India pursued by the British rulers since the World War I. This, he asserted, was a break with Britain's earlier policy. Roy explained this position at length in the Plenary Session of the Congress. 'While earlier', he said,

English capitalism has always hindered the development of British-Indian industry, of late it has not been so. In recent years, the industrial development in British India has gone up at such a pace as cannot be imagined here in Europe. One can have an idea of the level of rapid development of capitalist system in British India from the fact that in recent years the industrial proletariat of British India has increased by 15 per cent and that the capital employed in British industry has gone up by 2,000 per cent. This also applies to Egypt, the Dutch Indies and China.[41]

For Roy, therefore, there had been a break with the classical policy of colonial exploitation by Britain which resulted in the encouragement of industrialization of India.

Roy's formulation, as regards the second issue, namely, the assessment of the role of the bourgeoisie in the colonies, followed logically from this premise. Since the process of industrialization was leading to the emergence of the proletariat on the national scene, the nationalist leaders looked upon this development with dismay. This, argued Roy, led to polarization of interests between the two streams:

The nationalist movement in India began to assume more or less specific forms from the eighties of the last century, and has found its expression in the National Congress.
This movement, in the course of its development, spread to wide circles of students and middle classes, but the call of the nationalists to fight for the independence of India found no response from the masses.
The masses of India are not imbued with the national spirit. They are interested solely in questions of social and economic nature . . . .
. . . . a revolutionary movement in India in so far as the wide masses are concerned, has nothing in common with the natioal liberation movement.[42]

In this speech of Roy in the Commission there is a clear indication that he was making a contraposition of the national

and class interests in the period of struggle for the overthrow of British imperialism. This becomes particularly evident if one carefully studies the original Draft Supplementary Theses that Roy had submitted to Lenin for consideration. In paragraphs 7, 10 and 11 of the Theses he had elaborately formulated the proposition that a fundamental contradiction existed between the interests of the bourgeois nationalists and those of the masses and that the two streams were growing further and further apart.[43] The national movement was thus virtually written off by Roy because 'The nationalist movement chiefly rests on the middle classes. . . .'[44]

This led Roy to formulate his stand on the third issue, namely, the assessment of the revolutionary potential in the colonies. For Roy, however, it was all very simple. Since Britain had changed its policy since the War, since industrialization was progressing at great leaps and since the contradiction between the masses and the bourgeoisie was growing sharper, the inevitable conclusion that flashed in his mind was that the proletariat had emerged as a real force in the colonies and already there existed in the colonies 'organised socialist or communist parties, in close relation to the mass movement'.[45] Consequently he drew the conclusion, while reporting in the Commission, that it was necessary to exclude from Article 11 of Lenin's Draft Theses that paragraph which spoke of the need for assistance of all communist parties to the bourgeois democratic liberation movement in the colonies.[46] Rather, Roy observed, as the minutes of the Commission show:

The Communist International must help exclusively in the building up and development of a communist movement in India,

and the Communist Party of India must devote all care exclusively to the organisation of wide masses for struggle for class interests of the latter.[47]

Roy fervently believed, driven by his logic, that the destiny of the revolutionary movement in Europe depended solely on the course of the revolution in the East. Roy's argument was, according to the minutes of the Commission,

World capitalism draws its chief resources and its profits in colonies mainly in Asia. The European capitalists can, at the most, give the workers the whole additional surplus and thus attract them over to their side, killing in them the revolutionary aspirations. The capitalists themselves would continue the exploitation of Asia with the help of the proletariat. Such an outcome would be of great advantage to the capitalists. In veiw of this, it is necessary to shift the energy to the development and strengthening of the revolutionary movement in the East and take, as the main thesis, the position that the destiny of world communism depends upon the victory of communism in the East.[48]

Lenin disagreed with Roy on all these three issues. This disagreement, however, has been misinterpreted in various ways, quite often distorted beyond recognition. First, Lenin differed with Roy on the basic assessment of the social structure and the level of economic development in the colonies. This needs careful consideration. Today it is suggested in certain quarters that Lenin's Colonial Theses and Roy's Supplementary Theses were complementary, in the sense that while Lenin's Theses were primarily written for those backward colonies where feudal or patriarchal-peasant relations predominated, Roy's Theses were written for more adavnced colonies like India and China where the industrial proletariat had emerged as a decisive force. In other words, the two Theses are to be studied separately, each being complete in itself and, quite logically, the inference is made that for India it is not Lenin's Theses but Roy's Supplemen-

tary Theses that are relevant.[49] This kind of understanding, I am afraid, follows from two misconceived notions about Lenin's Colonial Theses and Roy's Supplementary Theses.

In the first place, it is quite often conveniently forgotten that Roy's Draft Supplementary Theses had been drastically altered by Lenin, in course of the debate in the Colonial Commission on 25 July 1920, and that it is this amended text of the Supplementary Theses that was presented to the plenary session of the Second Congress on 26 July 1920, which, along with Lenin's Draft Theses, with certain minor changes introduced by the Colonial Commission, was adopted by the Congress.[50] It should be mentioned here that Lenin always made persistent efforts to involve everybody who could be useful, because of his experience or knowledge, towards serving a revolutionary cause. It is in this spirit that Lenin asked M. N. Roy to draft a set of Supplementary Theses, because of the latter's special acquaintance with such an important colonial country as India. But Lenin was equally careful to strike off certain grossly erroneous positions in Roy's Theses when he pointed to the specific importance of Roy's document in the plenary session. The point to note, however, is that by this time the original Supplementary Theses had been considerably modified by Lenin's drastic alterations, so that by the time the two Theses were adopted there remained no gross or violent contradiction between them. It is in this sense that Roy's Theses became not 'complementary',

but a 'supplement' to Lenin's Theses.[51] *Lenin thus pointed out, while discussing Roy's Theses, 'The latter were framed chiefly from the standpoint of the situation in India and other big Asian countries oppressed by Britain. Herein lies their great importance to us'.*[52] Years later, the importance of the adopted Theses of Roy was explained, much more explicitly, by Stalin:

Why were the Supplementary Theses needed? In order to single out from the backward colonial countries which have no industrial proletariat such countries as China and India, of which it cannot be said that they have 'practically no industrial proletariat'. Read the Supplementary Theses, and you will realise that they refer chiefly to China and India. . . . How could it happen that Roy's special theses were needed to 'supplement' Lenin's theses? The fact is that Lenin's theses had been written and published long before the Second Congress opened, long before the representatives from the colonial countries had arrived, and prior to the discussion in the special commission of the Second Congress. And since the discussion in the Congress Commission revealed the necessity for singling out from the backward colonies of the East such countries as China and India, the necessity for the 'Supplementary' Theses arose.[53]

The other major incorrect proposition that follows from the earlier position is that for Lenin there was a fundamental qualitative difference between the colonies in terms of the level of capitalist development, and while Lenin had formulated the Colonial Theses with an eye exclusively on the more backward countries, Roy had been entrusted with the responsibility of formulating the Supplementary Theses in relation to the more advanced colonies where capitalism was rapidly developing. No doubt there was a distinction between Persia and India, Indonesia and China. But such an interpretation of Lenin's Theses

seems to suggest that imperialism was pursuing different economic policies in different colonies and that in colonies like India and China imperialism was, unlike its classical policy, extending support to the development of capitalist production relations, while in other colonies pre-capitalist production relations were not disturbed. It is true that Lenin did not place the levels of development of the colonies on an equal plane but, unlike Roy, he did not feel that in colonies like India, pre-capitalist production relations were being rapidly replaced by capitalist ones as a result of the new colonial policy of British imperialism ;[54] on the contrary, he felt that colonies of all varieties were predominantly characterized by an overwhelming majority of the peasantry, which indicated the level of production relations in the colonies.[55] This was the crucial point of difference between Lenin and Roy, from which all subsequent differences followed.[56]

Methodologically, such an analysis of the socio-economic conditions of colonies like India by Roy and those who shared his position followed from two rather complex misconceptions. In the first place, as M.A. Persits points out, because of a lack of understanding of the social and class context of the category 'proletariat', the revolutionaries representing the colonies believed that the most oppressed, ill-treated and unfortunate strata of the population were synonymous with the proletariat. With such a category in mind they lumped together into the class of proletariat millions of ruined artisans, handicraftsmen, peasants and lumpenproletariat, that is, people with deep petty bourgeois ideological leanings, basically different from the social and historical meaning of the class designated as the proletariat. The terrible ruin and pauperization of these strata quite inevitably led them to believe that numerically the proletariat was emerging as a decisive force and a socialist revolution was on the agenda in these countries."[7] Lenin's position, on such questions, was unambiguously clear. In his remarks on Sultan Zade's speech in the plenary session of the Congress that was closely akin to Roy's position, Lenin made the following very deeply meaningful observations, which indicate the way he looked upon the question:

(1) Disintegration of the propertied exploiter classes.
(2) A large part of the population are peasants under medieval exploitation.
(3) Small artisans—in industry.
(4) deduction: adjust both Soviet institutions and the Communist Party (its membership, special tasks) to the level of the peasant countries of the colonial East.
This is the crux of the matter. This needs thinking about and seeking concrete answers.[58]

The basically wrong understanding of the character of pro-

duction relations in the colonies was motivated, secondly, by the ideological position of many delegates in the Congress who cherished utopian dreams of immediate socialist revolutions by a supposedly existent and numerically big proletariat, which necessarily led to voluntarist tactics of revolutionary war on their part. Actually, Roy's position concerning opposition to bourgeois democratic liberation movements as well as extending support exclusively to communist parties followed directly from this premise. It may be mentioned in this connection that this 'leftist' trend, rather romantic in orientation, was at that time quite widespread among many delegates attending the Congress. Thus, a worker of the Council of International Propaganda in the East, whose name remains unknown, writing on the perspectives of a socialist revolution in Asia, observed that since the East was more enslaved and oppressed and its fetters harder than those of the proletariat of the West, it appeared that a dictatorship of the proletariat could be established more quickly in the East than in the West. Again, Sultan Zade, reporting at the First Congress of the Iranian Communist Party held in June 1920, spoke of identical socio-economic conditions of Iran and the pre-October Russia, convinced thereby that Iran could carry out its socialist revolution without delay.[9]

This underestimation of the peasantry and overestimation of the role of the proletariat constituted the premise of Roy's second disagreement with Lenin on the assessment of the role of the bourgeoisie in the colonial countries. Unlike Roy, who regarded the contradiction between the colonial bourgeoisie and the masses as more fundamental than the contradiction between imperialism and the colonial people which included the bourgeoisie, Lenin fused the two contradictions in a single dialectical whole in formulating the strategy of a united anti-imperialist front. This theoretical position of Lenin has been variously and quite often rather wrongly misinterpreted. Citing Lenin's Draft Theses it is contended that Lenin's strategy was for extending all-out support to the colonial bourgeoisie, since he believed that the bourgeoisie in the colonies constituted a really revolu-

tionary class. Thus in 1943 M. N. Roy commented on Lenin's position at the Second Congress that,

> Very inadequately informed about the conditions in the colonial countries, Lenin had attributed an important revolutionary role to the nationalist movements in these countries. He regarded the bourgeoisie in the colonial countries as a revolutionary class.... Lenin expressed his views in 1920. During the following years, the situation in the colonial countries, particularly in India, changed greatly. By 1928, there could not be any illusion about the revolutionary role of the nationalist bourgeoisie. The fact of their seeking a compromise with imperialism could not be disputed.[60]

It is also suggested that since in the version of the Colonial Theses that was adopted Article 11 of Lenin's Draft Theses, which referred to support to bourgeois democratic movements in the colonies, was amended, substituting the expression 'bourgeois democratic' by 'revolutionary-liberation' movements, it proves how Lenin compromised his position under the influence of Roy.[61] It is quite true, as pointed out earlier, that Lenin in his Draft Theses had suggested support to bourgeois democratic liberation movements in the colonies; but it would be an absolute and unpardonable travesty of truth to suggest that by this formulation Lenin was pleading for strengthening the position of the bourgeoisie in the colonies. Lenin, repeatedly emphasizing the role of the peasant movemnts in the colonies as

evidenced in so many documents cited earlier, identified the truly revolutionary potential in the existing condition of the colonies in the vast masses of the peasantry. Thus, in the Draft Theses he emphatically stressed the need to extend special support to the peasant movement and lend it the most revolutionary character. His plea for support to the bourgeois democratic movement, viewed correctly, was a tactical move since the vast peasant masses in the colonies were, in the absence of an organized proletariat, under bourgeois influence.

In other words, while the peasantry could not be won over by the communist movement in the colonies without supporting and sometimes even making an alliance with the bourgeoisie, it would be equally wrong for the proletarian movement to lose its identity and merge with the bourgeois democratic movement. Thus, as studied earlier, in the Draft Theses, while emphasizing the need for supporting bourgeois democratic movements in the colonies in the struggle against imperialism, Lenin was equally emphatic on the necessity of struggling against these movements, in so far as the interests of the masses were concerned, and preserving the independence of the movement, howsoever embryonic it might be. This dialectical position of Lenin was revealed furthermore in his cryptic observations on Roy's speech in the Colonial Commission on 25 July 1920 when he, according to the minutes of the session, stated,

> In Russia we supported the national-liberation movement at the time of opposing Czarism. The Indian communists are bound to support the bourgeois-communist (democratic?) movement, without merging with it.[62]

No less significant is the information now available that Lenin,

while he was engaged in reading the proof-sheets of the German version of the Draft Theses, emphasized the expression, 'The Communist International must enter into a temporary alliance with bourgeois democracy in the colonial and backward countries' and again, the words 'uphold the independence of the proletarian movement even if it is in its most embryonic form'. In the English version of the proofs, Lenin stressed the words 'temporary alliance' and, further, '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'.[63] This, everyone would agree, is a revealing instance of how Lenin's mind actually worked on the interpretation of the colonial question.

Coming now to the question of the substitution of the expression 'bourgeois-democratic' by 'revolutionary-liberation' movements in the adopted text of Lenin's Colonial Theses, Lenin himself did not attach too much importance to this change because, as he stated in the plenary session of Congress,

> It is beyond doubt that any national movement can only be a bourgeois-democratic movement, since the overwhelming mass of the population in the backward countries consist of peasants who represent bourgeois-capitalist relationships.[64]

The change of expressions, one scholar has suggested on the basis of a painstaking exploration of Lenin's working out of the colonial question, was motivated by two circumstances.[65] First, there was the necessity to demarcate clearly the line between revolutionary and reformist trends in the national movement; secondly, there was the need to point out that the bourgeoisie in the colonies, though supporting the national movement, was at the same time quite often so close to imperialism that with it they jointly opposed all revolutionary movements and revolutionary classes. It is better to cite Lenin's observation in the plenary session at length:

> However, the objections have been raised that, if we speak of the bourgeois-democratic movement, we shall be obliterating

all distinctions between the reformist and the revolutionary movements. Yet that distinction has been very clearly revealed of late in the backward and colonial countries, since the imperialist bourgeoisie is doing everything in its power to implant a reformist movement among the oppressed nations too. There has been a certain rapprochement between the bourgeoisie of the exploiting countries and that of the colonies, so that very often—perhaps in most cases—the bourgeoisie of the oppressed countries, while it does support the national movement, is in full accord with the imperialist bourgeoisie, i.e., joins forces with it against all revolutionary movements and revolutionary classes. This was irrefutably proved in the commission, and 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-liberation movements in the colonies only 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. If these conditions do not exist, the Communists in these countries must combat the reformist bourgeoisie, to whom the heroes of the Second International also belong.[66]

This lengthy excerpt is significant for a number of reasons. In the first place, the change of expression from 'bourgeois-democratic' to 'national-revolutionary' was effected in the perspective of Lenin's understanding of the dual role of the bourgeoisie in the colonies and in the context of his overall strategy of building up a united anti-imperialist front by supporting as well as fighting this bourgeoisie, the character of which was basically reformist. Secondly, such a characterization of the bourgeoisie, i.e. reformist, was made with reference to the *whole* bourgeoisie, despite the fact that the bourgeoisie as a *whole* class also provided the leadership of the national movement in the colonies. Subsequently this position was revised by Stalin, leading to meaningful changes in the understanding of the colonial question, discussed fully in Chapter 2. Thirdly, despite the fact that Lenin agreed to a substitution of the expression, for him, howsoever revolutionary a national movement might appear, it was bound to take place within the framework of bourgeois democracy.

What follows from this analysis is that for Lenin a movement would have to transcend the political, organizational and ideological constraints of bourgeois democracy and reach out to the broadest strata of the toiling masses in the colonies to assume a truly revolutionary character in its struggle against imperialism. It is precisely in this context that one has to grasp the third fundamental point of difference between Lenin and Roy on evolving a correct strategy for the struggle of the oppressed masses in the colonies. Lenin thus developed the idea of building up Soviets in the colonies in sharp contraposition to Roy's idea of emphasizing exclusively the importance of the communist party. Here again, Lenin proceeded from his assessment of the level of economic development in the colonies which was primarily agriculture-and not industry-oriented, and where the proletariat had not yet emerged as a decisive force. For Roy, as shown earlier, industrialization in colonies like India was a real phenomenon and hence he felt that the industrial proletariat in countries like India had the tremendous potentiality and immediate possibility of leading the anti-imperialist movement, by organizing a mass-based communist party. As one scholar, Annemarie Hafner, commenting on Roy's position, writes:

He ignored the objective and subjective weakness of the proletariat in the colonial countries and regarded the strikes as the beginning of class-conscious, organised trade-union movement in India. Roy felt that conditions thus already were there for Indian Communists to take up the leadership of revolutionary struggle.[67]

That Lenin took exception to Roy's position on this question becomes particularly evident if one considers the fact that Roy's original Draft Supplementary Theses relating to this issue were radically altered by Lenin in the Colonial Commission. Roy's Theses originally read,

The real strength of the liberation movement in the colonies is no longer confined to the narrow circle of bourgeois democratic nationalists. In most of the colonies there already exist orga-

nised socialist or communist parties, in close relation to the mass movement.[68]

The Colonial Commission deleted the reference to communist parties and in the finally adopted Supplementary Theses the sentence read,

In most of the colonies there exist organised revolutionary parties which strive to be in close connection with the working masses.[69]

Roy's zeal for proletarian leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle shows, to quote Hafner, that

in his bid for expediting the revolution and solving simultaneously the national and social questions, Roy regarded the spontaneous upsurge in the colonies as the prelude to social revolution. He felt that this spontaneous outburst constituted such effective material as would greatly arouse the consciousness of the backward peasant masses and unleash as well the revolutionary strength of the proletariat.[70]

A particularly good theoretical analysis of Roy's methodological position has been given by Reznikov. Roy proceeded from the idea that capitalist development in the colonies could be cut short only by the development of capitalism. This kind of theoretical position would lead to either opportunist assistance to the development of capitalism or to a mad rush for power under proletarian leadership in conditions of total isolation, resulting in a complete break with other nationalist forces. Logically, Roy followed the second path which led him to exaggerate the influence of the communists and the communist party and correspondingly he wrote off the dominant influence of bourgeois nationalism among the masses and ignored thereby the weakness of the proletariat.[71] This explains why Roy treated the embryonic revolutionary groups, which functioned at that time without any clear aims and objectives, as organized communist parties—a phenomenon against which Lenin had warned

in his Draft Theses by emphasizing 'the need for a determined struggle against attempts to give a communist colouring to bourgeois-democratic liberation trends in the backward countries'.[72]

Moreover, it is precisely this infatuation with revolutionary dreams of overthrow of British rule in India, with a kind of hypothetical faith in the proletariat and a communist party, which also explains Roy's fervent belief that the destiny of Europe depended on the fate of proletarian revolutions in the colonies. In the Colonial Commission Lenin had sharply reacted to such utopian and dreamy ideas of revolution, as dished out by Roy. According to the minutes, Lenin stated,

Comrade Roy goes a bit too far when he asserts in such a way as to give the impression that the fate of the West depends exclusively on the degree of development and force of revolutionary movement in Eastern countries. Despite the fact that there are five million proletariat and 37 million landless peasants in India, the Indian communists have not so far been able to create a communist party in the country, and this alone, in itself, shows, in a considerable measure, the unfoundedness of Comrade Roy's views.[73]

Roy's position basically reflected the ideological stance of a revolutionary imbued with a strong nationalist fervour. This utopian dream of the 'Eastern route' to world revolution was in a way the result of an extreme dissatisfaction, at that time prevalent among many revolutionaries of the East, with the weak and inconsistent policy of the national bourgeoisie towards imperialism, followed by the position shared by many like Roy that since communism was the embodiment of the ideals of the working people the proclamation of its main positions would ensure its acceptance as an ideology by millions of those whose interests communism objectively represented.[74] It is also very true that the sectarian position of many communist leaders in the countries of the East and the absolutization by them of the

role of the East were in a large measure a reaction against the policy of the Social Democrats to ignore the problems of liberation of colonial countries and retard the world revolutionary process. Indeed, it is not without reason that of the twenty-one conditions for admission to the Comintern framed by Lenin and adopted by the Second Congress, one specific condition, obviously directed against the positions of the Social Democrats on the colonial question, was that any party desiring to belong to the Third International was obliged to expose mercilessly the deeds of 'their' imperialists in colonies, support not in words but in action all types of liberation movement in the colonies, demand the exile of their own imperialists from these colonies, bring up in the hearts and minds of the workers of their own country a truly fraternal attitude towards the working people of the colonies and oppressed nationalities, and carry out a systematic agitation among the troops against all oppression of all colonial people."[75]

Indeed, this theory of a supposed 'Eastern route' to world revolution was at that time quite prevalent among many leading stalwarts of the Third International, besides Roy. Thus as early as 1919 Trotsky, in a Memorandum to the Central Committee of the R.C.P., had suggested that since the Red Army constituted an incomparably more powerful force in the Asian terrain of world politics than in the European terrain, 'the road to India [might] prove at the given moment to be more readily passable and shorter.... than the road to Soviet Hungary.'[76] Consequently, Trotsky stressed,

We have up to now devoted too little attention to agitation in Asia. However, the international situation is evidently shaping

in such a way that the road to Paris and London lies via the towns of Afganisthan, the Punjab and Bengal.[77]

Trotsky accordingly called for setting up a 'Revolutionary Academy' somewhere in the Urals/Turkestan, which would be the political and military headquarters of the Asian Revolution.[78] Trotsky's plan of launching the Red Army against India was of course rejected by the Central Committee but interestingly such ideas continued to get coverage in contemporary Soviet press. Thus, within two months of the Central Committee's firm rejection of Trotsky's plan, *Zhizn' natsional'nostei*, dated 26 October 1919, published an article which stated,

If the decrepit Czarism could, for rich booty, plan, with some reality, a campaign to India and its capture through a whole series of hostile countries...., why cannot the Workers' and Peasants' Russia, which inspired so many hopes in the peoples of the East, accomplish something in this direction, in order to give to the Indians the ideology of Bolshevism ?[79]

We have already seen that Lenin had to encounter very soon such fantastic dreams of pushing up the revolutionary process in the colonies and backward countries—evident from the comments he received on his Draft Theses. Interestingly, there are scholars who have the tendency to interpret Lenin's position, especially his scheme for 'federation' in the settlement of the national question in the formation of the USSR in terms of his ultimate drive for control of Asia, so that, with this early political control over the masses of Asia, the conquest of the West would become rather easy.[80] The fact is that while in principle Lenin fully endorsed military help to the colonial peoples,[81] he

was terribly scornful of any idea relating to the export of revolution in the colonies by way of armed intervention from outside, or by any forcible occupation by the Bolsheviks.

It is against this backdrop that Lenin's idea of building up Soviets in the colonial countries has to be understood. Lenin first advanced the idea of the 'Soviet' as an organization of revolutionary power in his Draft Theses where he said,

> It is particularly necessary to exert every effort to apply the basic principles of the Soviet system in countries where precapitalist relations predominate—by setting up 'working people's Soviets', etc.[82]

This was further elaborated by him in his report at the plenary session where he said,

> The idea of Soviet organisation is a simple one, and is applicable not only to proletarian, but also to peasant feudal and semi-feudal relations. Our experience in this respect is not as yet very considerable. However, the debate in the Commission, in which several representatives from colonial countries participated, demonstrated convincingly that the Communist International's theses should point out that peasants' Soviets, Soviets of the exploited, are a weapon which can be employed, not only in capitalist countries but also in countries with precapitalist relations, and that it is the absolute duty of Communist parties and of elements prepared to form Communist parties, everywhere to conduct propaganda in favour of peasants' Soviets or of working people's Soviets, this to include backward and colonial countries. Wherever conditions permit, they should at once make attempts to set up Soviets of the working people.[83]

As suggested earlier, Lenin's idea of supporting bourgeois democratic movements in the colonies has to be grasped only in the light of his idea of Soviets. Soviets, being class organizations of workers, peasants and nonproletarian masses, would play the role of, as Adhikari has correctly suggested, 'unleashing the agrarian revolution and raising the national struggle to a revolutionary level—thus progressively isolating the compromising bourgeois tendency.'[84] Hence, support to the limited anti-imper-

ialist struggles of the colonial bourgeoisie would have to be combined with the idea of devolping working people's Soviets. While Roy, in overemphasizing the strength of the proletariat and consequently ignoring the role of the peasantry, called for an immediate seizure of the leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle by the communist party without taking into account the magnitude of bourgeois democratic influence among the masses, Lenin's flexible guidelines enabled the Comintern to develop the idea of an anti-imperialist united front dialectically. Support to bourgeois democracy might even necessitate temporary alliance with it on the part of the communist party in the battle for the overthrow of imperialist domination. At the same time, the working of the united anti-imperialist front would have to be viewed in the context of the Soviets which would unleash the agrarian revolution under the leadership of the communist vanguard. This is how Lenin provided clues to a completely new strategy for the functioning of communist parties in the colonies where the proletariat had not yet emerged as the decisive force because of the low level of economic development. It is the failure to establish the dialectical linkage between the idea of a united anti-imperialist front and that of Soviets as organs of power with agrarian revolution as the central axis that leads one to mechanically contrapose the two notions and conclude thereby that the two ideas are irreconcilable.[85]

It is necessary to point out in this connection that although in paragraph 9 of the adopted text of Roy's Supplementary Theses one finds references relating to the building up of workers' and peasants' Soviets, these were not there in Roy's original Draft. These were incorporated by Lenin in the Colonial Commission, specifically emphasizing the idea of not only peasants', but peasants' and workers' Soviets,[86] presumably keeping in mind the fact that in colonies like India the proletariat, unlike in the more backward colonies, was gradually emerging,

howsoever embryonic it was, as manifest in the numerous strike actions.

Moreover, it should also be emphasized that for Lenin there was no contradiction between the necessity to form communist parties and the struggle for Soviets in the colonies. Indeed, Lenin, just as he was sharply critical of any sectarian understanding of nationalist movements, was equally intolerant of ideas that might give the wrong impression that the leadership being in the hands of the bourgeoisie and the stage of the revolution being bourgeois democratic in the colonies, there was no necessity of resolutely defending the formation of communist parties. As Reznikow has shown, it was not for nothing that Lenin altered that expression in Article 9 of the original Draft of Roy's Theses where it was mentioned that from the bourgeois democratic character of the tasks of the first stage of revolutions in the colonies 'it does not necessarily follow that the leadership of the revolution will have to be surrendered to the bourgeois democrats'. Significantly, the words 'it does not necessarily follow' were replaced by 'it does not follow at all'. Thus, while advancing the idea of an anti-imperialist united front Lenin at the same time considered the refusal of the communists from struggling for the leadership of the revolution absolutely unacceptable. This is evidenced in Lenin's repeated warnings against any tendency of the communists and the communist party, howsoever small they might be, to merge with the bourgeois democratic nationalist movement. But those who, like Roy and many others, supposed that the communists could possibly come to the leadership of the revolution without daily, incessant struggle for the masses, or that all popular movements in the colonies and dependent countries were essentially communist, dreaming of an utopian hegemony of the proletariat which was still very far away, were actually ruining the cause of independence of the proletarian movement.[37] It is precisely in this context that Lenin emphasized the role of Soviets, which would be the first embryonic organizational forms of the proletariat's and the communist party's striving for leadership. Roy, it now becomes amply clear, spoke of the need for proletarian hegemony without caring either for the objective con-

ditions in the colonies or analysing the organizational forms of power which would effect the linkage between the communist party and the masses and which in turn would pave the way for proletarian hegemony. Therein lies the crucial theoretical significance of Lenin's position on the Soviets and his differences with Roy on this question.

IV

To sum up, the Lenin-Roy debate primarily centred around their differences concerning the analysis of the economic policy of imperialism in the colonies. While Roy's formulation in 1920 materially amounted to the idea of economic decolonization, since imperialism for him had revised its classical policy of exploitation of colonies and encouraged on the contrary the development of capitalism through a process of industrialization, for Lenin, colonies despite differences in the level of economic development were characterized primarily by pre-capitalist production relations, although at the same time in colonies like India and China the proletariat too was slowly emerging and making its impact felt on the national scene. Consequently, the two Theses became, in their original form, completely contradictory. Later the drastic deletion and substantive alteration of several clauses from Roy's original Draft by Lenin led to the adoption of the Supplementary Theses, which were fitted in with the Colonial Theses of Lenin. Scholars thus admit that the entire gamut of the Lenin-Roy controversy verged on Roy's opposition to Lenin's idea of united front tactics in which the latter combined dialectically the issues of struggle against imperialism and the local bourgeoisie. Roy's opposition was an expression of his failure to grasp this dialectical unity and this logically led him to plead for a sectarian position which made him contrapose the national and the class issues of the liberation struggle in India.[88] As regards the adoption of the Supplementary Theses, to cite one comment, 'The Russian strategist had given in on terminology in exchange for

his opponents' compromise on essential tactics.'[89]

The Second Congress of the Comintern thus witnessed a confrontation between two completely different viewpoints regarding the role of the bourgeoisie vis-a-vis imperialism and the working masses in the colonies. Despite the drastic alteration of his original Draft in the following years Roy continued to develop the ideas that were latent in an embryonic form in the original text. And, ironically enough, through Roy's analysis India became the centre of this discussion. Eventually Roy became the official spokesman for India and consequently in the years that followed Roy's understanding of the Indian question, howsoever erroneous it was, rather decisively shaped the course of the communist movment in India, at least definitely in the very difficult early years of its formation. The differences between Roy and the Comintern, however, began to be felt very soon, in the subsequent congresses of the Communist International.

3

The Shaping of a Doctrine

Between the Second and the Sixth Congress

I

THE SECOND CONGRESS had given the theoretical direction to the colonial question; the *Theses on the National and Colonial Questions* had set the perspective. The years that followed witnessed the concrete shaping of this framework. In the process, however, especially after the death of Lenin, the colonial question in the Comintern acquired certain new dimensions. This became particularly evident in some of the interpretations of the colonial question given by Stalin, and quite naturally the analysis of the situation in India too was deeply affected. To what extent the colonial question was becoming increasingly complex and deeply polemical, at times appearing to be almost unresolved, was graphically illustrated in the great debate on decolonization at the Sixth Congress in the midsummer of 1928. The years preceding the Sixth Congress, therefore, are remarkably significant in the sense that it was during this period that the issues that later agitated the minds of the participants in the Sixth Congress crystallized. For that one has to carefully scrutinize the discussions that took place in the three congresses and a number of ECCI plenums between the Second and the Sixth Congress.

II

As far as the Third Congress is concerned very little time could be devoted to the discussion of the colonial question. However, the main direction of the Comintern's understanding of this living issue can be ascertained from Lenin's *Theses for a Report on the Tactics of the R.C.P.*, delivered on 5 July 1921. But before one goes in for an analysis of Lenin's Report, one cannot help

recollecting certain other interesting historical highlights which have, theoretically speaking, a very significant bearing on the discussion of the colonial question in the Comintern immediately on the eve of the Third Congress.

What I have in mind are, first, the Theses prepared by a Delegation of Indian revolutionaries who had arrived from Berlin in Moscow on the eve of the Third Congress to meet Lenin, and secondly the Draft Theses prepared by M. N. Roy analysing the situation in the colonial countries. Between March and June-July 1921, on the eve of the Third Congress, a delegation of Indian national revolutionaries paid a visit to Moscow to discuss with Lenin the situation in India. As regards the composition of this delegation, it has not yet been possible to ascertain all the names.[1] However, two things are quite clear. In the first place, it becomes evident, especially from a reading of Roy's *Memoirs* and Bhupendranath Datta's *Aprakashita Rajnaitik Itihas* that the delegation consisted predominantly of the members of the Berlin Committee of Indian revolutionaries in Germany, among whom the most prominent were Virendranath Chattopadhyaya and Bhupendranath Datta. Secondly, among the members there were two distinct opinions about the colonial question concerning India. One group was led by Bhupendranath, who was supported by Birendranath Dasgupta and Abdul Wahed; the other group, which too was no less powerful, was led by Virendranath, who had among his supporters Agnes Smedley, G.A.K. Luhani and Pandurang Khankhoje.[2]

As regards the question whether some members of the delegation could meet Lenin, the issue remains unsettled. There are two conflicting versions about this episode.[3] In his *Memoirs*, Roy tells us that Lenin had granted an interview to Virendranath, Bhupendranath and probably Pandurang Khankhoje. Roy even proceeds to argue, although he surely did not accompany

them, that after their encounter with Lenin they were extremely disappointed and came back almost crestfallen.[4] On the other hand, Bhupendranath Datta, who is supposed to have met Lenin (according to Roy), has left no account of any such meeting.

However, both Bhupendranath and Roy agree that the Indian question was referred to a Commission appointed by the Comintern. Bhupendranath Datta has left a very detailed account of the different sessions of the Commission and it appears from his version that the Commission met at irregular intervals.[5] Of the different sittings, the most important was the second session which met for two days under the chairmanship of James Bell, with Rakosi acting as the Secretary. In this session Roy too was present. Bhupendranath reminisces that this session witnessed the presentation of three different Theses on the Indian question. One set was submitted by the Chattopadhyaya group; the second set was presented by the Datta group; finally, a set of Draft Theses was submitted by Roy.

On the basis of Bhupendranath's account of the three Theses, it may be surmised that Chattopadhyaya's Theses attached priority to the destruction of British imperialism and called for establishment of a 'revolutionary board' which should be given assistance for its revolutionary work in India. Troyanovsky, a member of the Commission, described it, says Bhupendranath, as a 'nationalist thesis'.[6] Bhupendranath's own Theses emphasized that as long as the foreign enemy was there, it was necessary that various classes engaged in struggle against it should work together to organize the political revolution. However, it was necessary, according to the Theses, to organize communist groups which would establish socialism in the country through a social revolution after the accomplishment of the political revolution.[7] Both Chattopadhyaya and Datta sent their respective Theses to Lenin for his opinion and it may be gathered that Lenin's comments were very brief. As regards Lenin's observations on Chattopadhyaya's document entitled *Theses on India and the World Revolution,* sent by Virendranath on 7 July 1921 when the Third Congress of the Comintern was in session, there

are two versions. According to Bhupendranath's record, Lenin's reply simply endorsed the main contention of Virendranath that British imperialism had to be destroyed.[8] On the other hand, years later, Chattopadhyaya, in a speech delivered before the Leningrad Academy of Sciences on 18 March 1934, reminisced that Lenin's reply suggested that he had read the Theses with great interest. But he did not find the necessity of a new Thesis.[9]

More significant, however, was Lenin's reply to Bhupendranath's Theses entitled *Communist Revolution—Final Solution of the Problem*, sent by the latter through Rakosi on 23 August 1921. In his reply, Lenin said that instead of discussing social classes what was necessary was to gather 'statistical facts about Peasant leagues if any exist [ed] in India.'[10] Years later, in his *Dialectics of Land-Economics of India* (1952), Bhupendranath recalled this comment and acknowledged that the importance of peasant question, as emphasized by Lenin, for the first time made him aware of the role of the peasantry in the national liberation movement.[11] Indeed, Lenin's observation was in direct continuation of the line of highlighting the role of the peasantry in the colonial question.

As regards the Draft Theses of M. N. Roy, the different accounts left by the members of the Commission are even more puzzling. It is rather strange that in Roy's account of the proceedings of the Commission in his *Memoirs* there is no reference to the Draft Theses. However, he refers to the presentation of a Report to Lenin on the eve of the Third Congress. He prepared this Report, as the *Memoirs* tells us, as he was supposed to speak to the Third Congress about the activities of the Turkestan Bureau of the Communist International and also about the situation in the colonial countries.[12] From all evi-

dences it appears that it is this Report which was probably submitted as the Theses before the Commission. This follows from the fact that the Commission, too, had its last meeting just on the eve of the Third Congress. According to Bhupendranath's version Roy had his Theses already printed, the principal thrust of which was aimed at completing the political revolution, to be followed by the social revolution.[13] Roy then argues that 'Lenin made a few notes to be incorporated into my report to the Third World Congress.'[14] Moreover, it was again these Theses which were submitted by Roy before the Eastern Commission of the Third Congress of Comintern and which were voted down.[15]

A common misunderstanding about this document of Roy is that 'Roy probably submitted a printed copy of the Supplementary Theses on the National and Colonial Question, which he had submitted to the Second Congress of the CI and were adopted by it with the substantial amendments made to it by Lenin.'[16] This, I am afraid, has happened because of two reasons. In the first place, Roy's Theses remained untraced till very recently, and quite naturally it came to be believed that this document of Roy presented to the Commission was simply the printed version of his Supplementary Theses adopted by the Second Congress. Secondly, this confusion follows from a reading of Bhupendranath's rather inaccurate description of Roy's Theses in the Commission. But if one carefully takes note of the Report that Roy is said to have submitted to Lenin on the eve of the Third Congress, and particularly if a thorough scrutiny is made of Roy's version of this Report, it appears that this document was not definitely identical with the Supplementary Theses of the Second Congress.

M. N. Egorova, a Soviet scholar, has very recently thrown interesting light on this document. Her research tells us that Roy's Draft Theses were published in English as a brochure and

in Russian in *Narody Dal'nego Vostoka,* No. 3, 1922.[17] Roy's own version of the Theses is quite interesting. He contends that the differences between him and Lenin about the revolutionary potentialities of colonial nationalism had considerably narrowed down since the Second Congress of the Comintern. However, as regards the role of Gandhi, the difference still remained.[18] Egorova, who has made a detailed scrutiny of Roy's Draft Theses, however, gives a different interpretation.[19] Referring to Roy's comment in his *Memoirs,* she argues that the differences between Lenin and Roy had narrowed down because Roy himself had softened his own position over the year since the Second Congress, while Lenin's position remained unchanged. Citing the first section of Roy's Draft Theses, she points to the significant stress of Roy on the importance of colonial possessions for the imperialist powers, and where he thus emphasized the necessity of liquidation of British monopolies in the countries of the East.[20] However, the earlier sectarian position persisted throughout the Theses. For instance, Egorova, quoting from the document, shows that Roy pleaded for exclusive involvement of the working people in the liberation movement, as the basis of struggle for economic independence, and thus restricted the possibility of creating a wide anti-imperialist front inside the country.[21] This followed from his original theoretical position about the nature of the colonial economy in India, and Egorova shows that this position was reiterated in the Theses —that development of machine industries had done away with feudalism and that this pointed to the growing role of the industrial proletariat as well as the 'proletarianisation' of the Indian peasants.[22] However, that the political position of Roy had softened becomes evident from his own version of the Report

in his *Memoirs* that he now agreed with Lenin that the role of Gandhi was at least obectively revolutionary.[23]

The Third Congress could devote very little time to the discussion of the colonial question. But the pattern of the Comintern's understanding of the Eastern Question can be quite clearly ascertained from Lenin's *Theses for a Report on the Tactics of the R.C.P.*, delivered on 5 July 1921. There were two very significant points of stress in Lenin's Report. First, talking about the significance of the movement in the colonies, he stated,

> It is perfectly clear that in the impending decisive battles in the world revolution, the movement of the majority of the population of the globe, initially directed towards national liberation, will turn against capitalism and imperialism and will, perhaps, play a much more revolutionary part than we expect.[24]

This is an evidence of how Lenin hinted at the possibility of the growing fusion of the anti-imperialist and the anti-capitalist struggle in the colonies. Secondly, in continuation of the formulation given by him at the Second Congress, Lenin again emphasized the crucial role of the peasantry in the colonies despite the fact that the peasantry as a class was extremely backward in the countries of the East. To cite his observation,

> And in spite of the fact that the masses of toilers—the peasants in the colonial countries—are still backward, they will play a very important revolutionary part in the coming phases of the world revolution.[25]

III

The colonial question came up for a detailed and exhaustive discussion at the Fourth Comintern Congress in 1922. M. N. Roy was, as usual, the chief spokesman of the colonial countries and it is to be noted that besides Roy there was no other delegate from the colonies who spoke in so much detail on the situation in the East, particularly on the economic policy of imperialism in the colonies. Especially for this reason, Roy's *Report on the Eastern Question* deserves special attention. To cite his observation,

> . . . imperialism today is trying to save itself by developing the industries of colonial countries. Since the war, imperialism, particularly British imperialism, has found it necessary to gradually slacken its monopoly rights over the economic and industrial life of the backward colonial countries. Thus, for example, a country like India which for more than 150 years was a reserve and source of raw materials for the British industries, has become, during the war, sufficiently developed industrially. The collapse of the capitalist equilibrium in Europe has compelled imperialism to search for new markets, so that the equilibrium of world capitalism can be restored. They hope to find this in colonial countries by developing countries like India and China industrially.[26]

It is on the basis of this analysis that Roy proceeded to identify the character of the bourgeoisie, particularly in countries like India which he characterized as industrially developed colonies. 'In other words', he suggested,

> industrial development of the bourgeoisie requires peace and order, which foreign imperialism brought to most of these countries. The threat to this peace and order, the possibility of disturbances and revolutionary upheaval makes it convenient for the native bourgeoisie to enter into a compromise with the imperial master.[27]

He agreed that the bourgeois national movement in the colonial countries was objectively revolutionary, but warned,

The bourgeoisie becomes a revolutionary factor when it revolts against backward, obsolete forms of society, that is, when the struggle is fundamentally against the feudal order, with the bourgeoisie thereby leading the people. Then the bourgeoisie is the vanguard of the revolution. But about the new bourgeoisie in the East or of the greater part of it, this cannot be said. Although the bourgeoisie there leads the struggle, it is not led against feudalism. It leads the struggle of a weak, undeveloped and suppressed bourgeoisie against a strong and developed bourgeoisie. Instead of being a class struggle it is an internecine struggle, so to say, and as such contains the elements of compromise.[28]

Consequently, Roy classified the bourgeoisie in the colonies in two sections; while the upper layer, which was industrially developed and aligned with imperial capital, went over to imperialism, the other layer, being weak and indecisive, failed to be the leader of a revolutionary movement and thus reached its present period of depression.[29]

This scepticism of Roy was shared by Orhan, the delegate from Turkey. Referring to the betrayal of the national revolution by Kemalism, which was becoming increasingly repressive towards the Communist Party of Turkey and pursuing a policy of compromise with imperialism in the exploitation of the masses, he expressed doubts about the policy of lending support to the nationalist bourgeoisie in Turkey.[30] In fact, in Roy's Report, too, frequent references to Turkey are made in justification of his stand.

Roy followed up his characterization of the colonial bourgeoisie by his tactical line of action. Although in the concluding portion of his Report he referred to the importance of united front tactics, the whole tenor of his speech was directed precisely towards a negation of this line.[31] In the spirit of his stand taken at the Second Congress, here too Roy emphasized that the emergence of the proletariat in the capitalistically-developed colonies pointed towards the possibility of proletarian hegemony in the national revolution through the organ of the Communist Party. Interestingly, Roy, while acknowledging that communist parties in the colonies were nothing more than nuclei, felt all

the same that desertion and betrayal of the revolutionary struggle by the bourgeoisie would witness the assumption of the leadership of the national revolutionary struggle by the communist party and that the communist party alone would be in a position to lead the colonial peoples and oppressed nationalities to complete political and economic independence.[32] But Roy did not elaborate the crucial issue as to how, despite their weakness, the communist parties would achieve hegemony in the national revolution.

Like Roy, optimism about the strength of communist parties in the colonies was voiced also by the Chinese delegate, Liu-Yen-Chin, and Nik-Bin, the Persian delegate. Speaking about the working class movement in China, the Chinese delegate referred to the strike movement in Hong Kong and Shanghai and observed that the unrest of the working masses showed the strength of the Communist Party which had succeeded in broadening its influence among the people.[33] Nik-Bin referred to the organized strength of the Persian working class in different industrial centres of the country and expressed the hope that the Communist Party was prepared for struggle towards the final victory of communism.[34]

These claims of an imminent communist victory in the colonies were, however, disputed by Karl Radek, speaking on behalf of the Executive Committee of the Comintern. While sharing his concern with the Turkish delegate about the repression of communists by the forces of Kemalism,[35] Radek, referring to the position of the Chinese delegate, argued,

> You must understand that today the issue in China is neither the victory of socialism nor the Soviet Republic . . . in uniting the working-class forces, we have to perform two tasks: 1. to organise the young working-class and 2. to establish the rational relationship between this and the objective, bourgeois revolutionary elements in organising the struggle against European and Asian imperialism . . . As the Communist International says to the communist parties in the West: to the masses, so is also our call to you: from the confines of the communism of Confucian pedantry to the masses. Not merely to the workers, not

only to the coolies, but to the peasant masses which would become agitated through all these happenings.[36]

Radek's disagreement with Roy and others on this issue shows once again that most of the delegates from the colonial countries were, methodologically speaking, bent upon establishing a logical and not a historical relationship between the strength of the communist parties and that of the bourgeoisie in the colonies. The strike movements in the colonies were regarded as the first signs of proletarian hegemony in the national revolution and, logically, this led the delegates to correspondingly underestimate the influence of the bourgeoisie as well as the role of the peasantry. Finally, this also led to a corresponding underrating of the strategy of overthrowing imperialist domination which could not be accomplished by the communist parties alone. The tenor of this kind of argument was based on the construction of a logical nexus between the development of capitalism in the colonies and corresponding betrayal of the national revolution by the bourgeoisie, on the one hand, and on the imminent possibility of capturing the leadership of the revolutionary struggle by the communist party alone, on the other. The theoretical basis of this position was provided by Roy in his *Report on the Eastern Question*, as analysed earlier. He explained the development of capitalism in terms of industrialization of colonies by imperialism and it is not unfair for scholars to regard his stand as a statement pertaining to the theory of decolonization.[37] However, it would not be correct to suggest, as has been done by Allen S. Whiting, that it was only at the Fourth Congress that Roy had put forward his theory of industrialization of colonies which marked a change in the classical policy of imperialism, since till then the policy of imperialism had been one of driving the colonies into an ever-increasing dependence on agriculture.[38] It has already been explained in the preceding chapter that this theme has had its roots embedded in the original Draft Theses of Roy which were

submitted in a revised form as the Supplementary Theses at the Second Congress of the Comintern in 1920.

However, it is true that at the Fourth Congress Roy's views on industrialization of colonies and the political and economic consequences that followed (which were shared by some other delegates representing the colonial countries) were not directly criticized. But this cannot make one agree with the conclusion reached by Robert C. North and Xenia J. Eudin that the *Theses on the Eastern Question* adopted at the Fourth Congress supported Roy's analysis, contending thereby that the Comintern lent support to Roy's viewpoint.[39] A careful scrutiny of the Theses would belie this interpretation.

First, the Theses did not, while noting the development of capitalism in some of the colonies characterize it as industrialization, nor did it explain the phenomenon of capitalist development as a result of the changed economic policy of imperialism. The Theses stressed the objective political conditions that led to a weakening of the imperialist pressure in the colonies. It said,

> The imperialist war of 1914-18 and the prolonged crisis which followed it, particularly in Europe, have weakened the power of the Great Powers over the colonies. On the other hand, these same circumstances in narrowing the economic bases and spheres of influence of world capitalism have rendered imperialist rivalry for the colonies more acute and in this way have disturbed the equilibrium of the whole imperialist system . . . It is precisely this weakening of imperialist pressure in the colonies, together with the increasing rivarly between various imperialist groups that has facilitated the development of native capitalism in the colonies and semi-colonial countries which are outgrowing the narrow framework of the domination of the imperialist Great Powers.[40]

In his *Report on the Eastern Question* Roy tried to explain the development of capitalism in the colonies in terms of the process of industrialization that was ushered in, in countries like

India, by British imperialism as a result of the latter's search for markets in the post-war period of imperialism's crisis. The emphasis of the Theses, however, was different. It tried to explain the development of capitalism in the colonies in the post-war period in terms of imperialism's temporary loosening of the grip over colonies as a result of the crisis in the inter-imperialist relations, generated by the Great War. It was this phenomenon that provided the opportunity to the nationalist bourgeoisie to devolp the productive forces, an urge expressed in the form of demand for national and economic independence put forward by the colonial bourgeoisie. The consequence is that the

growth of native productive forces in these colonies, therefore, causes an irreconcilable antagonism of interests between them and world imperialism; for the essence of imperialism consists in using the varying levels of development of productive forces in various parts of the economic world for the purpose of extracting monopolist excess profits.[41]

At the same time the Theses took note of the vacillating position of the rich bourgeoisie and bourgeois landlords amongst the strata of the nationalist bourgeoisie, in view of the fact that colonial revolutionary movements were witnessing the entry of proletarian and semi-proletarian peasant masses.[42] But unlike Roy or Nik-Bin, who emphasized the delinking of the communist party from the national movement (as the latter was led by the colonial bourgeoisie) and consequently stressed the exclusive role of the communist party in providing leadership to people's struggles, the Theses categorically rejected this stand. This was the second major point of difference between the Theses and the reports presented by Roy and a number of delegates from the colonial countries. The Theses said,

The refusal of the communists in the colonies to participate against imperialist oppression on the pretext of alleged 'defence' of independent class interests is opportunism of the worst kind calculated only to discredit the proletarian revolution in the East. Not less harmful must be recognized the attempt to isolate oneself from the immediate and everyday interests of the work-

ing class for the sake of 'national unity' or 'civil peace' with bourgeois democracy. . . . The Communist Parties in the colonies and semi-colonial countries 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. At the same time, however, they must conduct an energetic campaign against the patriarchal and craft prejudices and bourgeois influences in the labour unions, in order to protect these embryonic organisations from reformist tendencies and in order to convert them into mass fighting organizations.[43]

The excerpt shows that the Comintern did not agree with the assessment of the strength of the proletariat and the communist parties in the colonies, as given by the Eastern delegates. Quite logically, the Theses put forward the idea of anti-imperialist united front, since

The expediency of these tactics is dictated by the prospects of a prolonged struggle against world imperialism demanding the mobilisation of all revolutionary elements. This mobilisation becomes all the more necessary from the fact that the native ruling classes are inclined to make compromises with the foreign capitalists directed against the fundamental interests of the masses of the people. Just as the watchword of the United Labour Front in the West facilitates the exposure of the social democratic betrayal of the interests of the proletariat, so the watchword of the United Anti-Imperialist Front will facilitate the exposure of the wavering and hesitation of certain bourgeois nationalist groups in the East.[44]

The Theses, thus appreciating the immediate importance of overthrowing imperialist domination and taking into account the compromising role of the colonial bourgeoisie in relation to imperalism on the one hand and the weakness of the proletariat and its party on the other, emphasized through the formulation of an anti-imperialist united front the necessity of utilizing it against imperialism as well as gradually broadening the influence of the leading role of the proletariat within the front by exposing the limitations of bourgeois nationalism. It is only in the context of this dual role of the proletariat within the front that the idea of a united front against imperialism, first formulated

by Lenin in the Second Congress of 1920 and further elaborated by the Comintern in the *Theses on the Eastern Question,* has to be understood. And it is only in this perspective that Lenin's stress at the Second Congress on the utilization of the objectively revolutionary role of the colonial bourgeoisie, arising out of its contradiction with imperialism, has to be grasped. Commenting on the Theses, a recently published work on the Comintern correctly observes,

> The Theses of the Fourth Congress, as we see, clearly defined the close connection which exists between the class and national aims of the proletariat in the oppressed countries. These aims, far from being regarded as alternatives, supplemented each other. The tactic of the united anti-imperialist front in the East was closely bound up with the slogan of the united workers' front in the West. They were different aspects of the same tactic in the implementation of which the leading role of the proletariat and the communist party in the revolutionary process was achieved through an unremitting daily struggle within the framework of the united front.[45]

Finally, the Theses laid particular emphasis on the role of the peasantry in the revolutionary struggle against imperialism in the colonies, an issue that was not at all sufficiently stressed by Roy and the other delegates from the colonial countries in their zeal for securing the hegemony of the proletariat in the national liberation struggle. The Theses categorically stated,

> In the majority of countries in the East (India, Persia, Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia) the agrarian question is of primary importance in the struggle for emancipation from the domination of the despotism of the Great Powers . . . Only the agrarian revolution aiming at the expropriation of the large landowners can rouse the vast peasant masses destined to have a decisive influence in the struggle against imperialism.[46]

Emphasizing the importance of the agrarian revolution, the Theses particularly stressed the necessity of exposing the fears, vacillations and weaknesses of the colonial bourgeoisie towards the awakening of the consciousness of the peasant masses.

The fear of agrarian watchwords on the part of the bourgeois nationalists (India, Persia, Egypt) is evidence of the close ties existing between the native bourgeoisie with the large feudal and feudal-bourgeois landowners and their ideological and political dependence upon the latter. The hesitation and wavering of this class must be used by the revolutionary elements for systematic criticism and exposure of the lack of resolution of the bourgeois leaders of the nationalist movement.[47]

A careful scrutiny of the Theses thus shows that while Roy, followed by the delegates from the colonial countries, counterposed the national and the class question of revolutionary struggle in the colonies, the Theses, by combining the idea of an anti-imperialist united front with that of the agrarian revolution, attempted a dialectical fusion of the two tasks. Thus the differences that had cropped up between Roy and the Comintern in 1920 now continued to persist at the Fourth Congress, which widened furthermore at the time of the Fifth Congress two years later.

It should be pointed out in this connection that while in his *Report on the Eastern Question* Roy provided an economic analysis of the changed policy of British imperialism in India since the end of the War, this had been already worked out in detail in his book *India in Transition*, published in the year of the Fourth Congress. Over the years Roy continued to harp on the theme, elaborately formulated in this book, through his numerous writings. It is necessary, therefore, to take into account the views of Roy over this period till the Fifth Comintern Congress in 1924.

In his *India in Transition* Roy tried to prove through a wealth of statistics that it was the class question that prompted the growing alignment of British imperialism and the Indian bourgeoisie and that the course of the revolutionary struggle against imperialism too would be determined exclusively by this class issue. In explaining the counter-revolutionary role of the Indian bourgeoisie and its joining of the camp of British imperialism he argued that, first, the World War had made it impossible for England to keep the Indian market supplied with manufactured goods—an event that placed the Indian manufacturers in an advantageous position for free development of capitalism with-

out being restrained by imperial capital. Secondly, because of mass discontent against British rule in which the bourgeoisie too participated, the imperial rulers felt the necessity of winning over the bourgeoisie by providing them with concessions in the form of encouragement of industrialization of India and using this class as a junior partner in the exploitation of the Indian masses. 'The object behind this remarkable change of policy on the part of British imperialism,' argued Roy, 'was to split the revolutionary movement by making clear to the bourgeoisie that it was no longer impossible for it to realise its ambitions under British rule.'[18] It will be seen how Roy developed this idea later in elaborating the theory of decolonization on the eve of the Sixth Congress in 1928. Since the bourgeoisie was opposed to imperialism exclusively for gaining political and economic rights pertaining to the development of capitalism in the country, the process of industrialization coupled with the growth of an existing capitalist class would, argued Roy, inevitably intensify the class-antagonism between the bourgeoisie and the working masses.

Since 1918 the Indian movement has entered this stage. It may still have the appearance of a national struggle involving masses of the population, but fundamentally it is a social strife, the revolt of the exploited against the exploiting class, irrespective of nationality.[19]

Thus, encouraged by the process of industrialization which served its capitalist interests as well as political concessions like the Montagu Chelmsford Reforms and threatened by the class antagonism between its own interests and the interests of the masses, the Indian bourgeoisie would, with a great show of loyalty, throw itself into the arms of imperialism ; consequently, argued Roy,

The revolt of the oppressed masses and the ruthless manner in which such a revolt would surely be suppressed by the government with the aid and connivance of the national bourgeoisie, would clarify their social tendencies, thus rescuing them from the vicious circle of orthodox nationalism, and push them forward into the healthy and envigorating atmosphere of an inevit-

able class-struggle against the native as well as the foreign exploiting class.[50]

A careful reading of *India in Transition* does in fact show Roy's consistent inclination towards making a case for explaining the course of the anti-imperialist struggle in terms of polarization of the bourgeois and proletarian class interests. The case for industrialization, which in effect meant a reversal of imperialism's economic policy, provided the rationale behind his argument.

Between the Fourth and the Fifth Congress Roy continued to harp on this theme in a number of writings.[51] Besides *India in Transition,* the next major important work of Roy during this period is *What do we Want* ? (1922). Written in the form of a manifesto, this work by Roy mainly emphasized the demands of the working class and peasantry in the context of an industrialized economy. Unlike *India in Transition,* where the peasant question was dealt with summarily, in this work Roy emphasized the impact of industrialization on agrarian relations. He pointed out that if extensive industrialization of a country would mean the liberation of the peasantry from feudal bondage, the expropriation of the free cultivator, the gradual elimination of individual production and the transformation of the pauperized peasants into proletarian wage-slaves,—this was exactly what was going to happen in India.[52] A careful study of the programme enumerated in this book would suggest that Roy, while lending cautious support to the bourgeois-nationalist movement against imperialism was however putting forward a programme for the liberation of the working class and the peasantry which would be relevant only in relation to a proletarian revolution. Some of the demands were: workers' control of industry through workers' councils, nationalization of public utilities, unconditional confiscation of landlord's estates and distribution among the poor peasantry, eight-hour day for labour, etc. It becomes evident that Roy, confident as he was about the proletarian seizure of the leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle, put

forward this programme with a kind of utopian conviction. Commenting on this programme, O. V. Martyshin quite correctly observes that putting forward maximum social demands of the working people outside the framework of the bourgeois democratic revolution in the absence of an independent movement of the working class and an influential communist party, in the absence of conditions of an immediate proletarian hegemony in the national liberation movement, led only to artificial aggravation and intensification of the contradictions in the national anti-imperialist front as well as to the isolation of a small group of communists. Such a line, he observes, was a reflection of Roy's ideological position who affirmed that the communist vanguard must head the national movement from the very beginning.[53]

However, it would be wrong to contend that during this period Roy alone stood for these views. V. Vilensky, in a speech at the Communist University of Toilers of the East, dwelt at length on the theme of the development of productive forces in the colonies of the East as a result of penetration of capitalism in these countries.[54] He concluded his speech by observing that the only way that could lead the East away from imperialism's orbit was that of the Russian proletarian revolution. The rationale behind this argument was:

> the capitalist development in some districts of China and India have caused an extensive strike movement in the countries. This once more confirms the fact that the laws of capitalist development are common to the East and West, and that the proletarian movement grows along with the increasing growth of industry.[55]

Roy's position also virtually amounted to the drawing of this mechanical parallel between Europe and the countries of the East. A similar opinion was expressed by Trotsky as early as

1924. He traced two major reasons behind what he described as the process of 'feverish industrialisation' of colonial, semi-colonial and, generally speaking, of all backward countries (which for him included India too) since the end of the War. The first reason he gave was British imperialism's loss of confidence in the bankrupt and emasculated old Europe, with rabid French militarism in the very heart of Europe producing convulsions; the other reason he gave was the feeling of the imperialist countries to look for consumers of machinery and other British and American manufactured goods in the colonies. On the basis of these two arguments he observed that while previous to the War the colonial countries were receiving from Great Britain and the USA only half as much as the capitalistically developed countries, after the War the financial investments in the colonial countrties exceeded to a considerable extent the investments in old capitalist countries; on the contrary, industrial development was being financed mainly in Asia, South America and South Africa.[56]

It has to be noted, however, that despite these viewpoints which did not correspond to the Comintern's understanding of the problems of anti-imperialist struggle in the colonial countries, as outlined in the *Theses on the Eastern Question,* there was no direct refutation or criticism of these views during this period. For that one had to wait till the Fifth Comintern Congress, two years later, in 1924.

IV

The Fifth Congress heard the *Report on the National-Colonial Question,* delivered by Dmitrii Manuilsky. The Report, while reiterating the strategy of an anti-imperialist united front in the colonial countries, also warned against the danger of class collaboration in course of work of the communists with the Kuomintang in China and with the bourgeoisie in Turkey.[57] Roy, however, struck a different tone regarding the question of united

front. In his fairly long speech on the colonial question Roy virtually reiterated his earlier position but this speech was marked particularly by his criticism of Manuilsky's report. First, arguing for his favourite theme of industrialization, Roy said,

In some of the colonies native capitalism has developed quite significantly. It is true that following this development, the conflict between the native and foreign bourgeoisie has sharpened. But the question has another aspect. The class contradiction in the native society too has sharpened. This leads to unrest among the masses. Following the War, this primitive expression of class contradiction, together with unrest, constitutes the foundation of an acute nationalist movement. Earlier, the nationalist movement centred around the intellectuals and the petty bourgeoisie. After the War, this has spread all over the country. The bourgeoisie placed itself at the peak of this discontent, without grasping its class-character. By utilising the forces of this mass-insurrection, it however put forward the demands of its own class. But imperialism immediately made it a point to split the national front by giving concessions through colonial capital. The present crisis of world capitalism has made it possible for imperialism to pursue this new policy. In Egypt as well as India, this policy has had remarkable success. The bourgeois leaders have turned against the participation of masses in the movement. They withdrew support of revolutionary mass-action and went back to the old method of constitutional opposition. Consequently, the nationalist movement has collapsed even in India, where it had gained tremendous strength. In India there exists a developed bourgeoisie and the capitalism there is far more developed than in any other colonial country. Nevertheless, the bourgeoisie has put forward the programme of freeing itself from the Empire. In reality, it does not have any such programme. The nationalist bourgeoisie pleads for Dominion Status. Why ? Because the new economic policy of imperialism leads to industrialisation of colonies. This is exactly what the nationalist bourgeoisie today demands. As soon as its political rights are conceded, it gets itself reconciled with imperialism fully.[58]

Roy further argued that because of the intensity of class struggle the masses were concerned about not national, but class exploitation by the capitalists and big landowners.

The Indian Society stands close to the outbreak of sharp class-struggle. In view of this danger, the Indian bourgeoisie would rush into the arms of imperialism and, when necessary, will not hesitate to crawl under the throne of King George.[59]

These two excerpts from Roy's speech express very clearly the reiteration of his earlier stand on the idea of industrialization in colonies like India as a result of changes effected in imperialism's post-war economic policy. This led to his observation that the course of the liberation struggle would be determined by the intensity of contradiction between the masses and the bourgeoisie who had already aligned with the camp of British imperialism.

This led him to question the idea of applicability of united front tactics in the colonies and criticize Manuilsky's assessment of the potentiality of national movement in India. In his speech Roy attacked particularly the Resolution on the Report of the Executive Committee of the Comintern which called for extension of direct contact between the ECCI and the national liberation movements of the Orient which were obviously led by the bourgeoisie. The Resolution read,

In addition to winning the support of the peasant masses and of the oppressed national minorities, the Executive Committee, in its instructions, always emphasised the necessity for winning over the revolutionary movements for emancipation of the colonial peoples and for all peoples of the east so as to make them the allies of the revolutionary proletariat in the capitalist countries. This requires not only the extension of the direct contact between the Executive and the national emancipation movements of the Orient, but also very close contact between the sections in the imperialist countries with the colonies of those countries, and, in the first place, a constant struggle against the imperialist colonial policy of the bourgeoisie in every country.[60]

Interestingly, Roy tried to defend his position in terms of the *Theses on the National and Colonial Questions* adopted at the Second Congress. Citing the authority of the Theses, he pointed out that the Resolution of the Executive was in clear contradic-

tion with the main direction of the Colonial Theses since the latter, in envisaging united front tactics, had called for not direct contact with bourgeois nationalists but only with the revolutionary workers and peasants.[61] This interpretation of the Theses was, however, a complete travesty of truth. The Theses which were virtually the adopted version of Lenin's *Preliminary Draft Theses on the National and the Colonial Questions* stated very clearly:

> The Communist International should collaborate provisionally with the revolutionary movement of the colonies and backward countries, and even form an alliance with it, but it must not amalgamate with it; it must unconditionally maintain the independence of the proletarian movement, even if it is only in an embryonic stage.[62]

In fact, Lenin's fundamental disagreement with Roy centred around this question of lending support to and establishing contact with the bourgeois democratic liberation movements in the colonies. Roy's interpretation of the Colonial Theses reveals

once again that he could not grasp, even at the time of the Fifth Congress, the dialectical quality of Lenin's flexible formulation of united front tactics. For Roy, a united front would mean exclusively an alliance of workers and peasants since he could not, like Lenin, dialectically fuse the national and the class question in the colonial countries. For Roy it was an 'either-or' issue and accordingly, since for him it was the class question that unilaterally determined the course of the liberation movement in India, he contested Manuilsky's position that the upsurge of the peasantry was a sign of the upswing of the nationalist movement.

> Comrade Manuilsky mentioned that the bloody struggles waged by the peasantry are signs of the upswing of the nationalist movement. This is both correct and incorrect. This is correct in so far as the bloody struggles have taken place and have been suppressed by the military power of English imperialism. Comrade Manuilsky however is wrong when he regards these bloody revolts as the sign of a revival of the nationalist movement. Rather, in reality, these only signify that the early forms of nationalist struggle are already over. These point to the fact that the apparently united nationalist front against foreign domination is split open as a result of class conflict, which sharpens everyday following the course of nationalism.[63]

On the basis of this observation Roy questioned the feasibility of regarding the bourgeoisie as an objectively revolutionary force and of aligning thereby with the colonial bourgeoisie in India. Consequently he argued that only workers and peasants should be organized in a front which would extend support to the nationalist bourgeoisie as long as they would struggle against imperialism. Significantly, in this speech Roy emphasized not the necessity of a communist party (as he did on earlier occasions), but that of a workers' and peasants' party which would accomplish the task of organizing the peasantry and the workers in a front.[64]

The import of Roy's speech in 1924 was thus not substantially different from his stand on earlier occasions. Here too Roy's characterization of the bourgeoisie followed from his formulation about the theme of industrialization in the colonies and his

contraposition of the national and class question. Logically, he followed up the rejection of the idea of a tactical alliance with the bourgeoisie against imperialism by his claim of the possibility of uniting the workers and peasants independently, overestimating the organizational and ideological strength of the proletarian movement in India.

This was exactly the criticism voiced by Manuilsky against Roy in his concluding speech. Manuilsky warned that while it would be wrong to underestimate the strike movements in the colonies, it would also be equally wrong to overestimate the level of economic development in the colonies and regard the strike movements as the beginning of a split in the nationalist movement in terms of polarization of classes. This meant, as Manuilsky elaborated, that Roy was committing the old error of Bukharin who intended to solve the question of self-determination of nations in terms of self-determination of the working class.[65] Methodologically, this would lead to contraposition of the national and the class questions of national liberation and determination of the course of freedom struggle in terms of the class question alone. It must, however, be acknowledged that Manuilsky in his *Report on the National-Colonial Question* appreciated the real and very serious difficulty of pursuing the united front tactics in the colonies where the problem of dialectical fusion of the national and class question had come up. Speaking of the experience of the united front tactics of the Chinese Communist Party, he observed,

> Thus, our sections are faced with a two-fold danger: the danger of ignoring the phenomena which are revolutionising the East, and the danger of losing their proletarian character by collaboration with the petty bourgeoisie—We notice that communists approach this question with great timidity with the result that we lose control over the national liberation movement which passes into the hands of native nationalist elements.[66]

By the time of the Fifth Congress then Roy's position was in complete contradiction to that of the Comintern. Roy's position at the Fifth Congress, the theoretical foundation of which was based on his assessment of the new economic policy of imperialism in colonies like India, thus led him to develop furthermore the idea of industrialization of India and the assessment of the character of the colonial bourgeoisie, emanating therefrom. Keeping in mind the fundamental disagreement between Roy and the Comintern, one cannot but sharply refute the kind of suggestion that for years Roy's views regarding the development of the national liberation movement in India and other colonial countries were the views of the Comintern.[67]

V

Between the Fifth and the Sixth Congress, the colonial question acquired new dimensions. This was the period following the death of Lenin. From the records of the Comintern it is evident that at least till the Fifth Plenum of the ECCI in 1925 the Comintern in its understanding of the colonial question was guided primarily by Lenin's strategy of an anti-imperialist united front, where the nationalist bourgeoisie *as a whole class* would have to be supported as well as exposed, corresponding to its dual role of contradiction as well as collaboration in relation to imperialism. This was reflected in the Resolution of the Fifth Plenum of the ECCI on India in 1925 which, calling for the participation of communists in the National Congress and the left wing of the Swaraj Party, simultaneously instructed them to direct their efforts towards securing leadership over the masses of the peasantry and organizing the amalgamation of trade unions with a view to taking over the leadership of all their struggles.[68] It is rather strange that V. B. Karnik, a leading commentator on M. N. Roy, describes the ECCI Resolution on India as 'a full endorsement of the line that Roy had suggested'.[69]

Actually, however, as evidenced earlier, Roy's idea of a front of workers and peasants was a reflection of his strategy of class versus class, which implied that it was the class issue that unilaterally determined the course of the liberation struggle.

Stalin on the contrary took up a middle position. On the one hand, he interpreted the dual character of the nationalist bourgeoisie in terms of manoeuvres of the two sections of this class which according to him had been split up into revolutionary and reformist wings. On this score Stalin's position appears to be close to that of Roy's. On the other hand, while Roy felt that both of these two wings had gone over to imperialism,[70] leaving open the only other alternative of class versus class strategy, Stalin called for attack on the reformist section while pleading for building up a united front against imperialism, where the revolutionary section would remain a partner of the workers and peasants.

This becomes evident from two important speeches made by Stalin in this period. While reporting on the work of the Fourteenth Conference of the R.C.P.(B) in 1925 he observed that because of the export of capital from the advanced to the backward countries, capitalism in the colonies was rapidly developing, breaking down old socio-political conditions and introducing new ones; consequently, the nationalist bourgeoisie had been split into a revolutionary and an anti-revolutionary wing and hence the task of the communists in such colonies would be 'to link up with the revolutionary elements of the bourgeoisie, and above all with the peasantry, against the bloc of imperialism and the compromising elements of "their own" bourgeoisie, so as to enable the proletariat to wage the battle for liberation from imperialist domination.'[71]

Then, in the oft-quoted speech delivered at a meeting of students of the Communist University of the Toilers of the East, while referring to the Indian situation he observed that India had to be distinguished from Egypt and China where despite the split of the nationalist bourgeoisie into revolutionary and reformist wings the latter had not yet fully gone over to im-

perialism. In India, on the other hand, the compromising wing had struck a deal with imperialism since it was afraid of revolution. Hence fire would have to be concentrated on the compromising wing of the nationalist bourgeoisie and attempts would have to be made for the creation of a revolutionary anti-imperialist bloc and to ensure the hegemony of the proletariat in this bloc. 'But,' he observed simultaneously, 'the Communist Party can and must enter into an open bloc with the revolutionary wing of the bourgeoisie' so that 'after isolating the compromising nationalist bourgeoisie' the masses could be led in the struggle for liberation.[72]

Thus, apparently Stalin's views may appear to have been close to those of Roy, at least in so far as this new strategy did not correspond to the one formulated in the Resolution on India at the Fifth Plenum of the ECCI in 1925. Yet the crucial difference between Stalin and Roy lay in Roy's refusal to extend support to even a section of the nationalist bourgeoisie since for him the latter as a whole class had gone over to imperialism. This fundamental point of distinction, so aptly pointed out by Adhikari,[73] is particularly relevant since later at the Sixth Congress the debate on the colonial question witnessed serious differences of opinion precisely on this issue. It would therefore be absolutely wrong to suggest, as even some marxists have done, that Stalin's strategy was virtually identical with that of Roy (viz. class against class) and that Roy thus found a saviour in Stalin in 1925.[74] This kind of misinterpretation suggests furthermore that since the Sixth Congress bore the heavy imprint of the Stalinist strategy on the colonial question (which no one denies) and since as early as 1925 Stalin was echoing the views of Roy, the Comintern's stand on the colonial question at the Sixth Congress virtually endorsed the Royist strategy while Roy, ironically enough, had to face expulsion immediately thereafter.[75]

This distinction is particularly noteworthy because while Roy's strategy of class against class was based on his idea of industrialization and the consequent decolonization of colonies like India as a result of the changed economic policy of imperialism since the War Stalin, and under his leadership the Comintern, did not share this viewpoint. This would explain the Stalinist strategy of united front (where the revolutionary section of the bourgeoisie was believed to have the possibility of playing a positive role), which was very much different from the one formulated by Lenin and completely at variance with the standpoint of Roy. This disagreement over the economic policy of imperialism vis-a-vis the role of the bourgeoisie in colonies like India and China sharpened over the following years. To appreciate the theoretical position of the Comintern on the growing complexity of the colonial question it is necessary to study the debate in the Comintern on the question of industrialization of India and the historic Trotsky-Stalin controversy on China between 1925-1927, that is, during the period of the first united front. All these episodes that took place in the momentous years between the Fifth and Sixth Congress of the Comintern gradually shaped the colonial question and, consequently, set the pattern of communist movement in the countries of the East.

The Comintern's standpoint on the economic policy of imperialism in the colonies was formulated by Eugen Varga, the official commentator on the economics of capitalism and imperialism. Varga, in his periodic report presented in mid-1925, did not deny that capitalism was developing in the countries of Asia and that the importance of the Asian market for the imperialist world powers was rapidly developing; but while in Japan the process of the development of the nationalist bourgeoisie and a real industrial proletariat was already completed, in India and China it was only beginning.[76] In analysing the Indian situation, Varga observed that while the development of capitalism there could not be denied, its magnitude had to be understood in terms of its position as a colony. While appreciating the importance of Roy's research on India he, however,

gave the hint that the idea of industrialization could not be applied to such a colony since,

Domestic industry and handicrafts, developed to a high degree in India, are not being superseded so much by the development of big industry in the country itself as by the import of foreign manufactures, especially from England. The development of native factory industry has far long been successfully checked, and the homeworkers and craftsmen deprived of employment have not been able to find work in native factories . . . The labour released by the changed circumstances has found no place in industry. The people have either simply starved . . . or have sought to find a refuge in agriculture on the basis of the co-utilisation of the soil (similar to the Russian Mir Constitution) by which they have been enabled to exchange an immediate death from starvation for a condition of shronic [sic !] starvation.[77]

Varga then cited the following figures to indicate the main line of development in India:

	Million Persons			
	1921	%	1911	%
Total population	316	100	313	100
Agriculture	231	73	227	72
Industry	33	10.5	35	11.3
Transport	4.3	1.4	5	1.6
Trade	18	5.7	18	5.7

The figures indicated, as Varga pointed out, that there had been a steady rise in the number of persons living by agriculture, contrasted with a decrease in the number of persons living from industry, transport and trade. In fact, industrial workers had been rendered superfluous and, for lack of occupation, they had to fall back upon agriculture, thus bringing about the state of chronic famine in the country. The conclusion that Varga drew was that on the whole economic life in India had not progressed along capitalist lines as rapidly in the post-War period as during the War.[78]

The implication of Varga's position was that industrialization was not to be understood in terms of export of capital to the colony from the metropolis since this would all the while be directed towards control of native capital by British capital and would in no way lead to the generation of new productive forces. On the contrary, Roy and his associates like G. A. Luhani identified industrialization with the export of capital to the colony in the post-war period although they acknowledged that this process of industrialization, while providing economic opportunities to the Indian bourgeoisie, did at the same time lead to consolidation of the control of imperialist capital. This becomes evident from the writings of Roy and his associates during this period.

In an appeal to the British proletariat in 1925 Roy, after stressing the changes in the post-war economic policy of imperialism in India, observed:

> The characteristic of this new era will be industrialisation of India with capital exported from Britain. This process has been going on for a long time. It is the foundation of modern Imperialism ; but now it will be accelerated.[79]

In another article, written in 1925, Roy further clarified his theory of industrialization in the context of the growing dependent character of Indian capitalism which was flourishing under conditions of dependence on the export of British capital.

> There are very important economic reasons for the political weakness of the Indian bourgeoisie. The basis of pure bourgeois nationalism is the conflict between native capitalism and imperialism. In the present period of capitalist development, this conflict becomes more superficial everyday. Indian capitalism is so much inter-linked with and dependent upon British imperialism, that a serious political conflict leading up to a revolutionary situation has become practically impossible. . . . It was found out that the pre-war policy of forcing the colonies to remain in a state of industrial backwardness could no longer be maintained. Consequently it was decided that an industrialised India would be of much more value to British imperialism than the

agrarian India of the past. The capitalist development of India is thus taking place not in antagonism to British imperialism, but with the sanction and to the interest of British imperialism. This process of industrialisation renders the Indian bourgeoisie a protégé of British imperialism.[80]

Roy thus took the position, very different from that of Varga, that industrialization was possible within the contours of a colonial economy since this was a policy ushered in by imperialism itself in its own interests. The obvious implication is that if industrialization means development of new productive forces, this would be generated by imperialism—a policy that does not correspond to the marxist theory of looking upon imperialism as the main hurdle to the economic development of a colony. In other words, this could clearly be interpreted as a case for British imperialism's policy of economically decolonizing India.

G. Luhani, a close associate of Roy during this period, even argued that the industrialization of India had become the accepted policy of British imperialism and this was manifest in the constant flow of capital from London to various industrial areas in India, where in collaboration with capital supplied by the native bourgeoisie the foundations had been laid for what he described as an industrial revolution after the model of that which happened in Europe generally in the 19th Century in the period of transition from the economy of guild and craft industries to the higher economy of high scale production.[81]

Roy developed this theme of industrialization further and in great detail in his major work written during this period, namely, *The Future of Indian Politics* (1926). In this book he explained elaborately the new economic policy of British imperialism in India in the context of the economic demands of the nationalist bourgeoisie. Traditionally the two main avenues of exploitation open to the Indian bourgeoisie were through investment in land and trade. Over the years the search for more profitable exploitation demanded lucrative investment in industry—an issue that crystallized in the nationalist demand for protection of native

industry—and fiscal autonomy. Britain too, as a colonial power, would not allow the Indian bourgeoisie to readjust the financial and trade relations in a way harmful to British interests. This dispute over the share of booty thus caused the initial conflict between the Indian bourgeoisie and British imperialism.[82] This naturally led the bourgeoisie to demand the control of political power. This, coupled with the exigencies of the War and the necessity of suppressing the revolutionary uprising of the Indian masses with the help of the bourgeoisie, led to the grant of concessions in the form of setting up of a Indian Industrial Commission. Besides these, Roy emphasized particularly the adverse position of Britain in the world trade market in the wake of the War. He showed through a study of a wealth of statistics that British manufacturers were being systematically dislodged from the Eastern markets because of the emergence of Japan as the major competitor. Thus, already in the first quarter of 1925, Japanese import amounted to £ 16,160,285 as against £ 4,861,775 from England. This was more so because of the decline in the process of accumulation of capital in the industries in Britain. Hence, Roy argued, that with the utilization of cheap labour and raw materials, to manufacture in India would be the best possible way out of the crisis. Thus, with the end of the War, a number of iron and steel manufacturing companies were registered in India, all connected with British firms (of these the principal ones cited by Roy were the Indian Iron and Steel Company Ltd., The United Steel Corporation of Asia Ltd. and The Peninsula Locomotive Co.). This, Roy said, would make the tariff walls raised by the Indian Government ineffective against British interests. The result would be protection of the key Indian industries largely promoted and owned by British capital, with native capital participating. At the same time, post-war financial difficulties had forced the Indian Government to raise import duties to a height which for all practical purposes had the effect of protection. This satisfied the traditional demand of the nationalist bourgeoisie, namely, the protection of native industries. This policy of protection was finally put into effect by the Government of India in 1923 in its acceptance of the principle of discriminating protection re-

commended by the Fiscal Commission.[83] The new economic policy of imperialism thus satisfied the nationalist demand for industrialization, fiscal autonomy and protection, strengthening at the same time the stranglehold of British capital on India.

The most important feature of this analysis was that Roy characterized this dependent growth of Indian capitalism as industrialization.

> In the new state of world economy, it has become impossible for the British capitalists to extract tribute from India in the shape of a large unpaid surplus of export over import.... To arrest the shrinkage of British trade with India, caused by the reduction in the latter's export trade, her purchasing power should be otherwise increased. This can be done by raising the standard of living of the Indian people. The standard of living of the Indian people, again, cannot be raised unless the choking grip on her economic life is considerably loosened. On the other hand, since a sufficient market for Indian raw produce cannot be found abroad, it must be created inside the country. This again must lead to industrialisation.[84]

Logically, Roy drew the political conclusion that industrialization of India would on the one hand provide the Indian bourgeoisie with a coveted place under the sun, and lead to the intensification of the exploitation of the Indian proletariat on the other. The agreement between imperialism and the Indian bourgeoisie would give the national struggle a new dimension, namely, class struggle, and the fight for national freedom would thus take place on the basis of the struggle between the exploiter and the exploited masses, at the head of which stood the proletariat.[85] The analysis of this major work of Roy shows that his arguments reflected the basic idea he had been developing over the years since the time of the Second Congress. It becomes evident from a reading of *The Future of Indian Politics* that by 1926 he had made a clear case for industrialization on the basis of interpretation of facts relating to the export of British capital to India.

However, it would be unfair to contend that this idea of industrialization of India under colonial rule was the exclusive

viewpoint of M. N. Roy. The opinion was also to some extent shared at that time by R. Palme Dutt. A careful scrutiny of Palme Dutt's book *Modern India* published in 1926 (later issued by the Communist Party of Great Britain from London in 1927 with a new introduction by R. P. Dutt) would corroborate this argument. At the same time it would be seen that this idea of industrialization, as put forward by Roy and Palme Dutt, was sharply criticized by the Comintern—an issue that makes very interesting reading.

Referring to the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms and the Industrial Commission of 1916-18, Palme Dutt wrote:

> The New Policy is driving towards the Industrialisation of India under British control and for the profit of British investors. In place of a backward agricultural India, kept backward for the advantage of the forward rulers, is set the vision of an 'advanced', 'opened-up', 'industrialised' India—but equally to be drained and bled, only the more efficiently by the foreign domination and its parasitic agents among the Indians themselves.[86]

Dutt then explained the steps through which British capital, in the process of its interlocking with Indian capital, was leading to India's industrialization. These were, firstly, the change of location of British compaines operating in India; that is, they changed their nominal centre from London and entered on the Indian register. Secondly, Britain established banking control. Banking control being a major instrument of the power of finance capital, the amalgamation of the old Presidency banks into the single Imperial Bank of India in 1921 brought every Indian bank and every Indian firm under the control of the British-directed Imperial Bank. The third major step in this direction, Dutt argued, was the direct absorption of and amalgamation with Indian enterprises like the Tata firm. This shows, he explained, the capitulation of Indian capitalist enterprises to imperialism.[87]

Palme Dutt particularly emphasized, like Roy, that the high level of development of capitalism in India had made the proletariat the only class to lead the revolutionary struggle against Imperialism. In other words, like Roy Dutt too did not attach

importance to the question of the peasantry since for him India was characterized basically by the capitalist mode of production.

'Is the working class the inevitable future leader in India? To this question the answer No is still often given.... The arguments in support of this denial follow along lines familiarised in the experience of other countries. It is argued firstly that capitalist development in India is still an open question and not inevitable; secondly, that the peasant basis of Indian society gives it a peculiar character which will separate it from the lines of capitalist development and class struggle,.... These beliefs are all based on traditions and sentiments which no longer correspond to realities in India. Capitalism in India is already far advanced. The Industrialisation of India is the keystone of modern economic and political policy. The class struggle has reached the most extreme intensity in the past half dozen years. The peasantry are becoming more and more 'proletarianised' by the workings of Capitalism, and forced into the field of social struggle. The only leadership for the scattered forces of the peasantry is to be found in the only progressive revolutionary class—the industrial proletariat. All these facts point with absolute certainty to the future hegemony of the working class in India.'[88]

Finally, characterizing the role of the bourgeoisie in the liberation struggle Palme Dutt wrote, almost echoing Roy's position, that the new imperialist policy demanded the co-operation of the Indian bourgeoisie to act as their agents in the exploitation of the Indian masses, that imperialism was almost absorbing Indian capitalism and effecting thereby an economic and political partnership and that consequently the Indian bourgeoisie at every turn was expected to vacillate, to draw back and to go over to the camp of the Government, heavily entangled as its interests were with imperialism.[89]

The positions of Roy and Palme Dutt being nearly identical on the question of industrialization of India, the issue that now comes up is how the Comintern responded to this understanding. In the first place, one has to take note of the fact that the logical conclusion that followed from Roy's and Palme Dutt's analysis of the economic policy of imperialism in India was that the bourgeoisie as a whole class had virtually gone over to imper-

ialism, despite its occasional contradiction with the latter. This, we have seen earlier, was different from the position of Stalin who regarded only a section of the bourgeoisie (that is, the big bourgeoisie) as having betrayed the national revolution completely. In fact, it was this position of Stalin that was reiterated in the *Theses on the Immediate Problems of the International Communist Movement*, adopted at the Sixth enlarged session of the ECCI in February-March 1926. The document, while acknowledging that industrialization was assuming importance in the East, was cautious enough to emphasize the 'desertion of the national-liberation movement by some sections of the native industrial and trading big bourgeoisie of India, and in part of Egypt and China', and the 'social importance of the Indian workers, who are beginning to play an important role in Indian life'.[90]

However, a far more detailed and very sophisticated criticism of the 'industrialization thesis' was put forward by Varga. He intervened in 1928 as he had done in 1925. But this time his analysis of the Indian situation was far more detailed and studded with statistical data. Carefully analysed one finds that in this fairly exhaustive report Varga touched upon three major issues. First, he emphasized the peculiar characteristic of the Indian economy which was marked by the increasing agrarianization of the population with the development of industry. The introduction of machinery was leading to the destruction of the ancient crafts of India, pushing the unemployed population more and more to land. Thus while in 1891 the percentage of those living by agriculture was 61, in 1901 it went up to 66, and in 1911 and 1921 to 72 and 73 respectively. While the pressure of the workers released from industrial callings by the introduction of machinery was on the rise, the yield of Indian agriculture remained almost stagnant. Varga showed that while in 1900-1913 the total yield of crops (rice, wheat and other

grains) amounted to 62.7 million tonnes, in 1925 the figure stood at 64.3 only.[91]

Secondly, Varga argued that the extent of industrialization emphasized by Palme Dutt, Roy, and the latter's associates like Luhani and Hugh Rathbone,[92] was perhaps not correct. Varga applied several standards in testing his hypothesis. First he took into account the distribution of population in the urban and rural districts and pointed out, quoting the Census figures of 1921, that while in 1891 the percentage of town population was 9.5, in 1921 it rose only to 10.2. Then again, taking the 1921 Census data as the basis, he compared the occupation statistics between 1911 and 1921. His findings were as follows:

Agriculture	Mining	Industry	Transport	Commerce
+1.8%	+2.3%	−6.0%	−13.8%	+ 2.0%

The figures obviously represent a general regression of industry. To justify his position Varga showed that in 1921 while 70.9 per cent of the population were engaged in agriculture, only 10.7 per cent were engaged in industry. Compared with this, the percentage of workers in industry was 17.4 in Russia in 1897, 27.5 in Italy in 1910, and even in Spain, the industrially most backward country in Europe, it was no less than 14.6 in 1910.[93]

Thirdly Varga raised the crucial issue, emphasized so much by Roy in his writings, that whether in the post-War years the process of industrialization continued to maintain the same rate of progress as during the war boom. His answer was in the negative. Basing his analysis on the Statistical Abstract of British India, 1915-24, Varga showed that the number of workers employed in different industries proved the insignificance of just those branches which are most characteristic of modern capitalism and most indispensable to modern capital accumulation,

namely, the metal and building industries. This becomes evident from the following figures given by Varga*:

No. of workers in thousands					
Total industry	Metallurgy	Building	Textile industry	Ceramic industry	Outfit industry
15,700	730	810	4030	1080	3400

* The break-up figures are, presumably, incomplete.

This made him observe that since only about 10 per cent of the total number of workers were engaged in metal and building industries while approximately half of all workers was occupied in connection with the clothing of the population, the pattern of industry was mainly one of consumption. Even the growth of the industries that had really flourished, namely, textile, cotton and jute, was not quite remarkable if compared to the rate of development of those industries in China and Japan. In other words, the development of production oriented heavy industries was still a far cry and Varga observed that the so-called industrialization had changed nothing in the fundamental character of India as a predominantly agrarian country.[91]

Against this background Varga explained the temporary phase of industrialization during the War years and a reversal of that policy in the post-War period. He divided the development of British economic policy in India in three major periods. The first period, that lasted till the first year of the War, was characterized by him as one of deliberate prevention of industrialization. The second period, he argued, started from 1916 when the British Government agreed to the introduction of protective duty to the extent of 3.5 per cent on cotton goods. This policy change, he observed, was prompted by four major factors. First was the home-political reason: as the War forced Britain to withdraw troops from India she felt the necessity of neutralizing the Indian bourgeoisie and thus isolating the masses from them, being unable to rely exclusively on the landowners. Secondly, there was the military factor; the Asian theatre of war required industrial production in India. Thirdly, there was an economic consideration: because of shortage of goods, Bri-

tain could not supply the Indian market with manufactured goods and Japan was stepping in as her rival. It is quite obvious that the British bourgeoisie would consider it a lesser evil to promote the industrialization of India than to hand over the Indian market in its entirety to Japan. Finally, there was the foreign-political factor; as the War was being carried on in the name of 'humanity' and 'freedom of nations', it suited the British bourgeoisie perfectly well to make their concessions to the Indian bourgeoisie known to the world. Its manifestation was the Chelmsford Bill, the solemn promise that India would in course of time be granted Dominion Status, and the catchword, the 'decolonisation of India', got prominence.

In pursuance of this policy, Indian industry was granted a protective tariff, figuring on an average as follows:

1914	End of War	1921	1922
5%	7½%	11%	15%

The result was, Varga pointed out, the 'Indianization' of a number of English enterprises. At the same time, because of a great deal of investment of British capital even in the years immediately following the War (1921-1923), this period witnessed tremendous profits of Indian industry, rise in the rate of the rupee up to ten rupees to a pound and a kind of almost undisturbed collaboration between the British and the Indian bourgeoisie.[95]

Both Roy and Palme Dutt regarded this stage as the final one, in their analysis of British imperialism's economic policy. Varga's disagreement was precisely on this point. He noted a third phase that had started since the end of the War, which was marked by changes in the policy of British imperialism regarding industrialization of India. The post-War period was marked by an all-round deterioration of British industry, as coal, iron and steel, cotton and engineering industries suffered a chronic crisis. Hence the entire efforts of Britain were now concentrated on reorganization, rationalization and trustification of home industry and the promotion of exports; this spiralled into consequent

restriction of promotion of India's industrialization. This reversal was marked by three features. First was the almost complete stoppage of emission of British capital in India's direction, the amount being only 27 per cent of the total exported capital. Secondly, Varga pointed out, on the basis of figures cited in *Capital*, that the Government of India was again placing orders, especially for railway material, with British firms. In fact, the shares of Indian locomotive, rolling-stock and engineering works had fallen considerably and several of them had been obliged to close down. Thirdly, after a detailed scrutiny of facts, Varga showed how the deflation of the Indian currency by the British bourgeoisie had severely hit the Indian industry.[96]

Hence the conclusion of Varga was substantially different from the one drawn by Palme Dutt, Roy and his associates. Varga suggested that the British bourgeoisie was by no means pursuing a policy of India's industrialization. In fact, he made the observation that there was the very real 'possibility of a complete return to the old policy, supposing that after the effected reorganisation and rationalisation of British industry a still greater control of the Indian market should prove necessary.'[97]

The political conclusion too was naturally different. While Palme Dutt, and particularly Roy, felt that the nationalist struggle was virtually over with the total betrayal of the freedom movement by the nationalist bourgeoisie and that the social revolution under the leadership of the proletariat was round the corner, Varga held a different position. He said that as a result of the reversal of imperialism's policy the relations between the Indian bourgeoisie and Britain had again deteriorated. The boycott of the Simon Commission and the resolutions of the Indian National Congress to this effect were the political utterances of this conflict.[98]

It is true that Varga, expressing his dissatisfaction at the vacillating role of the Indian bourgeoisie, pinned his faith in the proletariat's capability of leading the national-revolutionary struggle.[99] But it would be utterly wrong to ignore, on this basis,

the fundamental points of difference in the assessment of British imperialism's economic policy in India between Varga on the one hand and Roy and Palme Dutt on the other, and conclude thereby, quoting Varga's articles, that the Comintern was coming round to Roy's position.[100] Moreover, Varga characterized the position of the bourgeoisie as a vacillating one while Roy and Palme Dutt regarded it as having become counter-revolutionary.

Varga's article evoked a strong note of protest from Palme Dutt in June 1928 in the pages of the *Labour Monthly*, just on the eve of the Sixth Congress. While he agreed with Varga's contention that in recent years there had been a definite arrest of industrial development he, however, questioned the adequacy of the factors that Varga had outlined in explaining the temporary phase of industrialization during the War years and immediately thereafter. Rather, Palme Dutt wanted to identify 'the more permanent economic reasons consciously underlying the whole policy of industrialisation'. Quoting from Chapter 4 (entitled 'The Importance of Industrial Development') of the Fiscal Commission Report, 1922, Palme Dutt argued that industrialization was not a temporary phase as suggested by Varga. On the contrary, the Government felt the economic necessity of encouraging this process since that would help 'accumulation of capital', 'more profitable employment for labour', 'enlarging the public revenues', etc. This, Palme Dutt observed, was manifest in the imposition of tariffs and grant of bounties to the iron and steel industry (appointment of the Tariff Board in 1923; the Steel Protection Act, 1924; total suspension of the cotton excise duty, 1925; bounties to the iron and steel industry in 1924-27).[101]

On this basis Palme Dutt proceeded to argue, contradicting Varga, that there were certain specific reasons which would explain the temporary halt of industrialization; moreover, this

temporary break was, far from being a reversal of policy, bound up essentially with the policy of industrialization of India. Palme Dutt identified four major factors in defence of his position.[102]

First, there was the general reason of the cessation of the post-War boom which in the case of British policy towards India created certain special conditions for the temporary reversal of the policy of industrialization. These special conditions constituted the second main reason. This was the financial policy of deflation caused by the post-War crisis of Britain. This was reflected in the Government's decision to fix the rate of rupee at 1s. 6d. in accordance with the recommendation of the Currency Commission of 1925-26, despite the vehement opposition of the Indian bourgeoisie who demanded the old rate of 1s. 4d. But this deflationary policy did in no way contradict the policy of industrialization. Palme Dutt argued that since the character of the British policy of industrialization of India was to secure industrialization under British control, the financial weapon was the most effective one which would strike at the root of Indian industries. In fact, the currency policy was closely bound up with the British policy of establishing a centralized banking system under British control (such as the Imperial Bank of India formed in 1920 by the amalgamation of the Presidency Banks of Bengal, Bombay and Madras). In other words, the currency policy would, despite its attack on Indian industrial development, pave the way for judicious amalgamation of Indian-owned concerns with British interests, enabling the latter to make the Indian industries accept British financial penetration.

Thirdly, the appointment of the Agricultural Commission in 1926 showed that the Government was shifting its emphasis from industry to agriculture and that too was quite in line with the policy of industrialization. Palme Dutt felt that until the bankrupt Indian agriculture could be made viable, at least to a minimum extent, for the expansion of the home market the necessary basis for further industrial development was lacking. At the same time, he also cautioned that this in no way meant that British imperialism wanted to solve the agrarian problem; in fact, the real question of land ownership had been totally excluded from the terms of reference of the Linlithgow Commission.

Finally, Britain's own problem of reorganizing the home industry, restoration of the gold standard with consequent intensified industrial depression and rationalization, had restricted the availability of British capital for export. Hence, Palme Dutt argued, arose the temporary reversal of the policy of industrialization. However, he hoped that as soon as there would be surplus available for export British capital exports to India too would go up.

On the basis of this analysis, Palme Dutt disputed Varga's contention and said that there was

> no ground for drawing from the present situation a conclusion of the abandonment of industrialisation or reversion to the pre-war period, with the consequent political corollary which this would mean of abandoning our central political perspective for India based on the certainty of the growth of the industrial proletariat.[103]

However, it should also be noted that in his polemic with Varga Palme Dutt, despite his overemphasis on the proletariat, did not stick to his earlier characterization of the Indian bourgeoisie as is found in his *Modern India*. In this book the bourgeoisie as a whole had been branded as a counter-revolutionary force; in the article of *Labour Monthly* he took due account of the growing opposition of a section of the bourgeoisie to British imperialism, as manifest in the boycott of the Simon Commission and the adoption of the Independence slogan. This, he argued, marked 'a step forward on the part of the main body of the Indian National Movement from their former isolation and limitations to becoming a conscious part of the world revolutionary fight against imperialism.'[104]

This subtle shift in Palme Dutt's political position, however, should not be confused with his stand on industrialization—an issue on which the position of the Comintern and that of Dutt were virtually contradictory. In fact, on this issue the positions of Palme Dutt and M. N. Roy were almost indentical and this constituted the economic basis of the theory of decolonization,

for which both of them were severely criticized at the Sixth Congress in 1928.[105]

Consequently, these two conflicting trends concerning the analysis of the economic policy of imperialism in India had their heavy imprint on the documents of the Comintern relating to India prepared on the eve of the Sixth Congress. Thus in a report on India released by the Comintern one cannot afford to miss the rather unsuccessful attempt to reconcile the two trends. A careful analysis shows that the report, while suggesting that the World War coupled with the setting up of the Industrial Commission in 1916 and the introduction of a protective tariff system laid the foundation of industrialization, also mentioned several factors which retarded this process.[106] These were, first, the difficulty of granting concessions to the Indian bourgeoisie which would not react to the detriment of British capitalism; secondly, the protracted crisis of British capitalism following the General Strike which put great difficulties in the way of providing the necessary means for carrying out the industrialization of India; thirdly, there was the necessity of a thoroughgoing overhauling of the financial system and the adoption of measures to increase agricultural production and the buying capacity of the peasants; the policy of industrialization was determined strictly by the interests of British capital, by Britain's war needs and thus in such a way as would securely guard the industries that were in British hands in India. Thus the Indian demand for protection of the glass and chemical industries which were largely in Indian hands did not

even receive the consideration of the Tariff Board while a preferential duty for British Steel was introduced in 1927.

Quite clearly, this analysis was closely akin to Varga's position. But again, as far as the role of the Indian bourgeoisie in the freedom struggle is concerned, the report bore the heavy imprint of Roy's ideas. Agreeing that the reversal of the process of industrialization had led to a renewal of the contradiction between imperialism and the bourgeoisie, it virtually wrote off the entire bourgeoisie as a spent force. The Report was particularly critical of the 'Left' elements in the Indian National Congress, which were described as an 'instrument, in the hands of the bourgeoisie, for the penetration and vicarious leadership of the broad working masses.'[107] Logically the earlier call for working class leadership without, however, any perspective of the anti-imperialist united front strategy, was reiterated.[108] One important feature of the Report, however, was the appreciation of the formation of the workers' and peasants' parties, although these could in no way be regarded as substitutes for the leadership to be given by the Communist Party.[109]

By 1928, then, as the Sixth Congress was drawing near, two distinct trends concerning the colonial question in India could be identified. This struggle of two lines erupted into the well-known debate on decolonization at the Sixth Congress.

VI

To appreciate the Comintern's stress on the united front strategy in the colonial countries till the time of the Sixth congress one cannot afford to ignore the experience of the Comintern in China. The initial success and then the retreat of the Chinese Communist Party after 1927 explain, quite graphically, to what extent the Comintern's strategy in the colonies was shaped by the Chinese experience until 1928, when the grim lessons of the Shanghai massacre were distinctly echoed in the new line that emerged from the Sixth Congress.

Like the embryonic communist parties of Indonesia, India

and several other countries of Asia in the early '20s, the CPC too could not appreciate the importance of united front tactics in the struggle against colonial stranglehold and political domination by foreign imperialism in collaboration with the local military warlords. At its First Congress the CPC firmly rejected the tactics of collaboration with other parties, particularly the Kuomintang, the most powerful bloc of national-revolutionary forces in China at that time, operating under the leadership of its celebrated leader, Sun Yat-sen. As in India, so in China too, many Chinese communists regarded the socialist revolution as the immediate task and consequently the idea of a united front with the nationalists (that is, the Kuomintang) was rejected.

It was mainly on the initiative of G. Maring (Sneevilet), a Dutch communist who had been sent to China by the Comintern as the representative of the ECCI immediately after the conclusion of he Second Comintern Congress, that the leadership of the CPC could be made to appreciate the importance of united front. Thus, at the Second Congress of the CPC, a resolution acknowledging the importance of united front was adopted and finally at the Third Congress (1923) the CPC took the decision to join the Kuomintang in accordance with the ECCI Resolution of 12 January 1923. In that resolution the ECCI stated that a national revolution against imperialists and their internal feudal agents (meaning primarily the warlords) was the central task for China and the since the Kuomintang was the only national-revolutionary group in China, the CPC should work inside the Kuomintang. This, however, was in no way to lead to the loss or rupture of the independence of the Communist Party.[110] The participation of the CPC in the Kuomintang was particularly necessary because the membership of the Communist Party was very small and consequently had very little organized hold over the working class and the vast peasant masses.

Within years the Kuomintang, with the communists as the vanguard of its left forces, became a party of the bloc of anti-imperialist forces in China. At the same time this paved the way for a tremendous growth of the CPC and the rapid spread of its influence among the peasants and the proletariat. But, the Kuomintang being essentially a multi-class party, with the

entry of the communists the struggle for leadership between the revolutionary elements and the bourgeois-landlord and militarist circles gradually began to sharpen over the years. While objectively this process stirred the Chinese masses who had so long been under the bourgeois democratic nationalist influences of the Kuomintang, for the CPC as well as the Comintern the unfolding of this process had far deeper theoretical and political implications. On the one hand the front with the Kuomintang had to be maintained in so far as imperialism and Chinese militarism were the common enemies of the Kuomintang and the CPC. On the other hand the CPC had to face the tremendous task of organizing the peasant masses under the leadership of the working class, so as to pressurize the Kuomintang to part with its reactionary elements and force it to move to the left. The CPC being too young at that time it was extremely difficult for it to carry on the two tasks simultaneously, using different tactics. There was every possibility of underrating one line of action while upholding the other, and consequently occasional deviations in either direction could not be ruled out.

With the death of Sun Yat-sen in 1925 the problem assumed serious proportions. On the one hand, impressed with the growth of communist influence the young CPC was hesitant to heighten the momentum of class struggle, particularly on the agrarian front, in the name of maintaining the front with the Kuomintang. On the other hand, within the Comintern the Leninist policy of united front in China came under attack from Leon Trotsky and, under his leadership, virtually the entire Russian Opposition.

Trotsky was all along a violent critic of the Comintern's policy of united front in China. Broadly speaking he voiced his criticisms on two grounds. First Trotsky, referring to Stalin's speech on *The Political Tasks of the University of the Peoples of the East* in 1925, argued that Stalin had committed an opportunist blunder by defending the CPC's entry into the Kuomintang on the ground that in its composition the Kuomintang was a party of workers and peasants. Trotsky believed that the Kuomintang was essentially a bourgeois party, but it was only compelled to seek support from the peasantry and ready to absorb workers into its ranks. Trotsky could not theo-

retically conceive of any such idea of a workers' and peasants' party since to him the proletariat and the peasantry were two exclusive classes and the entry of the peasantry into a workers' party would impede not only the hegemony of the proletariat but would provide the bourgeoisie with an opportunity to use such a two-class party for furthering its own designs.[111]

In meeting Trotsky's charges one has to refer to Stalin's clarification of the stand taken on the class nature of the Kuomintang. Stalin pointed out, in his *Talk with Students of Sun Yat-sen University* in May 1927, that the Kuomintang was the party of a bloc of several oppressed classes, which included the national bourgeoisie, the working class and the peasantry predominated by the petty bourgeoisie. His description of the Kuomintang as a party of workers and peasants in 1925 was based on only 'what classes were in fact linked with the Kuomintang in 1925', since he was thinking of it only as the type of structure for a people's revolutionary party in countries like China as it should emerge, being based on a revolutionary bloc of the workers and the petty bourgeoisie of town and country. Stalin was in fact emphasizing the necessity of a future transition from a united national front to a revolutionary bloc of the workers and the petty bourgeoisie.

> What I had in mind, therefore, was not the present, but the future of people's revolutionary parties in general, and of the Kuomintang in particular.... For organisations like the Kuomaintang can have future only if they strive to base themselves upon a bloc of the workers and the petty bourgeoisie, and in speaking of the petty bourgeoisie one should have in mind principally the peasantry, which constitutes the basic force of the petty bourgeoisie in the capitalistically backward countries.[112]

Secondly, Stalin quite correctly pointed out that it was wholly untrue that marxism did not at all appreciate the possibility of a party of a bloc of oppressed classes, and that it was quite impermissible in principle for marxists to belong to such a party. Stalin here referred to Marx and his supporters who had joined the bourgeois democratic league in Germany at the time of the

German Revolution in 1848. He pointed out that on this score Marx had gone even further than the CPC, since in forming a part of the Kuomintang the CPC retained its independence as a proletarian party with its own special organization.[113]

Trotsky also felt that the situation, because of the upsurge of mass movement in China, was already mature enough to ensure the possibility of proletarian leadership of the Revolution and a complete break of the CPC with the Kuomintang was a historical necessity.

It would be unwise pedantry to maintain that, had a Bolshevik policy been applied in the revolution of 1925-1927, the Chinese Communist Party would unfailingly have come to power. But it is contemptible philistinism to assert that such a policy was entirely out of the question. The mass movement of the workers and peasants was on a scale entirely adequate for this as was also the disintegration of the ruling classes.[114]

Theoretically, the implication of such a stand is first that Trotsky, ignoring the phase of struggle against imperialism, was identifying the stage of the Chinese revolution as one of proletarian revolution. Secondly, by so ignoring the stage of the bourgeois democratic revolution, Trotsky was proceeding from a completely wrong reading of the historical situation in which he, overemphasizing the organized strength of the Chinese working class, treated the proletariat as the only revolutionary force to the exclusion of the national bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeoisie and the peasant masses. From this followed his logical formulation that the Kuomintang was essentially a bourgeois party and that by entering into a front with the Kuomintang, the Chinese proletariat faced the danger of its autonomy being curbed by the bourgeoisie.

At the Sixth Plenum of the ECCI (February—March 1926), the Resolution on the Chinese Question precisely pointed to this danger of overestimating the strength of the Chinese proletariat, as emphasized by the Trotskyite Opposition. The Resolution thus cautioned the CPC against such left moods which tried to skip the revolutionary democratic stage of the movement and ask for proletarian dictatorship and Soviet power,

forgetting all about the peasantry, the most decisive factor in the Chinese revolution.[115]

Trotsky's criticism against the Comintern's policy in China gained momentum after Chiang Kai-Shek's first attempted coup in Canton in early 1926. Sun Yat-sen's death was followed by the rise of Chiang inside the Kuomintang and, with the growing influence of the communists, a process of polarization started within the Kuomintang itself. Thus, at the Second Congress of the Kuomintang held in January 1926, the rightists vehemently opposed the cooperation between the U.S.S.R. and the CPC although their viewpoint was ultimately defeated. The first sign of this manoeuvre was seen when with the departure of Borodin, the Comintern's representative in Canton, Chiang struck out. He claimed to have discovered a conspiracy against his government in Canton and the blame was put on the CPC. On this ground he declared martial law, arrested all political workers of the CPC attached to units under his command, raided the house of Soviet advisers, closed trade unions and thus staged virtually a coup. Consequently, curbs were imposed on communist activity within the Kuomintang. Communist membership in higher executive committees of the Kuomintang was limited to one-third and the CPC was forbidden to instruct individual communists within the Kuomintang.

The situation came up for a detailed analysis at the Seventh Plenum of the ECCI in November 1926. In the *Theses on the Chinese Situation* adopted at the Plenum a sharp rebuff was given to the Opposition which now demanded that Chiang's Canton coup made it an imperative for the CPC to withdraw from the Kuomintang and break the united front. While the Opposition proceeded in its reading of the stage of the Chinese revolution as already a proletarian one, the Theses characterized the stage as a bourgeois democratic one, with the special feature that the Chinese revolution was taking place in a period of world revolution as an integral part of the overthrow of capitalist society. Accordingly, the state that would emerge in course of the revolution would represent a 'democratic dictatorship of the proletariat, peasantry and other exploited classes'. The

Theses pointed out that it would be a revolutionary, anti-imperialist government of transition to non-capitalist development.[116] This, however, did not suggest, as the Theses correctly pointed out, that in the intermediate stage of bourgeois democratic revolution through which China was passing, the national bourgeoisie would not be an ally in the struggle against imperialism. But, the Theses simultaneously cautioned, as the bourgeoisie represented by the Kuomintang found that with the emergence of the proletariat on the scene the anti-imperialist struggle was getting beyond their control and thereby endangering their class interests, they would try to regain their leadership and as a result a parallel counter-revolutionary process would gradually set in. Imperialism, finding the Chinese warlords not fully effective instruments for crushing the revolutionary movement, would seek to induce the nationalist bourgeoisie to part company with the revolutionary bloc.[117]

At the same time, the Theses cautioned, this did not mean, as the Opposition was demanding, that the CPC must sever relations with the Kuomintang, since this would give a handle to the Right Wing inside the Kuomintang and the Canton Government had an anti-imperialist character, at least in so far as Chiang Kai-shek had proceeded in July 1926, along his Northern Expedition against Wu P'ei-fu, Chang Tso-lin and other militarists who were supported by imperialism. The Theses accordingly advised, rejecting the Opposition's demand, that Chinese communists must enter the Canton Government, particularly because the authority of this government was spread over a large territory of the country.[118]

Echoing the spirit of the Opposition, a number of Western scholars have tried to distort the meaning of the Theses. It is argued that by formulating the Theses Moscow was working on a false assumption that for a certain period the communists could simultaneously maintain the united front, intensify mass demands and see to it that the leadership of the mass movements

passed more and more into the hands of the proletariat.[119] It is quite obvious that such critics cannot simply grasp the meaning of the dual tactics of Leninism while working in a united front with the national bourgeoisie in a period of transition, although it cannot be denied that for the young CPC it was a tremendous task to fuse the two aspects of unity and struggle in the period of transition towards a state of democratic dictatorship. However, it would be a complete travesty of truth to say, as many scholars try to suggest, that the Comintern, in the name of maintaining the united front with the Kuomintang, engaged itself in restraining the Chinese workers and peasants from class battles against the landlords and capitalists.[120] On this score their argument implies that the Opposition's standpoint with its emphasis exclusively on class struggle and rejection of the idea of united front was correct. Fernando Claudin, for instance, an ex-official of the Comintern, in his contempt for Lenin as well as in his failure to appreciate the flexibility of the Leninist line of united front in the colonies, has gone to the fantastic length of arguing that Stalin simply pushed out the Colonial Theses of Lenin and the Supplementary Theses of Roy and popularized the Preliminary Draft Theses of Lenin, on which he could rely more confidently in order to justify his policy of tailing behind the national bourgeoisie in China—as if the adopted Colonial Theses were fundamentally different from the Preliminary Draft Theses.[121]

Indeed, a careful scrutiny of the proceedings of the Seventh Plenum would completely refute the charges. The Theses specifically stressed that it would be a mistake to limit the immediate tasks of the Chinese revolution to (a) overthrowing imperialism,

and (b) liquidating the remnants of feudalism, on the ground that the revolution was a bourgeois democratic one ; the Chinese revolution, the Theses emphasized, would not be able to overthrow imperialism without going beyond the limits of bourgeois democracy.[122] Then the Theses described the agrarian question as 'the central point of the present situation' and outlined a programme of demands aimed at drawing the bulk of the working class into the movement and strengthening its position in the national revolution.[123] In fact, the Comintern sharply criticized the vacillations of the CPC in regard to the launching of the peasantry's struggle in the countryside. Thus Bukharin in his Report to the Plenum on The World Situation and the Tasks of the Comintern said,

> The chief error committed by the CPC despite its generally correct policy, was the insufficient attention of the Party towards the peasant question. Unnecessary fear as to the development of the peasant movement and insufficient insistence on the necessity of conducting agrarian reforms in the areas occupied by the Kuomintang constituted the main trend of the errors. The task of the Party should also be to adopt a decisive course towards organising the widest strata of the toiling masses while preserving the united national revolutionary front, and simultaneously a course towards forming, supporting, extending and strengthening the organisation of the revolutionary peasantry.[124]

Petrov, representing the Soviet Union, also argued that the CPC had a tendency to exaggerate the meaning of the national revolutionary united front and for fear of frightening and antagonizing the middle and petty bourgeoisie it was sometimes inclined to hold back the labour movement. He even said that it would be wrong to issue the united front slogan in the rural districts and there could be no talk, because of increasing development of class struggle, between the peasants and landowners.[125]

This, however, did not imply, as people like Pavel Mif of the Opposition demanded, that peasant Soviets would have to be

formed immediately in the countryside. On this score Stalin pointed out very correctly in his speech on *The Prospects of the Revolution in China* delivered at the Plenum, that peasant Soviets could only be organized had China been at the peak of a peasant movement—almost on the verge of building a new power—meaning thereby that the ties with the national bourgeoisie were as if snapped and the united front giving way to the rise of Soviet power. But this would be a futile attempt while maintaining the united front with the Kuomintang till then.

Consequently, to speak of Soviets now would be running too far ahead. Consequently, the question that should be raised now is not that of Soviets, but of the formation of peasant committees. I have in mind peasant committees elected by the peasants, committees capable of formulating the basic demands of the peasantry and which would take all measures to secure the realisation of these demands in a revolutionary way. These peasant committees should serve as the axis around which the revolution in the countryside develops.[126]

Despite Comintern's correct guidelines and warning against the left deviation of the Opposition and the rightist mistakes committed by the CPC the latter, however, failed to apply properly, amidst serious difficulties, the united front tactics in the years immediately following the Seventh Plenum.

In early 1927, in course of the Northern Expedition by the Kuomintang against the military warlords, a revolutionary government was formed in the Wuhan cities by the Left forces within the Kuomintang with the support of the CPC, which, however, Chiang Kai-shek tried to sabotage from his headquarters in Nanchang, the capital of Kiangsi province. In response, the Wuhan leftists together with the support of the CPC and the working people removed Chiang from his party and army positions. In retaliation, and taking full advantage of the CPC's lack of organizational alertness Chiang, under cover of repulsing Sun Ch'uan-fang, the local warlord of Shanghai, actually struck a deal with the army and staged his second coup in Shanghai in April 1927. This time the strike was directed

with ruthless ferocity primarily against the Shanghai communists and the trade unions and in the regin of terror that followed with full support of the rightist section within the Kuomintang, the communists in Shanghai were virtually eliminated.

Immediately thereafter the Eighth Plenum of the ECCI was convened in Moscow in May 1927, where the new turn in the Chinese revolution came up for a detailed discussion. The Plenum witnessed a major confrontation between the Opposition led by Trotsky and the Comintern. Trotsky made a vitriolic attack on the Comintern's policy in China, alleging that the Comintern had betrayed the cause of the Chinese Revolution by ignoring the Opposition's viewpoint and consequently could not prevent the Shanghai coup of Chiang Kai-shek. Broadly speaking, he directed his criticism of the Comintern line from two angles. First, he argued that by entering into a block with the national bourgeoisie the Chinese proletariat had subordinated its class interests to the bourgeois leadership and consequently inhibited its independent class action. This, Trotsky said, had nothing to do with marxism and was sheer opportunism.[127] Secondly, and this followed from his first position, he questioned the CPC's working with the revolutionary Wuhan government of Wang Cheng-Wei and called for an immediate withdrawal from the Kuomintang. His position was that it would be a dangerous and politically wrong formulation to advise the CPC to launch agrarian struggles in the Wuhan while collaborating simultaneously with the petty bourgeois radicals of the government of Wang Cheng-Wei. Rather, to successfully carry out the agrarian struggles, what was necessary was to build up workers' and peasants' Soviets ; to arm the masses through the Soviets, draw soldiers' representatives into thte Soviets and shoot the generals, bureaucrats and bourgeois liberals who would organize uprisings against the Soviets.[128]

The position was further defended by Vuyovich, a leading member of the Opposition, at the Plenum. He argued that in the Hankow regime (the seat of the Wuhan government), to make the agrarian revolution really successful the working class and the peasantry had to be organized into Soviets since the Kuo-

mintang petty bourgeoisie would always vacillate between the big bourgeoisie and the proletariat and would eventually pass over to the more powerful side (meaning the big bourgeoisie).[129]

In defeating the erroneous viewpoint of the Trotskyite Opposition, Stalin, on behalf of the Comintern, played a crucial role in the Plenum. First, Stalin in his speech stated that Trotsky's basic mistake had been that of misreading the stage of the revolution in China since he denied the predominant importance of feudal-militarist oppression receiving every support from imperialism. Consequently Trotsky underestimated the agrarian revolution in China, failed to understand the bourgeois democratic stage of the Chinese revolution, and appreciate thereby the role of the peasantry in China. For Trotsky, Stalin argued, it was all the more so since for him, with the differentiation of the peasantry and the growing confrontation between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, the importance of the agrarian revolution was no longer important; consequently, capitalism and the bourgeoisie became for Trotsky the main enemy and the proletariat the leader of the revolution.[130]

In defending the Comintern's standpoint on Soviets too Stalin provided a sharp rebuff to the Opposition's viewpoint. Proceeding from the premise that while the Wuhan government and the Kuomintang in Wuhan represented the centre of the bourgeois democratic revolution in China and Nanking and the Nanking government under Chiang Kai-shek constituted the centre of the national counter-revolution, he pointed out that to issue the slogan of workers' and peasants' Soviets would lead to, when the bourgeois democratic revolution was in the initial phase of its development, disorganization of the revolutionary movement and the weakening of Wuhan and helping its downfall, providing thereby a handle to Chang Tso-Lin and Chiang Kai-shek.[131] The Soviets, Stalin pointed out, were primarily organs of an uprising against the existing power, organs for the establishment of a new revolutionary power. The Opposi-

tion did not understand that only as organs of an uprising, only as organs of a new power, could the Soviets of workers' and peasants' deputies become centres of the revolutionary movement.

. . . .It follows that if we were to set up Soviets in China, we should at the same time be setting up a 'regime of dual power', overthrowing the Wuhan government and forming a new, revolutionary power. Trotsky is here obviously taking as a model the events in the history of the Russian revolution in the period prior to October 1917. At that time we really did have a dual power, and we really were working to overthrow the provisional Government.[132]

Accordingly, Stalin suggested that Soviets would have to be set up in China during the period of transition from the bourgeois democratic revolution to the proletarian revolution, a stage which would be unavoidable for China in the near future. To this effect Stalin suggested,

It is necessary first to enable the agrarian movement to develop throughout China, it is necessary to strengthen Wuhan and support it in the struggle against the feudal-bureaucratic regime, it is necessary to help Wuhan to achieve victory over the counter-revolution, it is necessary broadly and universally to develop peasant associations, workers' trade unions and other revolutionary organisations as a basis for the setting up of Soviets in the future, it is necessary to enable the Chinese Communist Party to strengthen its influence among the peasantry and in the army—and only after this may Soviets of workers' and peasants' deputies be set up as organs of struggle for a new power, as elements of a dual power, as elements in the preparation for the transition from the bourgeois democratic revolution to the proletarian revolution.[133]

Participation in the Wuhan government and maintaining a united front with the Kuomintang did not mean, as Trotsky alleged, that the CPC would become an appendage of the bourgeoisie. Clarifying this position, Stalin spoke of

. . . .the participation of the Communists in the Wuhan Kuomintang and in the Wuhan revolutionary government, a parti-

cipation which does not exclude, but rather presupposes strenuous criticism by the communists of the half-heartedness and vacillation of their allies in the Kuomintang. The Communists must utilise this participation to facilitate the proletariat's role of hegemon (sic!) in the Chinese bourgeois-democratic revolution, and to hasten the moment of transition to the proletarian revolution, ... when that time comes the Communists must replace the bloc within the Kuomintang by a bloc outside the Kuomintang, and the Communist Party must become the sole leader of the new revolution in China.[134]

This perspective constituted the central focus of the Resolution on the Chinese Question adopted by the Eighth Plenum. In this Resolution it was pointed out that with the Shanghai coup of 1927 a new correlation of forces had arisen in China although the bourgeois democratic stage of the revolution was still there. Chiang's coup showed, the Resolution pointed out, that the revolution in China had passed on to a higher stage: the earlier bloc between the bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie, peasantry and the proletariat had collapsed and was beginning to be transformed into a block between the proletariat, peasantry and petty bourgeoisie in which the proletariat was increasingly assuming a leading role. This meant that the national bourgeoisie had separated itself and opposed the Left bloc of the proletariat, peasants, and the petty bourgeoisie.[135] However, the Resolution cautioned that it would be dangerous to toe the line of the Opposition and break with the Kuomintang immediately on the plea that the national bourgeoisie had betrayed the people. The Resolution said that in China the Kuomintang was the specific Chinese form of organization in which the proletariat came into direct contact with the petty bourgeoisie and the peasantry. Underestimation of the Kuomintang would lead to the Kuomintang being captured by the Right wing, and this would be so because the anti-imperailst, national liberation revolution had not yet ended and given way to a class revolution of the proletariat and the peasantry in China.[136]

Looking upon the two aspects of unity and struggle dialectically at the stage of the anti-imperialist, bourgeois democratic

revolution, the Resolution simultaneously cautioned that a united front with the Kuomintang should not be made a plea for restraining class struggles and losing the identity of the CPC.

While preserving and developing its own Party organisation, the Communist Party of China must to an increasing degree exercise influence over the work of the Kuomintang. It will be able to fulfil this task only to the extent that it is completely conscious of its own class proletarian position, that it strengthens and consolidates its own organization,.... The E.C.C.I. notes that waverings have been observed in the Communist Party of China precisely on this point and that the Party has not always with adequate firmness criticised the leaders of the Kuomintang and that within the Party there was at times expressed the fear of the development, especially the movement of the peasant to capture land and evict the gentry and landlords, etc. These warnings, particularly harmful at this stage of the revolution show that not all the comrades in the Communist Party of China have sufficiently clearly understood the line of policy of the Comintern in the Chinese Revolution.... The Communist Party of China as a Party of the working class must take the leadership of the agrarian movement of the peasantry into its own hands and ruthlessly combat every effort to restrict the extent of that movement.[137]

This was in perfect agreement with the *Theses on the Chinese Situation* adopted by the Seventh Plenum of the ECCI in 1926. The Resolution of the Eighth Plenum fused into a dialectical unity the two apparently contradictory issues of united front tactics in the anti-imperialist struggle. It is not unnatural that Western historians, who are not prepared to accept the dialectical framework, find the position of the Eighth Plenum on China 'impractical', 'contradictory', 'impossible',[138] and, methodologically speaking, the same mistake was committed by Trotsky. In failing to fuse together the two issues dialectically Trosky put premium on the class question ; on the contrary, the young and inexperienced CPC, in the name of maintaining unity, neglected the class question while implementing the tactical line. This has been corroborated by Chinese marxist historians too. Thus it has been stated that despite Comintern's correct guidelines Chen Tu-hsiu, the then General Secretary of CPC, followed a

definite right-deviationist line in regard to the CPC's political and organizational work within the Kuomintang. By placating the landlord and bourgeois elements of the Kuomintang, the CPC gave a handle to the reactionary forces. Even after Chiang's Shanghai coup, at the Fifth Congress of the CPC held immediately thereafter, Chen Tu-hsiu was reelected General Secretary, and despite the call of condemning opportunism the same rightist line was continued in practice.[139]

While the Eighth Plenum of the ECCI witnessed a rout of the Opposition, immediately thereafter there was a new turn in the Chinese revolution. In Wuhan the situation was getting complicated. In the areas dominated by the communists the peasants were rising in revolt against local landlords and militarists. In retaliation, in the province of Hupeh and Hunan the military commanders struck against the revolting peasants, rounded up labour and peasants leaders, and a violent confrontation ensued between the revolting peasants and the counter-revolutionary garrisons in which thousands of peasants were killed. This was followed by the betrayal of the Wuhan Government led by Wang Cheng-Wei who, on the plea that the CPC was instigating the peasantry against the Kuomintang, opened up a savage offensive against the communists.

Analysing this new turn in the Chinese Revolution the ECCI pointed out that for so young and inexperienced a party as the CPC it was particularly difficult to anticipate this kind of sudden twists and turns in the situation, although this did not at all disprove the validity of Comintern's earlier stand on the Wuhan government. It was quite possible that with the development of peasant unrest the so-called Left Kuomintang, dominated by

Wang Cheng-Wei, would capitulate to the enemies of the revolution, i.e. to the reactionary army generals. And this is exactly what happened. The Left Kuomintang failed to support the agrarian revolution, encouraged disarmament of workers and punitive expeditions against workers. In such a situation the CPC should have, as the ECCI pointed out,

> according to the instructions of the Comintern, developed and led the agrarian revolution, openly criticised and exposed the half-hearted and cowardly attitude of the 'radical' leaders of the Wuhan government and the C.C. of the Kuomintang, warned the masses of the possibility of their betrayal by the generals, armed ever greater number of workers, and pushed the Kuomintang and the national government determinedly on to the real revolutionary path.... Some leaders of the Party issued openly opportunist slogans, such as: 'The Revolution must be broadened before it is deepened'.[140]

Characterizing the Wuhan government as having become counter-revolutionary, the ECCI very correctly stated,

> The acute tension of the revolutionary situation requires a rapid grasp of the features peculiar to each moment; it requires skilful and timely manoeuvres, rapid adaptation of the slogans, the timely reorganisation of the ranks of the proletarian vanguard, energetic action corresponding to altered conditions, and the decided rupture of blocs which have ceased to be factors of the revolutionary struggle, and have become obstacles in its way.[141]

Accordingly, the ECCI advised the CPC to immediately withdraw from the Wuhan government but not from the Kuomintang, since despite the anti-communism of the Kuomintang the CPC still had chances open to induce the Kuomintang masses to demand the removal of the present leadership. Simultaneously, the CPC would have to build up labour organizations among the masses.[142]

At the Joint Plenum of the Central Committee and Central Control Commission of the CPSU held in August 1927, Trotsky again attacked the Comintern's policy in China, alleging that

the 'centrist' policy of Stalin had already proved its bankruptcy, that the Wuhan debacle was explained by the fact that the Comintern all along insisted on putting a brake on the agrarian struggle in the name of maintaining the united front with the Kuomintang, that the Comintern's policy had actually jeopardized the independent role of the CPC, and that the Comintern had committed an unpardonable blunder by not breaking with the Left Kuomintang and building Soviets.[113] However, as we have already seen, the Comintern had all along laid particular stress on the unleashing of the agrarian struggle while maintaining the front with the Kuomintang. Trotsky's undialectical understanding of the united front tactics could not, quite logically, enable him to grasp the theoretical significance of the Comintern's policy in China.

Clarifying the Comintern's position Stalin quite correctly explained that it was completely wrong for the Opposition to assert that the desertion of the petty bourgeoisie to the camp of counter-revolution, as manifest in Wang Cheng-Wei's betrayal, meant that the Comintern's policy had been basically incorrect. The policy of the Comintern was dictated by the Leninist policy of seeking the best allies for the Chinese proletariat. While at the first stage of the revolution the proletariat's allies were the peasantry, the urban poor, the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia and the national bourgeoisie, with Chiang Kai-shek's betrayal and the shift of the revolutionary movement from Canton to Wuhan, the proletariat's allies turned to be the peasantry, the urban poor and the petty bourgeois intelligentsia, and the revolution entered its second stage. In course of this alliance the proletariat had been able to strike its roots deeper into the Chinese masses and strengthen its ties with the peasantry. This, coupled with the pressure of the imperialists, made the Wuhan petty bourgeoisie panicky and led to its betrayal. With this the Chinese revolution entered a third stage where the proletariat was emerging as the leader.[114] It is quite true that this overestimated assessment of the Chinese proletariat was perhaps not wholly correct; yet, as marxist scholars of today point out quite plausibly, at that time

such an assessment was not unnatural because, since joining the front with the Kuomintang the ranks of the CPC grew into 58,000, of whom 53.8 per cent were workers, 18.7 per cent peasants, 19.1 per cent intellectuals and 3.1 per cent army men.[145]

As regards Trotksy's stand on Soviets, Stalin very correctly observed that the Opposition was completely mistaken in believing that the Comintern was in principle opposed to the building of Soviets in China. What the Opposition confused was that it could not differentiate the formula 'All Power to the Soviets' as a perspective from 'All power to the Soviets' as a slogan of the day; by giving this slogan before the Wuhan debacle the Opposition 'was running too far ahead, exposing the Party to the threat of being completely isolated from the broad masses', from the working people who still believed in the Kuomintang leadership, and particularly from the peasantry. As long as the Wuhan Kuomintang had proved its worth the CPC tried to utilize its bourgeois democratic potential; now its betrayal impelled the CPC to put forward the slogan: 'Down with the Kuomintang leadership in Wuhan'. Apparently the two positions were contradictory; but analysed dialectically they constituted a single whole and the essence of this Leninist principle of change of tactics was explained by Stalin as one of timely replacement of one slogan by another, so as to enable the broad masses of the working people to recognize the correctness of the Party's line on the basis of their own experience.[146]

It was not therefore at all unnatural for the Comintern to suggest that if after withdrawal from the Wuhan government the efforts of the CPC to revolutionize the Kuomintang did not meet with success, it was necessary to change the propagandistic slogan of Soviets into a slogan of immediate battle and to proceed at once to the organization of Soviets of workers, peasants and artisans.[147] Such a complex situation could not be correctly grasped also by the CPC and the Comintern sharply criticized the rightist deviation of the Party.

The representatives of this deviation assume permanent rela-

tions between the fundamental class forces of Chinese society; they do not grasp the complete necessity and inevitability of a development of class antagonisms within the formerly united national revolutionary front, nor do they comprehend the complete inevitability of the resultant regroupings of the classes. . . .[148]

Consequently the Comintern stressed the necessity of propagating the Soviet slogan in order to begin to organize Soviets as soon as there would be another revolutionary situation.[149] It would be absolutely wrong to suggest, therefore, that the Comintern accepted Trotsky's position on Soviets after the Wuhan debacle as is claimed by Trotsky.[150] The perspective of the Opposition being completely different there was no contradiction but a dialectical unity between the Comintern's earlier and later stand on Soviets, in two different historical situations.

That the Comintern's dual policy of maintaining alliance with the Kuomintang and preparing for organizations of Soviets was correct became evident in the Nanchang and Canton insurrections of late 1927 which, however, ultimately failed because of altogether different reasons. While in Nanchang the CPC, with the help of the Left Kuomintang army and the miners of Hanyehping, could stage an armed insurrection of troops in the case of the Canton insurrection the communists staged the uprising independently against the local Kuomintang. For the first time the Canton proletariat could organize Soviets as organs of power and held the city heroically for two days, although ultimately the resistance collapsed in Nanchang as well as Canton, in the face of a superior enemy offensive of the Kuomintang and also because of organizational shortcomings in the staging of these uprisings. This marked the end of the first united front in China from 1925 to 1927.

Interestingly, Trotsky now took up a completely different position. He now described the Canton insurrection and the attempt to build Soviets as leftputschist attempts to artificially boost up the falling revolutionary wave in China since for him the Chinese revolution, at least for the time being, was on the

decline ever since the Shanghai coup of Chiang Kai-shek.[151] On the contrary, another tendency developed which inspired by the heroic feat of the Chinese proletariat in the Canton insurrection pleaded for a theory of 'permanent revolution'; it described the bourgeoisie as not a very serious class force and felt that the Chinese revolution was developing along a continuously ascending line, excluding defeats and zig-zags. This led to the conclusion that the stage of the bourgeois democratic revolution in China was over and that the stage of the socialist revolution had arrived.[152]

The Ninth Plenum of the ECCI held in early 1928 warned against both these deviations. Sharply attacking the left-extremist viewpoint the Resolution on the Chinese Question adopted at the Plenum pointed out that it was wrong to characterize the Chinese Revolution as having reached the stage of the socialist revolution; rather, the period remained one of the bourgeois democratic revolution, which had not yet been completed either from an economic point of view (the agrarian revolution and abolition of feudal relations), or from the point of view of national struggle against imperialism (the unification of China and its national independence), or from the point of view of the class character of the government (dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry).[153] The desertion of the bourgeoisie only showed that the proletariat had become the driving force of the bourgeois democratic revolution in the new situation after the collapse of the united front.

At the same time the Comintern also cautioned against Trotsky's theory of 'falling wave' of revolution in China. While the Canton insurrection and the heroic struggle of the Chinese proletariat did not suggest that the revolution in China would continue uninterrupted, it certainly proved that the CPC was heading towards the historical possibility of an organized armed revolt. What was needed was the concentration of all efforts of the CPC on the daily, careful preparation of the armed revolt in all localities—from the leadership of the daily economic

struggles of the working class up to the creation of volunteer detachments. On this score the Comintern sharply differed from the exponents of the theory of 'permanent revolution' who looked upon the emergence of the ascending line of revolution as a matter of spontaneity; the Comintern, in the correct Leninist spirit, pointed to the crucial necessity of regular, mass work for the consolidation of the CPC and severely criticized the CPC's overestimation of direct action, guerilla struggle and insurrection without necessary preparations leading to the ultimate collapse of the Nanchang and Canton insurrections. 'The Ninth Plenum's central emphasis was on developing continuous contact with the masses, particularly the peasantry.'[154] As we all know today the idea of future Red Army detachments drawn from the peasantry was based on this precept and it took years for the CPC to painstakingly consolidate its roots among the masses for the ultimate victory of the Chinese Revolution.

It is quite true that the united front tactics in 1925-1927 did not bring victory to the CPC. This, however, does not suggest that the tactics formulated by the Opposition against the Comintern were correct. This precisely is what contemporary Western scholars attempt to do, while denigrating the exceptionally valuable contribution of the Comintern to the Leninist application of united front tactics in China. In their crusade against the Comintern and their passionate zeal for defending Trotsky's position they fail to note that in the history of the international communist movement the problem of correct correlation of the national and class factors in the anti-imperialist revolution came up for the first time and in fusing the two issues the CPC had to work in an extremely complex and difficult situation. The broad masses still believed in the Kuomintang, the Army Commanders were under Kuomintang leadership and, above all, there was the serious rightist deviation of the CPC, particularly when it had to deal with such a crafty enemy as the Chiang Kai-shek clique.[155] In assessing the policy of the Comintern in China Stalin thus quite correctly pointed out that a correct policy did not always and without fail lead to direct

victory over the enemy, since direct victory was not determined by the correct policy alone. 'It is determined', he stated,

first and foremost by the correlation of class forces, by a marked preponderance of strength on the side of the revolution, by disintegration in the enemy's camp, by a favourable international situation.[176]

The defeat of the CPC can thus in no way be regarded as a plea for denying the validity of the Comintern's contribution to the developemnt of the Chinese revolution in 1925-27.

First, in its struggle against the Opposition and the ultra-leftism of some of the representatives of the ECCI in China (after the Wuhan debacle), the Comintern quite rightly warned against the attempt to confuse the stage of the revolution with the forces of the revolution. Throughout 1925-27 the stage of the revolution remained basically bourgeois democratic while with changes in the historical correlation of forces there was a process of continuous shift in the forces of the revolution. Accordingly, the tactics had to be changed with continuous struggle against the right and the left deviations. This was an invaluable contribution in so far as this provided the correct Leninist perspective of viewing the stage of the revolution historically and not mechanically, it terms of political shifts in the correlation of class forces within the united front.

Secondly, the Comintern pointed to the crucial importance of the peasant question in China, an issue that was totally ignored by Trotsky in his zeal for capturing the leadership of the bourgeois democratic revolution by the proletariat. As early as 1920, at the Second Congress of the Comintern, Lenin had emphasized this question of the peasantry in the backward countries of the East and urged the embryonic communist parties in the colonial countries 'to strive to lend the peasant movement the most revolutionary character'.[177] By the end of 1927, it became evident that the closest ally of the Chinese proletariat in the revolutionary struggle was the Chinese peasantry and not the bourgeoisie. The Kuomintang resistance against thte consolidation and spread of the agrarian revolution in Wuhan, its fierce

counter-attack against the Nanchang and Canton uprising, testified to this fact.

Thirdly, the experience of the Comintern's line in China signified the crucial importance of preserving the independent role of the Communist Party while working with the national bourgeoisie within the framework of the united front. Trotsky regarded this as the ground for pushing the Communist Party towards an attempt at independent capture of power, while most of the leadership of the CPC largely failed to appreciate the issue at all, hesitating quite often to unleash the peasant's struggles in the face of the opposition from a section of the Kuomintang. This only shows that neither the Opposition nor the CPC leadership could correctly grasp the crucial theoretical significance of preserving and upholding the independent role of a growing party like the CPC in the perspective of a dialectical fusion of the national and class questions of anti-imperialist struggle within the framework of the united front.

Finally, the Comintern drew attention to the tremendous, to some extent autonomous, and often decisive role of the military factor in the Chinese Revolution,[158] a detailed analysis of which was made by the Chinese Commission at the Seventh Plenum of the ECCI in 1926. Thus A.S. Bubnov, speaking in the Commission, stated that it was wrong to regard Chinese militarism simply as a formation of feudal or semi-feudal order. Rather, because of the extraordinary backwardness of the Chinese economy, the decay of the central apparatus of state power, and gigantic agrarian overpopulation, Chinese militarism had developed as one of the main canals of capitalist accumulation in China surrounded by a whole host of state organs of semi-feudal order, and linked with some group or the other of foreign imperialsim. Later, marxist historians of China acknowledged that had the CPC at that time appreciated the advice of Stalin at the Seventh Plenum—that in the Chinese Revolution genuine revolutionary armed forces were of greatest importance to defeat Chinese militarism and the reactionary Kuomintang army, that it was extremely important for the communists to study military sciences, to lead the armed forces and develop the revolution in the countryside among the peasants—it may not

have been possible for the enemy to have defeated the revolution at a single stroke.[159]

In a way, India and China provided two different types of experience. So far as India is concerned, the Comintern was primarily preoccupied with the economic policy of imperialism. In case of China, however, the Comintern's involvement was basically political, concerned as it was with the united front tactics of the CPC. The two problems may appear to belong to two distinct categories. It will be seen however, as it became evident very soon at the Sixth Congress, that the two issues constituted virtually two aspects of a single issue, namely, the revolutionary struggle against imperialism in the colonial countries. Without an analysis of the economic policy of imperialism, it was felt, it would be futile to formulate the strategy and tactics of revolution in the colonial countries. In that respect, the experiences of the Comintern in India had to be heavily drawn upon. Consequently, at the Sixth Congress these two questions came up but as integral elements of a single problem. The debate on decolonization, and the consequent adoption of the new Colonial Theses, which virtually shaped the Comintern's pattern of analysis of the colonial question in the Sixth Congress, centred around the discussion of precisely these two issues. This, quite obviously, requires a detailed study, an attempt of which has been made in Chapter Four.

4

The Great Debate

I

IN THE literature on Comintern the Sixth Congress has always been treated as a major landmark, particularly with regard to the colonial question. The Congress witnessed extremely valuable discussions on the issue in great detail and the finally adopted *Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semi-colonies* became a turning point in the understanding of the colonial issues. As indicated earlier, the controversy on the colonial question that had been brewing since the Second Congress and that had been maturing over the years, finally erupted in the Sixth Congress. Moreover, the central theme around which the debate took place was the question of industrialization of colonies under imperialism, which ultimately led to the controversy on decolonization. India constituted the main subject-matter of this discussion.

The Comintern's position was made clear in the *Draft Programme of the Communist International* as adopted by the Programme Commission of the ECCI. In this Programme a clear indication was given that the Comintern did not share the ideas of M. N. Roy, Palme Dutt, G. A. K. Luhani and others, that in countries like India capitalism had already reached a mature stage whereby the proletariat was in a position to take up the leadership of the nationalist movement. With regard to colonies and semi-colonies like India and China the Programme said

> In these countries industry is in an embryonic stage, sometimes in a fairly well-developed stage but inadequate for independent Socialist construction. Feudal mediaeval relationships predominate in the economies as well as in their political superstructure, and the important industries, commerce, banks and principal means of transport, etc. are concentrated in the hands of foreign imperialist groups. The most important task in such countries is agrarian peasant revolution on the one hand, and to fight for

national independence against the foreign imperialists on the other.[1]

This assessment of the level of capitalist development in the colonies with consequent emphasis on the agrarian revolution was not however, shared by the Indian delegates at the Congress.[2] Raza, participating in the debate on the Programme as presented by Bukharin, criticized him for not mentioning the fact that the British Government had inaugurated a new industrialization policy after the World War.[3] Bukharin said in reply that he did not think British imperialism had embarked on a policy of industrialization of India. In support of his contention he referred to the fall in the flow and investment of capital, which in turn checked the process of economic development; this, he argued, was converting the peasants not into urban workers but into semi-beggars on the land, robbed and enslaved. This led to retardation of the development of the home market as well as of industry.[4]

The debate then took a new turn with the presentation of the report on the revolutionary movement in the colonies by Otto V. Kuusinen. It was in this report that Kuusinen, on behalf of the Comintern, gave an analysis of the major issues involved in the colonial question and thereby provoked a major controversy.[5] The report made a scathing attack on the idea of industrializa-

tion of colonies under imperialist rule. Kuusinen said in his report that no one would deny that industry had been developing and quite rapidly, in the last twenty years.

if even several Communist comrades have been induced, on the strength of this fact, to assume that the British policy is following an entirely new course in regard to the industrial development in India, I must say that they have gone too far. A semblance of this was possible in the boom years of 1921-23. Actually, no change has taken place in the course of the British colonial policy. Some of these comrades went even the length of holding out the prospect of a decolonisation of India by British imperialism. This was a dangerous term. The comrades who have represented and partly still represent this—in my opinion—false theory are comrades who otherwise deal very seriously with the problems of our movement—comrades Palme-Dutt, Roy and Rathbone. . . .[6]

Kuusinen then cited excerpts from Palme Dutt's *Modern India* in support of his statement.

Thereafter he took up the case of Roy. He referred to a Draft Resolution presented by Roy in October 1927 after his return from China and, citing long excerpts from this Resolution, Kuusinen alleged that in this document Roy developed in very clear terms the theory of decolonization. It is necessary, therefore, to have a look at this document.[7] Basically, the document was a summary of his earlier arguments on industrialization, as advanced in *India in Transition* (1922), *The Future of Indian Politics* (1926), and in his numerous other writings. Repeating those arguments, pointing to the changes in British imperialism's economic policy in recent years he said,

The implication of the new policy is a gradual 'de-colonisation'

of India, which will be allowed to evolve out of the state of 'dependency' to 'Dominion Status'. The Indian bourgeoisie, instead of being kept down as a potential 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'. India is in a process of 'decolonisation' in so far as the policy forced upon British imperialism by the post-war crisis of capitalism abolishes the old, antiquated forms and methods of colonial exploitation in favour of new forms and new methods. The forces of production, which were so far denied the possibilities of normal growth, are unfettered. The very basis of national economy changes. Old class relations are replaced by new class relations. The basic industry, agriculture, stands on the verge of revolution. The prevailing system of landownership which hinders agricultural production is threatened with abolition. The native bourgeoisie acquires an ever-growing share in the control of the economic life of the country. These changes in the economic sphere have their political reflex. [*sic* !] The unavoidable process of gradual 'de-colonisation' has in it the germs of disruption of the Empire. As a matter of fact, the new policy adopted for the consolidation of the Empire—to avoid the danger of immediate crash—indicates that the foundation of the empire is shaken.[8]

Furthermore,

The process of the gradual 'decolonisation' of India is produced by two different factors, namely, 1) post-war crisis of capitalism and 2) the revolutionary awakening of the Indian masses. In order to stabilise its economic basis and strengthen its position in India, British Imperialism is obliged to adopt a policy which cannot be put into practice without making certain concessions to the Indian bourgeoisie. These concessions are not conquered by the Indian nationalist bourgeoisie. They are gifts (reluctant, but obligatory) of imperialism. Therefore, the process of 'decolonisation' is parallel to the process of 'de-revolutionisation' of the Indian bourgeoisie.[9]

The excerpts from the Draft Resolution provide evidence to the fact that Roy here established a logical correlation between the economic and political aspects of the idea of decolonization,

namely, between the theory of industrialization of Indian economy and the grant of 'Dominion Status' to the Indian bourgeoisie and the consequent unfolding of the gradual process of dismemberment of the British Empire. In other words, the implication of the Draft Resolution is the proposition that the policy of industrialization of Indian economy by British imperialism would open up the possibility of erosion of the very basis of imperialist rule in India and pave the way for her gradual emancipation from colonial domination. It is suggested by some scholars that adoption of this position indicates that Roy, on the eve of the Sixth Congress, suddenly departed from his earlier 'left' positions and found himself for the first time in the right wing of the communist movement.[10] There is another opinion, slightly different from this one, that the so-called 'rightism' of Roy was not a sudden break with his earlier position on the eve of the Sixth Congress; rather, that this 'rightism' was gradually developing over the years during his work in the Comintern and that his formulation of the theory of decolonization in the Draft Resolution was only a logical consequence of his changing outlook.[11] In other words, the point common to these interpretations is that both of them look upon Roy's formulaion about decolonization as a kind of gradual or sudden *shift* from his earlier position. This is exactly the point with which I agree to differ. Roy's formulation about decolonization

[10] Overstreet and Windmiller, *Communism in India*, p. 132.

[11] J. P. Haithcox, *Communism and Nationalism in India. M. N. Roy and Comintern Policy: 1920-1939* (Bombay, 1971), p. 135. Haithcox emphatically dissociates himself from the position taken by Overstreet and Windmiller and argues that, along with Bukharin, Roy was gradually shifting his position in the rightist direction over the years. At the same time, Haithcox also contends that Roy's theory of decolonization should not be interpreted as a gradual dismemberment of the British Empire. ibid. pp. 112-13. In his opinion, by developing the theory of decolonization, Roy was only trying to stress the conciliatory or collaborationist role of the nationalist bourgeoisie, while he was convinced that imperialism, despite the grant of economic concessions, would continue political repression and therefore the ultimate battle would have to be fought out. ibid. pp. 113 and 317. In a sense Haithcox is right. Except in the *Draft Resolution*, Roy nowhere speaks of gradual dismemberment of the British Empire. But then, how is one to reconcile Roy's 'rightist' formulation in the Draft Resolution about the theory of gradual dismemberment of the British Empire through the process of decolonization with his leftist stand that the real battle for freedom would be fought on class-terms? The answer to this rather puzzling, and in a way apparently contradictory, position of Roy, however, is not provided by Haithcox.

did not indicate any shift at all; rather, this was the logical political formulation that followed from his theory of industrialization. Thus, industrialization of the Indian economy would lead to increasing concessions to the bourgeoisie which would result in the grant of Dominion Status, the first sign of political decontrol of the Empire. By a little stretch of imagination it could be logically concluded that this unfolding of the process of political decontrol would lead to the gradual dismemberment of the Empire, viz, decolonization. On the other hand, industrialization would heighten the class struggle between the native bourgeoisie and the proletariat and the more the process of decolonization would unfold itself, the more acute would become the class struggle. The prospects of gradual 'decolonization' of the Empire would thus be overshadowed by the prospects of a final battle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat and social revolution would thus be on the agenda. If the first position is regarded as an extremely 'rightist' formulation, the second one then is undeniably extremely 'left'. Interestingly, the two positions then become contradictory. From the first position it follows that the Empire would gradually break up and independence would be round the corner! From the second position one is tempted to draw the conclusion that more the class struggle sharpens more intense would become the bond of native capitalism and British imperialism and the contradiction between them and the working masses. In other words, the struggle for emancipation from colonial rule would coincide with the social revolution of the Indian masses and the battle for freedom from colonial rule would become correspondingly more difficult. In fact, if one carefully scrutinizes the Draft Resolution, this becomes very clearly evident. In the same Document, where in one place Roy speaks of the gradual break-up of the Empire, he observes again:

The movement for national freedom, as the political expression of these oppressed and exploited classes (constituting the overwhelming majority of the population) becomes a revolutionary struggle not only against imperialism, but also against its native allies, capitalist and landowning classes. Class-struggle coincides with national struggle. The anti-imperialist struggle will develop and triumph as an anti-capitalist struggle. . . . Indian nationalist movement in certain stages was a movement dictated by the

interests of the bourgeoisie, but the Indian national revolution will not be a bourgeois revolution. The motive force of the Indian national revolution is the struggle between the exploiting and exploited classes. . . . By virtue of the fact that the Indian national revolution will develop and finally succeed as a struggle against capitalism, the proletariat becomes its driving force.[12]

Then again, to drive home the point that the struggle for liberation would become increasingly difficult with the grant of 'Dominion Status', Roy wrote in an article after the Sixth Congress was over,

While it is out of the question that full Dominion Status will be granted in the immediate future, it is practically certain that the native bourgeoisie will be given considerable power in the provincial government. This will very likely include the administration of police by Indian ministers. . . . The object is to commandeer the services of the Nationalist bourgeoisie in the counter-revolutionary combat against the working class and any other revolutionary movement.[13]

This surely is no indication of any shift from his earlier position. In fact Roy himself, writing on this subject a year after the Sixth Congress, did not feel that he had taken up a 'rightist' position in formulating the theory of decolonization. Referring to the expression 'decolonisation' in the Draft Resolution, he observed,

. . . . the term 'de-colonization' 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. Nowhere is it stated that the tendency affects the entire people. Much less is it even implied that there is the least possibility of the Indian people being free with the sanction of imperialism. On the contrary, it is clearly asserted that the process of certain improvement in the condition of the bourgeoisie is the result of a plan to intensify the exploitation of the nation as a whole.[14]

What becomes evident from these writings is that it would be wrong to interpret Roy's theory of decolonization as a sign of a shift to a so-called 'right' position from a previously held 'left' one. The politically contradictory formulations of Roy can be explained only with reference to the theory of industrialization which he had been developing since the time of the Second Congress. The industrialization thesis could lead, as has been pointed out, to both 'right' and 'left' conclusions with reference to the bourgeoisie and the proletariat respectively and this is what exactly happened in Roy's case. Surprisingly, Western scholars who have discussed Roy's theory of decolonization have treated 'the latter' as a political category, that is, gradual dismemberment of the British Empire, without reference to the theory of industrialization, that is, decolonization in the economic sense ,and this naturally precludes them from identifying the logical link between Roy's industrialization thesis and his politically contradictory formulations, especially in the Draft Resolution. This, in turn, makes them believe that there was a shift in Roy's position.

Logically, Roy was correct in formulating the idea of gradual decolonization of the Empire in so far as he looked upon this as the inevitable consequence of industrialization ; but this, at the same time, was going to be a complete negation of his earlier strategy on destruction of colonial rule. Hence he drew the other conclusion relating to the perspective of class struggle, and emphasized the growing contradiction between the masses and imperialism along with the bourgeoisie, which would be the consequence of industrialization.[15]

Theoretically speaking, this has a crucial import for an understanding of the whole range of the debate on decolonization at

the Sixth Congress. The Comintern criticized the concept of decolonization in its double aspects, namely economic and political. Economically, decolonization meant industrialization of India under the aegis of British imperialism ; politically this meant, on the one hand, the grant of Dominion Status as a result of the growing tie-up between the nationalist bourgeoisie and the British colonial masters ; on the other hand, this meant the increasing polarization between the working masses and the bourgeoisie along with imperialism. The integral link between the two aspects—the political formulations being a logical derivative of the economic premises of the industrialization thesis—is thus extremely crucial, methodologically speaking, for an exploration of the way in which the concept of decolonization came under attack in the Comintern.[16]

Kuusinen, in his Report to the Sixth Congress, criticized the theory of decolonization precisely in this perspective. He interpreted the political formulation about the idea of decolonization of the Empire as a consequence of the theory of industrialization. Hence, the main brunt of Kuusinen's criticism was directed against the industrialization thesis, which in turn sparked off serious differences of opinion among the delegates.

Kuusinen also critized both Palme Dutt and Roy for their advocacy of the industrialization thesis and observed,

.... Industrialisation means the transformation of an agrarian into an industrial country, it means a general, thorough, industrial development, above all the development of the production of the means of production, of the engineering industry. This is not a question if any industrial development has taken place in India—this has certainly been the case—it is rather a question if it is the policy of British imperialism to industrialise India.[17]

A careful scrutiny of this Report would indicate how the Comintern put forward its arguments against the industrialization thesis.

First, Kuusinen did not deny that after the War British imperialism had made some concessions in favour of India's industrial development (i.e. 15 per cent protective tariffs for the cotton industry, the Constitutional Reform of 1919). But these were, he pointed out, caused by mutiny in the army, big peasant insurrection in the Punjab, unification of the Muslim League with the Indian National Congress, increasing competition with Japan and the USA in the sphere of trade, the Khilafat and Gandhi's movements. In other words, Kuusinen tried to explain the temporary phase of industrialization in the post-War period in terms of certain definite political, economic and military exigencies. In defence of this position Kuusinen argued that while in 1921-23 there was a definite boost in the export of capital to India, amounting to 36 million pound sterling per annum (i.e. one-fifth or a quarter of the entire export of British capital), in 1927 it came down to a mere 0.8 million pound sterling. In these years British capital found its way to South Africa, Australia and Sudan, but not to India. What is particularly significant was Kuusinen's emphasis on the pattern of the investment of British capital in India. He drew attention to the fact that of the whole amount (94,400,000 pound sterling), 70,000,000 pound sterling went to Government loans and this meant that only 10 per cent of the total export of British capital was invested in India in industry This showed, he suggested, that most of the capital invested was not for productive purposes, and definitely not for industry.[18]

Secondly, referring to Roy's formulation in the Draft Resolution that the Indian bourgeoisie would be granted participation in the sphere of economic power together with the British imperialists, Kuusinen pointed out that this was not possible all along the line unless the Indian market expanded at a rapid rate. This, he suggested, pointed to the recognition of the fact that the Indian internal market was almost stationary (in fact, consumption of cotton goods had decreased compared to the pre-War period) and this was so because the Indian market mainly constituted the peasantry and the purchasing capacity of the latter was very poor, while the biggest section of the landowners and big tenant farmers constituted the main pillar of support of British imperialism.[19]

Thirdly, Kuusinen attacked the position of G. A. Lubani, a close associate of Roy, for his 'poetical description of industrialisation and decolonisation.'[20] Kuusinen referred specifically to the non-industrial, unproductive investment of Indian capital, as manifest in the purchase of State bonds and shares, depositing money in savings banks, purchase of enormous quantities of gold and silver as treasure by the Indian bourgeoisie. This, he explained, happened precisely because of the enormous obstacles posed by the British colonial system.[21]

Finally, Kuusinen warned against the understimation of the influence of the bourgeoisie, which he characterized as 'national-reformist' (because of its fear of the proletariat), on the masses, especially on the petty bourgeoisie and the vast masses of the peasantry. He stressed repeatdly in his Report the necessity of

drawing the peasantry and petty bourgeoisie away from the reformist influences.[22]

Indeed, a careful analysis of the industrialization thesis, as put forward by the advocates of the theory of decolonization, shows that methodologically speaking,

They assiduously selected individual figures and facts in their attempts to show that industrialization of colonies [was] going on. Methodologically, these erroneous views proceeded from a mechanistic approach to economic processes in the colonies and semi-colonies, when individual phenomena of economic life were detached artificially from the whole process of development of the productive forces. Nobody denied that in the colonies, especially at the time of and after the First World War, industrial production had developed, that the imperialist colonial regime was based on capitalist exploitation which cannot occur without a certain development of capitalism. But the essence of the whole thing is that—and this was also stressed in the Theses of the Sixth Congress—industrial development in the colonies had taken place with great difficulties, not on free national basis, but in constant struggle against monopolies which were retarding the industrialization of colonies. Industrialization—the universal development of industry, production of the means of production, engineering industry—radically contradicts the essence of the colonial policy of Imperialism.[23]

II

Kuusinen's presentation of the Report on behalf of the Comintern provoked a serious, and on occasions rather uncomfortably sharp, debate on the question of decolonization, in which the lead was given by the British Delegation. Bennett, the most vociferous member of the Delegation, was the first to criticize Kuusinen. While agreeing with Kuusinen that industrialization under imperialism would not help the development of productive forces in the colony, he protested vehemently against the characterization of British India primarily as an agrarian appendage of British imperialism. He referred to the strikes launched

by thousands of workers and the industrial unrest that was sweeping the country and all this, he suggested, indicated that the industrial working class was in the forefront of the struggle for immediate transformation of the bourgeois-democratic revolution into a socialist one in India. Denial of the industrialization thesis would mean, he observed, underestimation of the strength of the working class as well as the counter-revolutionary role of the nationalist bourgeoisie in India.[24] Coming to the question of decolonization, Bennett formulated the meaning of this term essentially as an economic category. To cite his words,

Now one word about the famous bogey, decolonisation. . . . You will remember that Comrade Kuusinen in his speech quoted also several comrades who spoke about 'decolonisation'. Those, who used this word, rightly or wrongly, did so with the sole object of emphasising the industrialisation of India which is changing the relation of forces in this country. . . . While the social reformists are anxious to glorify imperialism, the aim of our comrades was to show the new forces and the new ways of development of the national revolutionary movement in India which makes for the transformation of the bourgeois-democratic revolution into the social revolution. . . .[25]

Bennett's position was defended by Andrew Rothstein, another member of the British Delegation. Referring to *Imperialism*, Lenin's classic text, he argued that in course of imperialism's search for higher profits the colonies ceased to be simply sources of raw material and of cheap labour power. 'The bourgeoisie,' he argued,

exports capital with the object of stimulating the basic industries in the home countries, and thereby transforms the colonial countries into fields for producing the means of production in their turn. Thereby the bourgeoisie objectively carries out a process of industrialisation, which does not adapt these colonies, to the requirements of the home countries of the imperialists, but on the contrary, as we see most classically in the example of Great Britain, transforming them into serious competitors in the first place and finally into sources of stagnation, of degeneration, of parasitism, for the metropolitan countries.[26]

R. Page Arnot, another member of the Delegation also pleaded very strongly for the industrialization thesis. He criticized Kuusinen's Draft Thesis on the ground that it did not differentiate between the classical period of the development of capitalism and the era of finance capital. While in the earlier period the colonial policy of imperialism used to be directed against the retardation of industry, in the more recent period the growth of finance capital led to its inevitable infiltration in the colonies, resulting in the acceleration of the process of industrial development. As regards the pattern of non-productive industrial growth referred to in Kuusinen's Report, Arnot observed that industrialization was a process the beginning of which had just been made in countries like Russia and Britain. The growth of light industries (like textiles in India) was the first sign which would later give way to heavy industries, that is, to production of the means of production.[27] In other words, the search for markets would inevitably lead the colonial power to accelerate the process of the development of capitalism in the colony.

> . . . .in the very process of finding a market for goods, capitalism has been forced to create the conditions (railways, means of transport, formation of a proletariat, etc.) for the development of the capitalist mode of production within the colonies. . . . Involuntarily, capitalism thus stimulates in the colonies the creation of its future rival ; and the export of capital in the home country becomes the source of new contradictions in the world market. This is a general law of capitalist development. This is the process of industrialisation.[28]

However, Arnot quite emphatically pointed out that while this process might lead to attempts at winning over the nationalist bourgeoisie in the form of grant of increasing concessions to the latter, this should in no way be interpreted as withdrawal, decolonization or peaceful liberation.[29]

A somewhat modified version of the industrialization question

was provided by Cox, another British delegate. He disagreed with the emphasis of the Draft Thesis on the issue that imperialism retarded industrial development in the colonies. Rather, he suggested that the Draft Thesis should read that the imperialist bourgeoisie endeavoured to prevent the colonial bourgeoisie from getting control of those industries which clashed with the interests of imperialism. Otherwise, he argued, if imperialism did not take any interest in the industrialization of colonies, how could the general theory be explained that imperialism transformed the agrarian areas into industrial colonies? In other words, his main point of disagreement was with the Comintern's stand on deindustrialization in an absolute sense which, he felt, should be interpreted in a relative sense only.[30] Cox, however, also made it clear that industrialization in the relative sense should not be looked upon as a progressive policy pursued by imperialism; rather, the fact is that the imperialist bourgeoisie tried to develop industry in the colonies for its own purpose, which did not at all exclude the brutal exploitation of the masses and industrialization, therefore, should not be regarded as leading to the opening up of a perspective of a greatly improved and rapid development towards capitalism. On the contrary, he argued that the striving of the imperialist bourgeoisie to wrest certain industries from the control of the colonial bourgeoisie held out prospects of a struggle between the imperialist bourgeoisie and the masses, and even a section of the bourgeoisie.[31]

The industrialization thesis was corroborated by some members of the Indonesian and Indian Delegation too. Padi, the Indonesian delegate, said that he did not agree with what was stated in Paragraph 15 of the Draft Thesis—that the poverty of the peasantry meant a crisis in the industrial home market in the colonies, constituting thereby a severe limitation on the capitalist development of the country; rather, in his opinion, the poverty of the peasants and the declining purchasing power of the colonial proletariat hastened the capitalist development of the country, since the exploiting bourgeoisie was compelled to industrialize the colonies in order to sell goods at cheaper prices and thereby expand the capitalist market. This, he argued,

was quite feasible because raw materials were very easy to get at cheap prices and the wages of workers in the colonial countries were far lower than those of the capitalist countries.[32]

Of the Indian Delegation Narayan (Soumendranath Tagore), Clemens Dutt and Raza more or less defended the industrialization thesis while Sikander Sur (Shaukat Usmani) opposed this viewpoint. Narayan virtually repeated the arguments of M. N. Roy in defence of his position, observing thereby that as long as imperialism had obstructed capitalist development in India the Indian bourgeoisie had been a driving force. With the change in imperialism's economic policy the Indian bourgeoisie had become a counter-revolutionary force ; this, he argued, was manifest in the Bardoli Resolution that called for suspension of struggle. On this score he criticized paragraphs 19 and 23 of the Draft Thesis which stressed the importance of the conflict between imperialism and the nationalist bourgeoisie and warned against the ultraleftism of the Communist Party of India.[33]

The position of Clemens Dutt and Raza, however, was not identical with that of Narayan. Although all of them stressed that it would be wrong to underrate the pace of industrial development in India, they also observed that this did not imply an exaggerated view of the development of Indian industry, since its growth was full of contradictions.[34] Raza, while emphasizing the phenomenon of industrialization, particularly warned against viewing it as something that was developing quite independently.

The creation of the native bourgeoisie is a historical necessity for the British bourgeoisie, but at the same time, by such an action, the British bourgeoisie wilfully creates a competitor and a rival. And it is here that the imperialist colonial policy asserts itself. India must be industrialised, but: 1. under the chief control of British capital ; 2. Indian capital has to assume a junior

partnership; and 3. The Indian industries have to play a secondary role so as never to be independent of the home industries, but besides this, to be permanent consumers of the home manufactures; 4. to help in their competition against Japan and the U.S.A.; 5. to help the production of war material. This is, in short, the gist of the real imperialist policy of the British bourgeoisie with regard to the industrialisation of India. There is a group of comrades who really think that the industrialisation of India is developing quite independently, and that is the real policy of the British bourgeoisie. Such an idea is absolutely erroneous and misleading.... Then again, a section of the theoreticians think that there has been no industrialisation whatsoever in India. Such an idea is just as wrong as the first one. If there has been no industrialisation how will you account for the huge army of the industrial proletariat and the strikes in practically all the industrial centres of India. Whatever motive may be attributed to industrialisation, it has been developing; though it is correct to say that it has been retarded, and that it will never receive any independent headlong stimulus at the hands of the imperialists.[35]

Besides these centrist positions, both the British and the Indian Delegations included members who did not toe the line of their respective delegations. Thus Murphy, the British delegate, openly criticized the position of the majority of the members of his Delegation. He highlighted Kuusinen's description of the colonial situation in the Draft Thesis which said that the contradictions in the relations between the imperialist and the colonial countries far outweighed and interfered with the normal development of capitalism, which meant industrialization. Criticizing the stand taken by Bennett, Rothstein and C. P. Dutt, he observed that while it would be sheer stupidity to deny the process of industrial development in India, it would be equally wrong to argue that the main task of the imperialists and the dominating feature of the colonial countries consisted in the accomplishment of industrialization of the colonies, particularly the creation of heavy industries. While the normal development of capitalism meant essentially the industrialization of a country, imperialist exploitation of the colonies, Murphy argued, retarded the normal industrialization of the colonies, such as occurred in the metro-

polis. Thus, instead of playing a liberating role to the inherent forces of production in the colonies, it added its own contradictions to the contradictions within the colonies, whilst sucking the life blood from them by its monopolist control. In defence of his position Murphy cited the case of Ireland, the industrialization of which was strangled by Britain. Referring to India Murphy showed that while in 1921 out of the total companies registered 55 per cent were industrial concerns, 25 per cent banking and loan companies and 18 per cent trading (including railways and navigations), the corresponding figures in 1927 stood at 8 per cent, 47 per cent (7 per cent—banking and 40 per cent—loan) and 39 per cent respectively. Murphy made it categorically clear that the industrialization of the colonies could not be carried through by the imperialist and native bourgeoisie. Just as the principal custodianship of the fight for colonial liberation fell historically upon the proletariat and the peasantry of the colonies, so also upon these classes fell the task of carrying through industrialization. Until then, industrialization was at best a tendency demanding development, yet held in the stranglehold of imperialism.[36]

This position was shared also by Sikander Sur, the Indian delagate. In his Report on 'The Development in India' delivered at the thirty-first session of the Congress, he sharply critized the theory of decolonization. First he mentioned that despite the development of modern means of production the backwardness of India was marked by the fact that the middle classes were united with the landowning class in a bloc. The British imperialists, taking advantage of the situation, made a united front with the landed aristocracy, subordinating the bourgeoisie against bourgeois interests. British imperialism, he argued, was developing the reactionary forces and not the forces of the bourgeoisie, and the decolonization theory was thus not tenable.[37] Secondly, he questioned the theory of industrialization of India in order to refute the idea that imperialism was developing, by virtue of adoption of the new economic policy of industrialization, the productive forces in the colonies and, thereby economically decolonizing India. Referring to the textile industry Sikander Sur pointed out that despite the fact that in the years

immediately following the War huge sums were accumulated in the hands of Indian capitalists, enabling them to gain profits as high as 600 per cent, this industry developed at a much lower rate than in China and Japan. This sign of industrial backwardness, he suggested, spoke against decolonization. He did not deny the development of industries in India but he simultaneously emphasized that only those industries were developed which were profitable to Britain. Moreover, he drew attention to the fact that industrial concessions granted in 1919 were withdrawn in 1925 and that Britain got 12½ per cent protection over Indian prices as a result of the introduction of Imperial Tariff Preference and the new Exchange Policy. This meant a heavy brake on India's industrial development, resulting in severe unemployment and labour unrest.[38]

This position was reemphasized by Sikander Sur in his concluding speech at the Congress. He particularly emphasized the issue that investment of British capital in India should not be confused with industrialization. British capital, he argued, was invested mainly towards expediting the production of munitions for the War. But as soon as she returned to peacetime production the break up of Indian industries commenced. His main criticism against the protagonists of the industrialization thesis was that they identified industrializaton with investment. In fact, Britain's going back to her old economic policy in the post-War period heightened the conflict between the monopolist position of imperialism and the main economic demands of the Indian bourgeoisie, namely, the development of key industries, export of capital and finally political independence. This was manifest in the protest movement of the bourgeoisie against the Simon Commission, although he warned against any false illusion about this class which had revealed its counter-revolutionary character by its betrayal in Chauri Chaura, as did the Kuomintang in China.[39]

Besides Murphy and Sikander Sur, the Comintern's position came to be defended by several other delegates from a number of advanced capitalist countries, as well as from the Soviet Union. A detailed criticism of the position of the British Delegation, particularly that of Bennett, was made by Martynov, the

delegate representing the CPSU. First, Martynov clarified a significant issue involving the idea of export of capital to the colonies, as pointed out by Lenin in his *Imperialsim.* In fact, as has been noted earlier, this idea of Lenin was frequently referred to by the members of the British Delegation in defence of the industrialization thesis. Martynov drew the attention of the delegates to the fact that while Lenin mentioned the export of capital to colonies in his *Imperialism,* written in 1916, there was no mention of it in his Preliminary Draft Theses on the colonal question, written in 1920. He said that this difference of treatment happened because in his book Lenin dealt with imperialism in general, showing that the export of capital led to parasitical degeneration of the mother country, but in the Colonial Theses he did not mention it because he did not require this context. Secondly, he pointed out that while no one denied the development of capitalism in the colonies the relation between imperialism and native capitalism should be viewed dialectically. Imperialism, he argued, called forth capitalism and impeded its development and then capitalism developed against it. By way of illustration he referred to India and China. In both the countries native industries were in a position to develop specifically during the period when imperialism was occupied with the War ; but as soon as imperialism was back on its legs the process of retardation of industrial development was stepped up.[40] Thirdly, Martynov rejected the contention of Bennett that by defending the standpoint of imperialism's impeding role Kuusinen's Draft Thesis was pinning hope on the revolutionary role of the national bourgeoisie in the colonies. He drew attention to Lenin's Preliminary Draft Theses and pointed out the necessity of utilizing the limited yet objective contradiction between the reformist bourgeoisie and imperialism. 'Thus,' referring to the Swarajists in India Martynov pointed out,

They are not a revolutionary party. They are a bourgeois-reformist party which will play a frankly counter-revolutionary role in the very near future. But although these reformists constitute now a loyal opposition to the British Government and are vacillating, this opposition creates a favourable situation for us, which we can utilise for the development of a truly national

revolutionary movement which must be directed also against the Swarajists as vacillating reformists. . . . One should make use of this contradiction, although they are not revolutionists, although they are reformists, although they will be frank counter-revolutionaries tomorrow, although they have already capitulated to a certain extent.[41]

Theoretically speaking Martynov was warning against the tendency of wrongly identifying the stage of the revolution in India at that time as a socialist one (as was implied in the stand of Bennett, who perhaps drew his inspiration from Roy). Thus, he stressed the necessity of distinguishing between the character of the revolution and its driving forces and argued that one could make a revolution against the bourgeoisie and this could nevertheless be regarded as a bourgeois democratic revolution, just as Lenin had characterized the Russian Revolution of 1905.[42] In fact, in 1905 the revolution was directed against the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie and yet the objective stage of the revolution was characterized as a bourgeois democratic one.

Martynov's position was strongly corroborated by Pepper, the American delegate. He suggested that the industrialization thesis should answer at least two questions: a) whether the existence of light industry could transform an agrarian country into an industrial country; b) whether the existence of light industry could make a country independent of imperialist domination. In this perspective he pointed out that only development of heavy industry, the engineering industry in particular, that is production of the means of production, could be a satisfactory criterion of industrialization. Consequently, without heavy industry a country could not become economically independent. On this score Pepper sharply criticized the position of the British Delegation, particularly that of Bennett. He argued that the industrialization thesis ignored the fact that India had not yet reached the stage of production of the means of production; rather, industrialization of India was impeded from above by the world system of imperialism, and from below by the pre-capitalist elements of the Indian economy, which pervaded vast sectors of the latter. In that respect India was still an appendage of the imperialist system, lacking the growth of heavy industry or

the creation of powerful world trusts. Furthermore, he criticized the position of Bennett as wholly undialectical since by his emphasis on the development of capitalism he overestimated the role of the proletariat, ignoring thereby the reality of the backwardness of India as a colony; consequently Bennett branded the bourgeoisie as wholly counter-revolutionary and the proletariat as the driving force of any anti-imperialist struggle.

If one sees one-sidely, undialectically only the existence of industrialisation and the strong development of capitalism, if one wants to see only the historical role of the proletariat, if one simply denies the colonial state of India, if one designates the process of decolonisation as the main process, one comes dangerously near the standpoint of the Second International. . . . The Indian bourgeoisie has repeatedly betrayed the national-revolution and is bound to finally betray it in the future. . . . One must still realise that the chief enemy is still British imperialism. It is of course also clear that final victory over imperialism is possible only through victory over the Indian bourgeoisie. But if one says: the Indian bourgeoisie is already now the chief enemy, this means an under-estimation of the importance of British imperialism, and this is rather dangerous.[43]

Pepper's criticism of Bennett's position was highly significant. He interpreted Bennett's ultra-left standpoint as a variant of decolonization to show that this theory, although apparently a reformist formulation, tended to serve the course of adventurism in politics. The implication of this position was, according to Pepper, skipping the stage of the bourgeois democratic revolution in the colonies, which in turn meant skipping the stage of the agrarian revolution and overlooking the role of the peasantry. This, Pepper pointed out, was also the position of Trotsky. Referring to Stalin's speech at the Ninth Plenum of the ECCI, held in 1928, he suggested that the bourgeois democratic revolution in China and India would mean a combination of the struggle of the peasantry against feudal relics and the struggle against imperialism.[44]

Criticism of the theory of decolonization was made also by Wolfe, another American delegate. He emphasized that decolonization, which meant acknowledgement of the fact of indus-

trialization of colonies under imperialism, ignored the other more dominant counter-tendency of imperialism to hinder, restrict, and prevent industrial development. The wrong position of Rothstein, Bennett and some other members, he pointed out, was based on their lack of understanding of the fundamentally parasitic role of finance capital of imperialism in the colonies.[45]

An extremely valuable contribution to the debate on decolonization was mady by Remmele, the German delegate, in his criticism of the British Delegation's defence of the decolonization theory. He suggested that they were dealing with a controversy which was as old as revisionism—this being an echo of the Congress of the German Social Democratic Party in 1907. At that time the Congress had been marked by three tendencies. First, there had been the rightwing bourgeois standpoint of Eduard David who pleaded for a socialist colonial policy, meaning the free development of industry so that a proletariat might develop which would work in solidarity with the proletariat of the mother country for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie. This, Remmele argued, was now echoed by Bennett. The second position was the one taken by Kautsky and Bebel who suggested that no Social Democratic colonial policy could be formulated in opposition to capitalism. The third position was that of Rosa Luxemburg who explained, following a correct marxist line, how imperialism plundered the colonies and their economic resources.[46]

Explaining this perspective Remmele then questioned, quoting a wealth of statistics, the theory of industrialization of India. He pointed out that a distinction had to be made between industrialization and industrial development. In India industrial development had no doubt taken place; yet this should not be confused with industrialization, because industrialization would mean transformation of an agrarian country into an industrial one, meaning thereby that this would foster development of the means of production.[47] Then, citing Futwaengler's data on India, he applied several criteria to prove his contention.[48]

First, he studied the employment pattern of workers engaged

in the different industries and trades, together with their families. His findings were:

Textile	:	7,849,000
Clothing	:	7,425,000
Chemical	:	1,194,000
Hide and Skin	:	731,000
Wood working trade	:	3,614,000
Foodstuff trade	:	3,100,000
Pottery	:	2,215,000
Mining	:	1,754,000
Metal	:	1,802,000
Secondary Industries	:	3,484,000
Total	:	33,168,000

Only 1.8 millions were employed in the metal industry which showed, Remmele argued, that this was the only sector that turned out semi-manufactured goods but did not build any machinery.

Secondly, he took up urbanization as a major criterion of industrialization. In India, he pointed out, this had been virtually in a process of stagnation. Thus, while in 1911 the urban population was 9.4 per cent, in 1921, the figure stood only at 10.2 per cent marking an extremely marginal increase of 0.8 per cent. During the same period he showed that the urban population of Germany had increased by 7.9 per cent. This showed, he argued, that India was in a sense a big agrarian hinterland of Britain.

Thirdly, he disputed the point raised by Bennett that export of capital from England to India had increased in recent years. He cited the following figures:

1908	:	To India	— 22.3%
		To other British Possessions	— 12.8%
1915	:	To India	— 16.7%
		To other colonies and British possessions	— 0.7%
1927	:	To India	— 0.5%
		To other British possessions	— 34.2%

Finally, Remmele observed that if the mass use of machinery was regarded as a criterion of industrialization, available figures indicated a case against industrialization of India. Thus, while in 1913 consumption of machinery per capita in India amounted

to 0.4 and in 1926 it was 0.7, the corresponding figures in the case of Germany were 32.3 in 1913 and 36.2 in 1926.

The critics of the decolonization theory repeatedly drew attention to the non-productive, non-industrial investment of British capital[49] and the recent diversion of the flow of capital away from India. A fairly exhaustive study in this regard was made by Wurm (ECCI delegate) in his speech. Virtually summarizing the arguments cited earlier in his criticism of the stand of the British Delegation, he particularly drew attention to the pattern of the flow of capital to India which showed a declining trend.[50] The following figures were cited by the ECCI delegate:

In 1913	. .	56 million rupees.
1920	...	122
1923	...	21
1924	. .	19
1926	...	16

Finally, mention must be made of Lominadze, a Soviet delegate, who while defending the main direction of Kuusinen's Draft Thesis pointed out some of its gaps. His intervention is particularly worth noting for some of the novel arguments he used in defence of his criticism of the decolonization theory. First, he questioned the stand of the British Delegation that industrial development in the colonies led to decolonization. This meant, he argued, that despite imperialism's domination and the inflow of imperialist finance capital, the internal forces in the colonies constituted the foundation for the development of industries. What, however, was lacking in Kuusinen's Draft Thesis, he observed, was that it did not stress that by establishing big industries in the colonies, imperialism was impeding the general development of the productive forces in the form of interference with the development of agriculture in the colonies. In other, words, his main criticism of Kuusinen was that in the Draft Thesis colonies were characterized as the agrarian appendage of capitalism. On the contary, Lominadze's assertion was that the inflow of finance capital was leading to industrial dev-

elopment in the colonies; but this again impeded the development of productive forces in the sense that finance capital, with the support of pre-capitalist classes, big landowners, feudal lords and the gentry, impeded agricultural revolution without which agricultural development in the colonies was impossible. Moreover, he pointed out that finance capital had in colonial agriculture the function of trade and usurious capital, the implication of which was that while this trade-usurious captial destroyed old forms of production, it did not create new ones. Thus, by destroying agriculture in the colonies imperialism narrowed down the internal market and consequently the base for the further development of industry. Lominadze, however, cautioned that despite considerable industrial development in colonies like India and China in recent years, this should not be confused with the development of productive forces, that is, with industrialization.[51]

Whatever the differences, the analysis of the debate on decolonization showed that the main thrust of the criticism of this theory was directed against the stand taken by the British Delegation. In other words, the Comintern interpreted the British Delegation's defence of the industrialization thesis as decolonization although the Delegation did not share Roy's views on the gradual dismemberment of the British Empire as a consequence of industrialization. This is particularly significant; the concept of decolonization was regarded by the Comintern basically as an economic category, meaning thereby the idea of industrialization under imperialism.[52] The idea of gradual dismemberment of the Empire was the logical, political conclusion that could easily be inferred from this premise. While Roy used the concept of decolonization as an economic as well as a political category the British Delegation, in its defence of the industrialization thesis, used it primarily in the economc sense. This perhaps explains why Kuusinen in his Report lumped together the names of Roy, Palme-Dutt and others as defenders of the theory of decoloniza-

tion. The sharp criticisms levelled against the industrialization thesis showed that the Comintern was attacking the basic theoretical issue involved in the decolonization theory.

Interestingly, the British Delegation refused to accept this criticism. Its contention was that while it advocated the industrialization thesis it in no way was a party to the reformist formulation about decolonization, which for its members meant the Royist idea of gradual dismemberment of the British Empire. Thus, theoretically the British Delegation, in its defence of the industrialization thesis, refused to treat it as having any connection with the defence of a theory of decolonization. This becomes evident from the Declarations made by several members of the British delegation, in protest against the Comintern's criticism of its stand. In their concluding Declarations, the members also clarified the British Delegation's stand on the industrialization thesis.

Thus Bennett referred to Marx's formulation that once the machinery was introduced into the communication system of a land possessing coal and iron, it was impossible to hold it back from its own development, and in that respect the railway system in India was in fact the forerunner of modern industry. Bennett said that he meant only this and nothing more and those who were quoting him as a man speaking about the development of industrialization by leaps and bounds were, to put it mildly, simply lying.[53]

More important were the two Declarations made by Andrew Rothstein. In the first Declaration made at the thirty-eighth session of the Congress, Rothstein pointed out very precisely the points of disagreement of the British Delegation with the Draft Thesis of Kuusinen. First, the Thesis emphasized too much the agrarian character of the colonies; how then could it be simultaneously asserted in the Thesis that the proletariat would strive for the hegemony of the national revolution and that the bourgeoisie had ceased to be a revolutionary force? In fact, the emergence of the proletariat he pointed out was marked by the growth in the recent number of strikes, embracing thousands of workers, which in turn was caused by the development of industries. Secondly, the main purpose of the British Delegation was

to criticize the theory of the revolutionary bourgeoisie in the colonies, which in the Draft Thesis was characterized as 'pendulating' between revolution and counter-revolution.[54]

In the concluding section of this Declaration Rothstein emphatically declared that the British Delegation never meant that colonies had already become advanced industrial countries or even similar to secondary industrial countries of Europe. He categorically rejected the inference made by Schubin, of Soviet Union, that the British Delegation was suggesting that imperialism was interested in transforming colonies into advanced industrial countries and that the contradiction between imperialism and the colonies had considerably narrowed down.[55]

As regards the British Delegation's rejection of the theory of decolonization, it would be better to quote Rothstein's concluding Declaration, made at the fortieth session of the Congress.

> In the first place, as can be seen from the speeches of all the members of the British Delegation who have opposed the theses of Comrade Kuusinen, we have not for a moment entertained or supported the absurd and un-Marxian theory of decolonisation. ... What was stated, and what we stand by, is, in the first place, that decolonisation in the real sense of the word involves a revolution, that there is no decolonisation without revolution, and secondly, that imperialism hastens the development of the objective conditions which make for successful revolution under the hegemony of the proletariat. In the view of the British Delegation the revolution alone can carry out the decolonization.[56]

From these declarations it becomes evident that the British Delegation did not at all look upon its defence of the industrialization thesis as a part of the theory of decolonization, which it emphatically rejected and on this issue at least the British Delegation lent full support to Kuusinen's criticism of the idea of decolonization. This was made clear by Rothstein in an article published in *Labour Monthly* after the conclusion of the Congress. Reviewing the discussion on the colonial question, he wrote,

> The debate was complicated by differences as to whether or not the opinion that industrialization was proceeding in the colonies

necessarily involved, also, the theory of 'decolonisation' proclaimed by leaders of the Second International, i.e., that, by a semi-automatic process imperialism would be forced or induced to relax its exploitation and grant relative freedom to the colonial bourgeoisie in the shape of dominion status. This false and dangerous theory was emphatically and unanimously condemned by the Congress, and the general line of Comrade Kuusinen's statement unanimously endorsed after its passage through the Colonial Commission, which made important changes in and addition to the text without changing main principles.[57]

This, however, might give one the impression that the controversy on decolonization that broke out so sharply was the result of an unfortunate misunderstanding regarding the interpretation of the term. In other words, an impression may be gathered that the critics interpreted rather wrongly (out of ignorance or misunderstanding) the British Delegation's stand on industrialization as political decolonization of the Empire.[58] This impression follows logically if in interpreting the term decolonization one is tempted to mechanically separate the economic and political aspects of the concept. But the evidences already provided indicate that the Comintern in its interpretation of the concept of decolonization while referring to the stand of the British Delegation criticized it fundamentally as an economic formulation, which meant industrialization of a colony under imperialism. Sometimes the concluding speech of Kuusinen is quoted, perhaps to provide evidence of the fact that the Comintern understood the pointlessness of the controversy in which it was engaged with the British Delegation.[59] Of course,

this statement shows that Kuusinen did not regard the stand of the British Delegation as a variant of Social-Democratic reformism ; the statement only suggests Cominten's appreciation that the British Delegation did not draw the conclusion about political decolonization of the Empire from the fundamental economic premise, namely, industrialization. Perhaps it would not be wrong to observe that while the Comintern was satisfied with the British Delegation's assurance that the latter did not believe in a theory of political decolonization, the fundamental disagreement regarding the economic premise of the theory (namely, industrialization) continued to persist. That the Comintern regarded the defence of the industrialization thesis as an advocacy of the theory of decolonization becomes particularly evident if one scrutinizes the *Theses of the Agitprop of the E.C.C.I.* that was adopted by the Congress after the heated debate on decolonization came to a close. Referring to the views of those who challenged the Cominern's position that India and other colonies constituted a kind of agrarian appendage of imperialism, the Theses said,

The logical development of such assertions is to leap up to the theory of 'decolonisation'. But to recognise the 'decolonisation' and industrialisation of the colonies would essentially mean to give up Lenin's thesis concerning the nature of colonial exploitation. To be sure, there is certain industrial development going on in the colonies. But this industrial development does not yet signify industrialisation. The industrialisation of a country means the development of the production of the means of production (machinery, etc.) in that country, whereas imperialism allows the colonies only the development of small manufacturing industries engaged in the conversion of agricultural produce. . . . But imperialism checks the industrialisation of colonies not only by hindering the development of the production of the means of production ; it checks progress by the whole of its policy of supporting the survivals of feudalism in the village and by the innumerable taxes which ruin the already impoverished peasantry.[60]

It should be pointed out in this connection that years later

Palme Dutt, in a letter written to Muzaffar Ahmad, acknowledged that although he himself did not believe in the Royist view of decolonization, i.e. that imperialism voluntarily renounced power, it was he who as the author of *Modern India* contributed much to the development of the industrialization thesis and that it was this theory which was subsequently developed and distorted by Roy into his own version of the theory of decolonization. Furthermore, in this letter Palme Dutt also acknowledged that the industrialization thesis was incorrect in so far as it assumed the possibility of a measure of industrialization under imperialism and that the criticism voiced against this line at the Sixth Congress was correct.[61] In this letter there was an implicit acknowledgement that the theory of industrialization constituted the fundamental economic premise of the decolonization idea;[62] this, however, the British Delegation stubbornly refused to accept and this would explain why the majority of the British Delegation voted against the adoption of the *Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semicolonies* after the deliberations on the colonial question were over. Available records show that excepting four members the majority had voted against the Theses, the declaration having been made by Andrew Rothstein on behalf of the majority of the members.[63]

III

Indeed, that the Comintern could not agree with the standpoint of the British Delegation on this issue despite the fact that much heat was generated and temper frayed, becomes very much evident from the concluding speech of Kuusinen and the finally adopted *Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semicolonies.*

In his concluding speech Kuusinen clarified the standpoint of the Draft Thesis. He argued that Section 1 of the Thesis was clear evidence of the fact that the development of native capitalism was not being denied in the Thesis. There it had been clearly stated that the imperialist policy conditioned a certain furtherance of the development of industry, since this became necessary in the interest of imperialist plunder. Coming to the question of decolonization Kuusinen remarked,

> It is, indeed, not true what comrade Bennett says, that our comrades spoke about de-colonization only in quotation marks. Regrettable as it is, there have been written seriously not only articles but whole books, in this sense; even our periodical for India matters, which appears abroad, represented for a long time this theory. Therefore, the question is not at all a question in quotation marks. I would prefer that these comrades who represented the de-colonization theory would say: it was a mistake; we represent it no more.[61]

Coming to Bennett's idea of treating industrialization as export of capital, Kuusinen pointed out that temporarily certain factors might give rise to the export of capital. But this, he suggested, was not the general rule. Thus, as a result of unusual surplus of free capital in an imperialist country or because of the narrowness of the export market felt by the machine-producing industries of the metropolis, there might arise in certain colonies a temporary deviation from the general anti-industrialization line of the respective metropolis. In fact, the government of an imperialist country was never in a position freely to decide the direction of the stream of capital export: this might lead to, particularly in times of high prosperity, a transitory promotion of industrialization in one or other of the colonies. Bennett, however, treated this phenomenon as an absolute policy of imperialism.[67]

That the contradiction between the necessity of industrialization of India and the anti-industrialization policy of British imperialism was irreconcilable was pointed out by Kuusinen in his characterization of the imperialist economic policy. First, he referred to the abolition of the 3 per cent assessment on cotton consumption of Indian textile mills and the raising of tariffs from 11 to 16 per cent on low quality textile products.

But this, he cautioned, did not mean encouragement of the growth of industrialization since England did not import textile goods of low quality to India; rather, this measure was directed against the fast-growing Japanese import.

Kuusinen then stressed a number of factors to indicate that the anti-industrialization policy of imperialism far outweighed the so-called encouragement of the growth of industries. These were, first, a Regulation on the Imperial Bank in 1920 by which the Bank was forbidden to give credit to industrial undertakings; secondly, in 1926-27 the rupee exchange rate was set at 1.6 despite vehement protest of all the industries which demanded an exchange rate of 1.4; thirdly, despite fervent demands of the Indian bourgeoisie, instead of increasing the tariff duty on iron and steel, preferential tariffs were fixed for British iron and steel goods; fourthly, an increase in coal tariff as demanded by the Indian bourgeoisie was rejected for protecting South African coal industry; finally, the working of the Royal Commission on Agriculture showed that the British Government desired that Indian capital be directed to agriculture.[66]

Finally, Kuusinen very sharply criticized the position of the British Delegation on its characterization of the role of the Indian bourgeoisie. Basing itself on the industrialization thesis the British Delegation branded the nationalist bourgeoisie as having joined en bloc the camp of imperialism and counter-revolution.

these comrades who are of the opinion that the entire national bourgeoisie of the colonial countries, like India, Egypt, etc., simply take an anti-national, compradore position.... This does not, in any way, exclude certain understandings on its part with imperialism. On the contrary, the national bourgeoisie seeks such understandings. Before all, it seeks such understandings in the questions of the struggle against the revolutionary proletarian movement and against the agrarian revolution.[67]

Referring to Bennett's comparison of the Indian Swarajists with the Cadets of Czarist Russia, Kuusinen warned against this kind of mechanical analogy. He argued that while the bourgeoisie of the colonial countries was no better, there were two crucial differences: first, there were the vacillations of the colonial bourgeoisie both to the Left and to the Right and prompted by this vacillation the colonial bourgeoisie might swing even to the blackest reaction; secondly, the objective contradiction between the class interests of the coloinal bourgoisie and imperialism far outweighed the contradiction between the Cadets and Czarism.[68]

Accordingly, Kuusinen criticized the positions of Bennett and of even Lozovsky and Schuller, who felt that if the national bourgeoisie had to choose between the two camps it would in all probability prefer the camp of the imperialists to that of the revolutionaries. Kuusinen observed that the Draft Thesis did not at all absolutely exclude the possibility that a part of the national bourgeoisie, even if for a very short period only, would join hands with the national revolutionary camp. The position of the nationalist bourgeoisie was thus described as 'half-revolutionary'. Kuusinen then drew the attention of the Delegates to the four conditions laid down in the Draft Thesis for characterizing the situation which might witness the temporary joining of the camp of national revolutionaries by an important section of the bourgeoisie. These were, (a) if the revolution did not expire rapidly; (b) if the danger of an independent class revolution was not an immediacy; (c) if the prospects of utilizing the masses of the people in order to force concessions from the government did not yet seem to be hope-

less ; (d) if the nationalist bourgeoisie found the substantial support of another capitalist state backing it up.

Simultaneously Kuusinen warned against cherishing any kind of rosy illusions about the nationalist bourgeoisie which he described as basically reformist, which would never be in a position to consciously opt for revolution. Rather, the reformism of the nationalist bourgeoisie constituted the greatest obstacle in the way of acquiring mass influence and the Delegates were warned to take guard against the vacillations of this class, the unawareness of which might lead to the repetition of what had happened in China after Chiang's coup.[69] Kuusinen's concluding speech was marked by an element of caution which warned against both the overestimation and underestimation of the contradictions of the nationalist bourgeoisie with imperialism.

It is believed by many that the Draft Thesis was substantially modified on the basis of the various suggestions and criticisms made in course of the debate. Consequentely, it is argued, the role of the colonial bourgeoisie was definitely declared to be a counter-revolutionary one in the finally adopted *Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semi-colonies.*[70] It is argued furthermore by a number of scholars that this new understanding of the role of the colonial bourgeoisie as formulated in the adopted Theses of the Congress essentially reflected Roy's position, which he had been advocating since the Second Congress of Comintern.[71] It would be seen, however, that the so-called 'left-sectarian' stand of the new Theses had, however, little in common with Roy's understanding of the role of the bourgeoisie in colonies like India which, as we have seen, he described as having become completely counter-revolutionary.

Unlike Roy, the Comintern in the newly adopted Colonial Theses treated the position of the nationalist bourgeoisie in terms of its vacillating and not absolutely counter-revolutionary

role in relation to the national liberation movement.[72] And on this score the Theses maintained a distinction between the situation in China and that pertaining to India.

> This intermediate position of the national bourgeoisie between the revolutionary and imperialist camps is no longer to be observed, it is true, in China after 1925; there the greater part of the national bourgeoisie from the beginning, owing to the special situation, took the leadership in the national-emancipatory war; later on it passed over finally into the camp of counterrevolution. In India and Egypt, we still observe, for the time being, the typical bourgeois-nationalist movement—an opportunistic movement, subject to great vacillations, balancing between imperialism and revolution. The independence of the country in relation to imperialism, being to the advantage of the whole colonial people, corresponds also to the interests of the national bourgeoisie, but is in irreconcilable contradiction to the whole nature of the imperialist system. . . . In this respect the contradiction of interests between the national bourgeoisie of the colonial country and imperialism is objectively of a radical character. In this respect, imperialism demands capitulation on the part of the national bourgeoisie.[73]

Speaking about the application of correct tactics in the struggle against such parties as the Swarajists and Wafdists in India and Egypt, the Theses pointed out that while it was true that these parties had more than once betrayed the national-emancipatory struggle, they had not yet finally passed over to the counter-revolutionary camp in the manner of the Kuomintang. Hence what was necessary was the exposure of the reformist character of these parties. The Theses thus urged the communist parties in these countries to utilize the whatever little contradiction that existed beween these reformist parties

and imperialism, knowing fully well that this contradiction would never become the real source of revolution in the colonies.[74]

Warning against the reformism of the nationalist bourgeoisie the Colonial Theses, however, rejected the formation of any kind of bloc between the communist party and the national-reformist opposition. But the Theses also observed,

this does not exclude the formation of temporary agreements and the coordinating of separate activities in connection with definite anti-imperialist demonstrations, provided that these demonstrations of the bourgeois opposition can be utilised for the development of the mass movement, and provided that these agreements do not in any way limit the freedom of the Communist Parties in the matter of agitation among the masses and among the organisations of the latter.[75]

This shows that while unlike in the other Congresses in the Sixth Congress the Comintern was rather sceptical about the formation of an anti-imperialist united front, it did not also pursue the Royist strategy of total break with the nationalist bourgeoisie, considering the objective importance of its contradiction with imperialism. It must, however, be acknowledged that during this period the Comintern was becoming highly optimistic about the growing strength of the communist parties in the colonies. In fact, this alone would explain why the Comintern now no longer felt the necessity of emphasizing the united front strategy; perhaps the bitter experience of counter-revolution in China too contributed much to it. However, the Colonial Theses did not regard the potentiality, the organizational strength and independence of communist parties as identical in all the colonies. Thus, while it was believed that in India the working class was rapidly liberating itself from the influence of national-reformism, the Theses also stresed the necessity of accomplishisg much of the organizational and ideological work among the masses that was yet to be done. On this score, the maturity of the Chinese Communist Party in the pre-1927 period was recalled and it was pointed out in the Theses that it would be absolutely futile to mechanically regard the immediate tasks

of the Chinese Communist Party as identical with those of the Communist Parties of India and Egypt.[76]

However, it would be totally wrong to suggest that the Comintern, while emphasizing the growing importance of the proletariat in the colonies and the compromising role of the big bourgeoisie, tried to explain it in terms of a theory of industrialization. Therein lies the crucial importance of the new Colonial Theses which categorically rejected the industrialization thesis and, consequently, the theory of decolonization. Thus, while the exponents of the decolonization theory tried to explain the importance of the proletariat in the colonies by linking it up logically with a hypothetical theory of industrialization, the Comintern looked upon the emergent social force in the colonies historically, in terms of its peculiar social character.

The Theses dealt with the question of industrialization in the light of the parasitic role of imperialism in the colonies. The Theses emphasized that while capitalist exploitation in every imperialist country had proceeded by way of the development of productive forces, the specific colonial forms of imperialist exploitation had the singular feature of hindering the development of the productive forces in the colonies. Consequently, the colony was converted into a 'free' trading economy by means of the subordination of precapitalist forms of production to the needs of finance capital, which resulted in the intensification of the precapitalist methods of exploitation through the subjection of the peasant economy to the yoke of rapidly developing trade and usury capital and the increase of tax burdens. Futhermore, the industrial working up of the colonial raw material was not carried out in the colonies but in the capitalist countries, viz, the metropolis. As a result, the profits obtained in the colonies were for the most part not expended productively, but were sucked out of the country and invested either in the metropolis or in new spheres of expansion, demanded by the interests of inperialism. This, the Theses clarified, in no way contradicted the carrying through of the minimum of constructive activity (railways, harbours, etc.) which were indispensable in the interests of imperialism for the sake of military domination, for guaran-

teeing the uninterrupted working of the grinding machinery of taxation as well as for trading needs.[77]

This, however, the Theses warned, should not be construed as industrialization. In countries like Sudan, Cuba, Java, Egypt, because colonial interests demanded a certain encouragement of the development of production, a part of the peasantry had indeed passed over from grain cultivation to the production of cotton, sugar or rubber; this was necessitated by the urgency of widening the raw material base for world imperialism. This was followed by new systems of irrigation constructed with the same object in view; furthermore, with a view to widening the internal market attempts were undertaken, the Theses pointed out, to adapt the agrarian relationships to the capitalist mode of production.

Referring to the pattern of investment of capital the Theses stated that the major area was plantation, followed by mineral wealth. Only where manufacture constituted a very simple process (tobacco industry, sugar, refineries, etc.) or where the expense of transporting raw material could be considerably decreased by the first stage of manufacture being performed on the spot, did the development of production in the colonies attain comparatively large dimensions.[78]

In this context the Theses particularly criticized the positions of those who were all along interpreting the idea of industrialization in terms of export of finance capital to the colonies. While it was not denied that the export of capital was conducive to the growth of capitalist relations in the colonies, it was simultaneously emphasized that this in no way was a pointer to the direction of economic independence; rather, this only strengthened the dependence of the colonial economy on finance capital of the imperialist country. The so-called imported capital was concentrated in the colonies almost exclusively for the extraction and supply of raw materials, or for the first stages of their utilization. This was used for extending the system of communications, so as to facilitate the transport of raw material and thereby binding the colonies more closely to the metropolis. As a result,

The transference to the metropolis of the greater portion of the surplus value extorted from the cheap labour power of the colonial slaves retards to a correspondingly enormous degree the upward growth of the economy of the colonial countries and the development of their productive forces, and serves as an obstacle to the economic and political emancipation of the colonies.[79]

Commenting on the character of the capitalist enterprises created by imperialism in the colonies, the Theses categorically stated that they were 'predominantly or exclusively of an agrarian-capitalist character', and were 'distinguished by a low organic composition of capital'.

Real industrialisation of the colonial country, in particular the building up of a flourishing engineering industry, which might make possible the independent development of the country, is not accelerated, but, on the contrary, is hindered by the metropolis. This is the essence of its function of colonial enslavement: the colonial country is compelled to sacrifice the interests of its independent development and to play the part of an economic (agrarian-raw material) appendage to foreign capitalism,. . . .[80]

This idea was elaborated furthermore to lend credence to the Comintern's rejection of the theory of decolonization. The Theses specifically stated, while dwelling upon the theme of imperialist economic policy, that the development of the national economy of the colonies, particularly their industrialization and all round independent development, could be realized only in the strongest contradiction to the policy of imperialism. 'Thus', the Theses observed,

the specific character of the development of the colonial countries is especially expressed in the fact that the growth of productive forces is realised with extreme difficulty, spasmodically, artificially, being limited to individual branches of industry. . . . All the chatter of the imperialists and their lackeys about the policy of decolonisation being carried through by the imperialist powers, about promotion of the 'free development of the colonies', reveals itself as nothing but an imperialist lie. It is of the utmost importance that Communists both in the imperia-

list and in the colonial countries, should completely expose this lie.[81]

The above evidences would clarify the stand taken by the Comintern on the decolonization question at the Sixth Congress. This negates, on the one hand, the claims made by several scholars that the course adopted by the Comintern in the Sixth Congress virtually reflected the position of Roy;[82] on the other hand, this would also refute, it is believed, the argument put forward by some scholars that the question of industrialization of colonies under imperialist domination was not at all seriously discussed at the Sixth Congress, as if the Congress carefully avoided a stand on this question.[83]

Decolonization, therefore, was a very real issue. The Comintern's criticism of this theory was directed towards a reaffirmation of the marxist position that the idea of industrialization of colonies under imperialism is a myth. The rebuttal of this theory was particularly important because objectively the advocates of the industrialization thesis were lending support to the typical imperialist historiographical literature which preaches this very myth of industrialization of British India under the 'benevolent' supervision of imperialism. This should be particularly emphasized because attempts are made by some scholars in their admiration for Roy and crude intolerance of marxism to pass off the Comintern's criticism of Roy's position as purely a reflection of what they call a kind of Russian distortion of the whole issue,[84] or a kind of a mysterious 'Stalinist intrigue',[85] which they suggest led ultimately to Roy's expulsion; in other words, the import of these interpretations is the refusal to admit the crucial theoretical importance of the stand taken by the Comintern on the decolonization question, and appreciate the importance of the discussion in relation to a marxist understanding of the colonial question.

Finally, a crucial import of the discussion in the Sixth Congress was the emphasis on the peasant question in the colonies, despite the fact that the Theses attached considerable importance to the growing role of the proletariat. The advocates of the industrialization thesis, in their zeal for establishing proletarian hegemony, had all along underestimated the role of the peasantry. This negligence of the peasant question, the importance of which had been repeatedly emphasized by Lenin in his polemic with Roy, would perhaps explain the corresponding underestimation of this issue by the Communist Party of India for quite a long time, at least definitely in the early period. This is quite plausible because in the '20s, at least till 1928, it was primarily under the influence of Roy's writings that the embryonic CPI formulated its theoretical position on Indian politics. That the Comintern did not share this position becomes clear from a commentary on Roy made by Safarov immediately after his expulsion.

On the question of the fate of the Indian revolution, Roy has for a number of years, beginning with Second Congress of the Comintern, defended the viewpoint of 'Left-wing Communism', denying the independent revolutionary role of the peasantry in the colonial revolution and making it all a matter of a proletarian revolution. He did not see, he did not wish to see anyone else in the arena of struggle of social forces except the local bourgeoisie, always ready for a treacherous accommodation with imperialism and the proletariat. Right down to the Fourth Congress he always adopted this attitude. He did not understand the basic feature in the Leninist view of the peasantry and its attitude to the proletariat.[86]

It cannot be denied that for years this overemphasis on the role of the proletariat, linking it up logically with a theory of industrialization of India, and the corresponding negligence of the peasant question, constituted the cornerstone of the theories, the exponents of which were censured severely at the Sixth Congress for their advocacy of the decolonization theory. Even the Colonial Theses, adopted at the Sixth Congress, while emphasizing the importance of proletarian hegemony attached particular importance to the peasant question in the colonies. In fact, some

scholars are tempted to argue that the Colonial Theses in emphasizing the role of the proletatiat landed itself into a contradictory position since the idea of proletarian hegemony did not square with its defence of the theory of retarded industrialization.[87]

It is true that the Theses attached considerable significance to the role of the proletariat; it is, however, equally true that the Theses were very much particular in distinguishing the peculiar character of the colonial proletariat from the proletariat of an industrially advanced Europe; consequently, the Theses regarded as particularly crucial the role of the peasantry in the colonies and the necessity of forging its links with the proletariat. Therein lay the fundamental difference between the Comintern and the exponents of the decolonization theory—in their understanding of the character of the proletariat in the colonies. Thus while the Theses held out the hope that the rapid growth of the labour movement in China, India and Indonesia pointed to the possibility of the emergence of the proletariat as an independent class force, in direct opposition to the national bourgeoisie, and of liberating itself from the influence of the nationalist and social-reformist leaders,[88] the Theses emphasized with equal importance the characteristic features of the proletariat in the colonies.

The predominant part of the colonial proletariat is derived from the pauperised village, with which the worker remains in connection even when engaged in production. In the majority of colonies (with the exception of some large factory towns such as Shanghai, Bombay, Calcutta, etc.) we find, as a general rule, only a first generation of proletariat engaged in largescale production. Another portion is made up of the ruined artisans who are being driven out of the decaying handicrafts, which are widely spread even in the most advanced colonies. The ruined artisan, a petty owner, carries with him into the working class a guild tendency and ideology which serves as a basis for the penetration of national-reformist influence into the labour movement of the colonies.[89]

Consequently, the Theses stressed, pointing to the importance of the peasant question,

Along with the national-emancipatory struggle, the agrarian Revolution constitutes the axis of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in the chief colonial countries. Consequently, communists must follow with the greatest attention the development of the agrarian crisis and the intensification of class contradictions in the village, they must from the very beginning give a consciously-revolutionary direction to the dissatisfaction of the workers and to the incipient peasant movement, directing it against imperialist exploitation and bondage as also against the yoke of the various precapitalist (feudal and semi-feudal) relationships as a result of which peasant economy is suffering, declining and perishing.[90]

IV

Before one concludes the analysis of the colonial question at the Sixth Congress, it would not be improper to explain the circumstances that led to the shift in the Comintern's line from the earlier strategy of an anti-imperialist united front.

In the first place, the Comintern overestimated the strength of the communist and workers' parties in the capitalist as well as the colonial countries in the context of the growing crisis of the capitalist economy. In other words, the Comintern developed a tendency to establish a kind of logical nexus between the impending crash of the world economy of capitalism and the historical possibility of a 'take-over' of state power by the communist parties. This, it cannot but be admitted, was an exercise in mechanical determinism. It is wholly true that the Comintern was correct in its assessment of the crisis of the capitalist economy. This was revealed, almost graphically, in the period of the Great Depression that followed. This refuted completely the claims of the Western economists who were enthusiastic about the economic boom in the late '20s. In fact, as Palme Dutt tells us,

It is not surprising that, when the crash followed in 1929 and spread out by 1931 to the most devastating world economic

crisis on record, with fifty million unemployed, and opening of the war offensive of Japanese imperialism in 1931, the United Senate Commission of Enquiry recalled the prediction of the Sixth Congress of the Communist International in the summer of 1928, made under what all western capitalist and social-democratic observers had thought to be a clear sky, and, gravely considered whether the world economic crisis might not possibly be a communist plot.[91]

But the correctness of this analysis did not necessarily justify the claim that the crack in the capitalist economic system would quite obviously strengthen the possibility of the communist parties to seize power. Of course, such aims were deeply motivated by the immediate manifestations of the growing militancy of working class struggles, as evidenced in the massive strike actions of the proletariat in a unmber of capitalist countries. But a major factor explaining this stand was the Comintern's struggle against Trotsky, Bukharin as well as the Social-Democrats who 'were slipping into a reformist assessment of capitalist stabilisation'. They ignored the contradictions of capitalism, denied the inevitability of a world economic crisis and looked upon the upsurge in working class movements in capitalist countries and the national liberation movements in the colonies with a feeling of deep pessimism.[92] Coupled with it was the crude intolerance of the communists by the social-democrats who doggedly refused to see the danger of fascism that was raising its ugly head in a number of countries in Europe. In the colonial countries, for instance in China, Trotsky now preached the theory of the 'falling wave', especially after the collapse of the first united front. All this precipitated the Comintern's espousal of a revolutionary optimism which could be seized upon by the communist parties, despite opposition from all quarters. This led, consequently, to sectarianism.

Indeed, the Comintern's assessment of India was deeply influenced by this analysis. The character of the working class movement in India, coupled with the fact that a number of industries had come up in different corners of the country, enabled the Indian marxists to think that the role of the working

class in the liberation movement had become the most decisive, if not the absolute force, since the major pivot of the most organized action of the Indian people against British imperialism had always been the urban population, along with the peasantry, including also the industrial and railway proletariat. Thus, while the country came to standstill in the wake of *hartals* called by Gandhi, these agitations were frequently based on specifically proletarian forms of struggle (for instance, strikes in such proletarian centres as Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Kanpur, Ahmedabad, Sholapur, etc.). These strikes, although not oriented towards revolutionary overthrow of the colonial order, were nevertheless laying the foundations of the transition to an armed struggle of the workers and the sailors of Bombay against the British colonizers in the later period. This continuous growth of the proletarian methods of struggle quite evidently gave the impression that the proletariat had perhaps become an independent social force upon which hinged almost exclusively the destiny of the anti-imperialist struggle in India.[93] This explains why the Colonial Theses of the Sixth Congress stated that,

> The basic tasks of the Indian communists consist in struggle against British imperialism for the emancipation of the country, for destruction of all relics of feudalism, for the agrarian revolution and for establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry in the form of a Soviet Republic.[94]

This was further precipitated by the negative attitude adopted by Gandhi towards this kind of militarism of the masses, the ideological emphasis of Gandhism being exclusively on the creed of non-violence. Its best evidence was Bardoli which quite evidently made marxists of all shades sceptical about the role of the colonial bourgeoisie in India's liberation struggle.

This, however, is not wholly explained unless one refers to the impact of Stalin's analysis of the colonial question that primarily shaped the content of the Colonial Theses adopted at

the Sixth Congress. Thus, although Stalin himself did not participate in the debate on the colonial question, the Theses bore the heavy imprint of his ideas. In the preceding chapter we have seen the subtle differences between the positions of Roy and Stalin regarding the role of the bourgeoisie in the colonial countries. In the Theses Stalin's position was vindicated in the sense that the Indian bourgeoisie was treated as a class that was divided in two sections. One section comprising the national-reformists, that is the Gandhists and the Swarajists, bore the main brunt of attack in the Theses. It thus stressed that alongside the fight against British imperialism, which of course constituted the main danger, the fight against the national-reformists, who had always the tendency to vacillate and then compromise with imperialism, would also have to be waged simultaneously. However, the Theses at the same time did not deny the existence of petty bourgeois and national-revolutionary groups but implored the communists to be more resolute in their struggle than these groups.[95] It becomes evident that this analysis of Stalin was a logical continuation of his earlier position in 1925. In other words, the idea of an anti-imperialist united front with the nationalist bourgeoisie, although the latter was wholly reformist, could not follow from this position. This is how sectarianism crept in.

However, a careful look at Stalin's writings shows that this position in the Theses was also a reflection of his general theoretical position regarding the 'Right' inside the Comintern and Social Democracy. Thus a year later, speaking at the Plenum of the Central Committee and Central Control Commission of the CPSU Stalin, recalling Bukharin's position at the Sixth Congress, sharply criticized him for maintaining the position that 'capitalism was reconstructing itself and was thereby maintaining itself more securely'. Stalin criticized the position for being virtually the standpoint of Hilferding. On the contrary, Stalin asked the delegates to reconsider whether capitalism was not passing through a period of the gathering storm, when the conditions were 'maturing for a new revolutionary upsurge, a period of preparation of the working class for future class battles.'[96]

In the same vein, Stalin criticized Bukharin for being too mild in his attack against the Social-Democrats. Stalin specifically stated that mere attack on Social-Democracy was not enough. What was more important, according to Stalin, was the fight against the so-called 'Left' wing of Social-Democracy because it was the 'Left' wing which,

> by playing with 'Left' phrases and thus adroitly deceiving the workers, [was] retarding their mass defection from Social Democracy. It is obvious that unless the 'Left' Social-Democrats are routed it will be impossible to overcome Social-Democracy in general.[97]

The theoretical links between this criticism and the emphasis of the Theses on the exposure of the national-reformists, the Gandhists and the Swarajists now becomes, it is hoped, quite obvious.

Finally, the stand of the Sixth Congress on the colonial question was also very deeply influenced by the events in China. The Congress was held a few months after the historic Ninth Plenum of the ECCI. The first united front had by that time given way, the CPC was on the run hounded by Chiang Kai-shek's army, and moreover, there was the disastrous thesis of Trotsky that the revolutionary wave in China had now fallen and that it was time for shedding tears, not for preparation of self-defence and counter-offensive against a most shrewd and deadly adversary. All this quite evidently affected the CPC too. Inside the CPC, on the one hand there was the line given by the Rightists led by Chen Tu-hsiu, which became predominant after the failure of 1927. Following Trotsky's thesis this section pursued the suicidal line of virtually liquidating the revolution by advocating a policy of retreat on all fronts. But this evoked a very strong reaction within the CPC. Chen Tu-hsiu's liquidationist line whipped up a kind of 'ultraleft' sentiment which was manifest at the 7 August conference of the CPC and this then developed into a kind of 'Left' putschism at the enlarged meeting of the Central Committee of the Party in November 1927. This section was represented by Chu Chiu-pai, who confused the democratic stage of the Chinese revolution with the socialist stage. Consequently, this section worked out plans for uprisings in Hunan,

Hupeh, Kiangsu and Chekiang, which were the centres of Kuomintang rule and called for immediate seizure of political power by the peasant masses in collaboration with the workers, conveniently forgetting that mass peasant uprisings without revolutionary peasant bases would be politically as well as militarily a disastrous adventure.

This work of creating revolutionary peasant bases, however, was carried on by Mao Tsetung, Chu Teh and other leaders throughout the period following the failure of the revolution in 1927. Between 1927 and 1928 a series of successful uprisings took place, the most notable of which were the Autumn-Harvest uprising in October 1927 which led to the creation of the first revolutionary base in the Chinkang Mountains, the Huangan and Macheng uprisings in October 1927 and at the beginning of 1928, and the Piangkiang uprising in July 1928. These paved the way for the creation of peasant military bases in the '30s which later decisively ensured the victory of the Chinese revolution. At the same time, it is through the creation of these peasant bases that the Chinese Red Army of the future was born in the fires of the revolution.[98]

The Sixth Congress of the CPC, which was held in Moscow in the middle of 1928 in the face of severe repression by the Kuomintang and which virtually coincided with the Sixth Congress of the Comintern, endorsed the above line, criticizing thereby the positions of both Chen Tu-hsiu and Chu Chiu-pai. The Congress, while admitting that the revolution was at a low ebb, nevertheless affirmed that the party's tactics at that time were not to launch attacks and uprisings in urban centres but to win over the masses, especially the peasantry, to create the Party's armed forces in the rural bases, keeping the question of agrarian revolution in mind.[99] The Congress at the same time uncompromisingly criticized Chen Tu-hsiu's liquidationist line, which had virtually surrendered revolutionary leadership of the

CPC.[100] The Sixth Congress of CPC, therefore, never endorsed the line of adventurist actions of armed uprising, as advanced by leaders like Chu Chiu-pai. This has to be emphasized because this happens to be a standard interpretation of the line adopted by the CPC at its Sixth Congress.[101] Thus, despite the heavy repression faced by the CPC, the Comintern was cautious enough not to give a call for premature uprisings against the Nationalist regime of the Kuomintang, realizing perhaps, as one perceptive analyst has suggested, that

> the Chinese revolution was a mixture of national and social revolutions; that even under normal circumstances the party must not be too aggressive in its relations with other classes; and above all, that even if the Communist ignored the demands of national revolution at certain times, nationalism assumed paramount importance in times of national emergency.[102]

But then, if the Sixth Congress of the CPC was mainly correct in identifying the stage of the revolution as bourgeois democratic,

in its emphasis on the worker-peasant alliance as the sole force of the revolution it virtually wrote off the national bourgeoisie for all time to come, although not openly giving a call for immediate mass uprising against the Nationalist regime. This, of course, was a line different from the 'putschist' line of Chiu Chu-pai but was at the same time a definite shift further to the left from the original position taken by the ECCI at its Ninth Plenum. Thus, as Ho Kan-Chih in his classic study has pointed out,

> it [the Sixth Congress] failed to work out a correct estimate regarding the dual character of the intermediate classes and the internal contradictions among the reactionary forces, for it considered the national bourgeoisie 'one of the most dangerous enemies that hinder the victory of the revolution'. Ignoring the position and the dual character of the national bourgeoisie under the Chiang Kai-shek regime, it failed to foresee the possibility of a change in the political attitude of this class. The congress also made the sweeping assertion that 'all factions of the Kuomintang are reactionary', failing to make any distinction between them or take advantage of the contradictions among them so as to isolate the most reactionary enemies and crush them separately.[103]

This position now found its way in the Colonial Theses adopted by the Sixth Congress of the Communist International. The Theses, reflecting the CPC's analysis of the situation as well as Stalin's analysis of the colonial question declared that the Chinese national bourgeoisie, together with the imperialists and the militarists, constituted the bloc that was now the chief enemy of the revolution. At the same time, the Theses warned against the attempts of the petty-bourgeois groups (inside or outside the Kuomintang) to influence the toiling masses and advised the CPC to isolate and expose these groups before the masses by

correct communist tactics.[104] This would be followed up, the Theses declared, by propagating among the masses the idea of soviets, the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, and the inevitability of a mass armed uprising, since it was only the proletariat and the peasantry which now were on the side of the revolution.[105]

The break with the united front strategy, which was particularly determined by the Comintern's experience in China, coupled with the other factors as explained earlier, thus decisively affected the direction of the new Colonial Theses. Questions such as whether this new course spelled disaster for a country like India, or why the united front line was revived again a few years later, or to what extent the Indian communists could appreciate this succession of shifts in the Comintern's position on the colonial question, form a truly fascinating field of inquiry and which now demands our attention.

5

The Colonial Question in Flux

I

THE YEARS following the Sixth Congress witnessed the opening up of certain fundamental shifts in the Comintern's understanding of the colonial question. As the uncertain '20s gave way to the stormy '30s, the capitalist world was confronted with the impending threat of the Great Depression, the gradual collapse of a number of bourgeois democracies and their overnight transformation into monstrous regimes of fascist dictatorships and the fast erosion of the credibility of capitalism as a socio-economic formation. The colonies, since they were historically interlinked with the world system of imperialism, became the natural vicitims of this global crisis that so deeply affected the imperialist powers. Its sickening impact was particularly felt in the sphere of the colonial economies as they were affected by the Great Crash. This, in turn, led to two most significant developments in the colonies and the Comintern's analysis of the colonial question was very decisively moulded by these considerations. Quite evidently the Comintern's focus on India too was shaped accordingly. In the first place, the crisis of the colonial economy of India led to an unprecedented ruin of the peasantry and a sharp deterioration of the conditions of the working class. This led to massive peasant unrest and strike movements that violently erupted in India with the onset of the '30s. Secondly, the intensification of these mass struggles witnessed a tendency towards increasing vacillation and compromise with British imperialism among the bourgeois leaders of the national movement. It follows quite logically, therefore, that the Comintern's understanding of the political line relevant to the leadership of the Communist Party of India centred around its analysis of the deepening crisis of India's economy and the assessment of the revolutionary potential of the workers and the peasant masses.

The colonies being the principal exporters of raw agricultural products to the metropolitan countries, the immediate effect of the Depression was felt most severely in the catastrophic fall in prices of agricultural commodities. Moreover, since in consequence of the Depression the terms of trade between industry and agriculture turned sharply against the latter, because in the world market as a whole prices of industrial commodities did not fall as drastically as prices of agricultural commodities and because there were heavy import duties on industrial goods whereas there was very little protection for agricultural commodities except for an import duty on wheat,[1] the adverse balance of trade, as manifest in the figures in Table 1 relating to decline of exports, further hastened the fall in agricultural prices.

TABLE 1: FALL OF EXPORTS IN 1930-31 OVER 1929-30[2]

Commodity	Quantity (In tonnes)	1929-30 (In millions of Rupees)	Quantity (In tonnes)	1930-31 (In millions of Rupees)
Food Products, Drink + Tobacco		675.7		596.7
Jute	809,000	271.7	620,000	128.8
Jute Products	958,000	519.1	767,000	318.6
Raw Cotton	729,000	650.7	701,000	463.3
Tea		260		235.6
Rice	2298	313.1	2254	258.2
Oil Seeds	1195	264.8	1037	178.6

The adverse position of India in terms of balance of trade becomes particularly evident from the following figures relating to industrial imports and agricultural exports, as prepared by the economists working on India in the Comintern at that time:

TABLE 2: INDUSTRIAL IMPORTS AND AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS[3]

Year & Month		Index of Prices (1914=100)	Export of Goods % Fall as on September 1, 1929	Index of Prices (1914=100)	Import of Goods % Fall as on September 1, 1929
September	1929	217	—	167	—
March	1931	139	39	144	14
September	1931	116	46.5	139	17
March	1932	124	43	154	8
July	1932	—	47	—	16

This had its disastrous impact on the fall of prices, as seen from Table 3, pointing to the sharp contrast between a colony like India and the developed metropolitan countries.

TABLE 3: FALL OF PRICES (1921-29 AND 1931-32)[4]

Year	India (1914)	Japan (1913)	Australia (1913)	Canada (1926)	USA (1926)	England (1914)
1921	178	200	175	110	98	197
1929	141	167	166	96	97	137
August 1931	91	113	128	73	69	69
August 1932	91	118	130	67	65	100
% Fall from 1921 to 1932	49.9	41.0	25.7	39.1	33.7	49.2
% Fall from 1929 to 1932	37.0	31.4	20.8	30.3	32.0	26.0

By the first half of 1933 the situation worsened further. Taking 1914=100 as the index, in February 1933 the price of raw jute fell to 36; in April 1933 the index of cereals came down to 58 as against 125 in 1929; of raw cotton to 80 as against 146 in 1929; of tea to 71 as against 140. The total index price of goods in April 1933 was 84 as against 141 in 1929. Only prices for sugar did not show considerable decrease and were even higher

than the 1914 level, this being the result of the protectionist duties fixed at 160 per cent of the market value.[5]

Interestingly, while the slump in the prices of jute was perhaps the worst, in cases of sugar and cotton, however, British imperialism pursued a slightly different policy. On the one hand, there was the problem of meeting the internal demand for refined sugar and cotton piece-goods, especially when a number of textile mills had already grown up in different parts of the country. Secondly, the threat of foreign competition, posed particularly by the Japanese and American business interests, was becoming especially acute. The Comintern analysts pointed out that by expanding the production of sugar, British imperialism was trying to become free from import of Dutch and American sugar into the metropolis. This followed from the British policy of establishing certain economic autarchy, making internal market competition most acute for sources of raw materials and food products and which found its most brilliant expression in the Ottawah Agreement. Similarly, it was pointed out that the policy of the British Government towards creating an effective base in Sind for raw material for production of average and high breed cotton for Lancashire was guided by the necessity of doing away with American dependence. But in both the cases, the British policy-makers took care to see that cultivation of sugarcane and cotton took place under the patronage of the kulaks and the semi-feudal holdings.[6] However, despite this differentiation the crisis of the Indian economy as a whole, leading to the ruin of the Indian peasantry, was particularly manifest in the reduction of the area of cultivation of the most important crops in 1932-33 as against 1928-29, as found in Table 4.

Along with this fall in production, coupled with fall in prices, the ruin of the Indian peasantry was further precipitated by the gruelling system of compulsory payment of taxes. On the one hand, this led to a consolidation of the stranglehold of the moneylender on the peasants and encouragement of usury,

TABLE 4: AREA UNDER CULTIVATION[7]

Year	JUTE				COTTON				WHEAT			
	Area ('000 acres)	%	Crop ('000 bales)	%	Area ('000 acres)	%	Crop ('000 bales)	%	Area ('000 acres)	%	Crop ('000 tonnes)	%
1928/29	3,544	—	9,956	—	29.053	—	5,782	—	32,000	—	8,507	—
1929/30	3,317	− 6.4	9,767	− 1.9	25,922	− 4.2	5,125	−11.3	31,654	− 1.1	10,469	+23.1
1930/31	3,492	+ 5.3	11,255	+15.2	23,500	− 9.3	5,110	− 0.3	32,181	1.7	9,302	−11.1
1931/32	1,862	−46.7	5,566	−50.5	23,522	+ 0.1	4,064	−20.5	33,745	+10.4	9.026	− 3.0
1932/33	1,899	+ 2.0	5,845	+ 5.0	22,558	− 5.0	4,516	+ 8.9	32,293	− 5.7	9,120	+ 0.9
1932/33 over 1928/29	—	−46.4	—	−41.3	—	−22.4	—	−21.9	—	+ 0.9	—	+ 7.2

Year	RICE ('000 tonnes)				GROUND NUTS ('000 tonnes)			
	Area ('000 acres)	%	Crop ('000 bales)	%	Area ('000 acres)	%	Crop ('000 bales)	%
1928/29	83,000	—	32,138	—	6,351	—	3,211	—
1929/30	80,000	−3.6	31,131	−3.1	5,748	− 9.5	2,268	−16.9
1930/31	81,900	+2.4	32,200	+3.2	6,579	+14.5	3,154	+18.2
1931/32	84,260	+2.9	32,988	+6.0	5,489	−16.6	2,276	−27.8
1932/33	82,026	−2.6	30,655	−7.0	6,952	+26.7	2,836	+24.6
1932/33 over 1928/29	—	−1.2	—	−4.6	—	+ 9.5	—	−11.7

[7] ibid. pp. 34-35.

while on the other hand, land, as a result of mortgaging, was continually passing from the agriculturalist to the non-agriculturalist, giving rise to the enslavement and pauperization of the *raiyat* and the formation of the landless proletariat. Proceeding on the basis of this analysis the Comintern analysts pointed out that although accurate data on agricultural bondage in India was not available, whatever fragmentary data existed showed that the proportion of agricultural bondage had greatly surpassed the figures given earlier by the Banking Commission. The bondage in the Punjab, for instance, which was to the extent of Rs. 135 crores, had increased to Rs. 200 crores. Again, in Travancore it was estimated to have reached Rs 25 crores, which meant an average bond of Rs 380 per peasant family.[8]

Such an exasperating situation could not quite obviously continue eternally. The grinding-wheel of oppression very soon let loose a series of massive peasant revolts, quite often sporadic but on occasions organized. Indeed, the peasant movements during the '30s constitute an excellent index of measuring the magnitude of their oppression. Available evidences show that the Comintern attached crucial importance to these peasant struggles. In the periodic reports on India most extensive coverage was given to the types of peasant uprisings in different parts of India as reported in the Indian press. In 1931, for instance, one comes across reports relating to peasant unrests in Mymensingh of Bengal; in Sind of Hyderabad, where cases of disconnecting of telephone wires and telephone lines took place; in Balaghar, where there was agitation for removal or reduction of taxes; in Jessore, where traders who were not reducing prices were looted of their wares; in Dharbar, Janapur and Northern Kanada, where five villages announced nonpayment of taxes; in Surat, where energetic and hectic campaign took place for non-payment of taxes.[9] By the first quarter of 1933 the peasant unrest had gained increasing momentum, quite often leading to organized armed actions. In Srinagar, in the estate of Diwan Badrinath, peasants started an active campaign for non-payment of taxes and refused to pay taxes even for the

previous year. In Lyalpur of the Punjab the peasants had taken back their land which they had mortgaged to the landlords. In Vishakhapatnam of Madras armed police detachments were sent to deal with those peasants who had refused payment of taxes. The Comintern gave particular prominence to the so-called 'bandit-raids' as reported in the Indian press. In Lyalpur, a group of 'bandits' attacked the house of a moneylender, looted the cash and ornaments and took away mortgage bonds of about Rs. 40,000 which were later burnt. Interestingly, the cries of the moneylenders requsting the peasants to come to their help and promising them help of Rs. 500 per person were ignored. Furthermore, there were reports of Red-Shirt peasants' movements in the North-Western Provinces and of armed uprisings in the princely district of Alwar. Thus, out of the 150,000 peasants who constituted the 'Meo' tribe (the main participants in the uprising), about 90,000 Meos, mainly Muslims, had taken active part. Particularly significant was the fact that among them were ex-army men, who acted as leaders and strategists of the uprising. The uprising, significantly, was against landlords, businessmen and particularly against the moneylenders who were, incidentally, Hindus.[10]

Alongside the peasant uprisings, the '30s experienced a massive stir in the working class movement. In the earlier chapters it has been indicated that even in the mid-'20s strikes had become an important feature of the day. By the '30s, under the impact of the Depression, wage-cuts in the industries were widespread, leading to growing deterioration of the positions of the workers. The intensification of the repression of the workers was particularly heightened by the growing militancy in the trade union movement, as evident in the seizure of important positions of trade union leadership by the communists. Thus, on 3 February 1928, the communists participated with vigour and enthusiasm in the all-India mass demonstrations to boycott the Simon Commission. In April 1928 began the six month long textile mill workers' strike of Bombay, in which communists as members of the Bombay Workers' and Peasants' Party took initiative in organizing joint strike committees and lending a militant orientation to the strike movement. The conclusion of this historic textile

strike witnessed the birth of the Girni Kamgar Union (Red Flag) with a membership of 80,000 workers. Similar unions began to be formed in Calcutta as well. In the '30s, under the looming shadow of the Depression, with the deterioration of the bargaining power of the workers, strikes reached a dizzy height. The following figures, publicized by the Comintern in its periodic reports on India in the '30s, testify to it.

In the first quarter of 1933 twenty-eight strikes were recorded in which 48,535 workers participated and 734,483 man-days were lost. Of the total number of strikes, eleven took place in textile industries, three in jute factories, three in railway workshops and eleven in other undertakings. A majority of these strikes took place on questions of wages. In the second quarter, the total number of strikes increased to forty-two. In these strike struggles 45,607 workers participated and 991,236 man-days were lost. Of the total number of strikes that took place in British India in the second quarter, twenty-four were in Bombay in which 22,088 workers participated and 172,915 man-days were lost. Of this twenty-four, seventeen took place on questions of wages and eight ended in the victory of the workers. In Bengal, six strikes took place in which 15,374 workers participated and 619,365 man-days were lost. In the United Provinces there took place three strikes in which 5,410 workers participated and 1,45,741 man-days were lost. All these strikes took place on questions of wages. In the Central Provinces there were three strikes, with 2615 workers participating and a loss of 53,215 man-days. An industrywise survey shows that of the forty-two strikes, thirty took place in the cotton and wool industry, in which 32,803 workers participated and 414,455 man-days were lost; three strikes took place in the jute industry, in which 11,614 workers participated and 56,342 man-days were lost. The remaining nine strikes were in fields of industry.[11]

By 1934, the strike-wave intensified further. In this year 159 strike actions took place in which 220,808 workers participated and 4,775,559 man-days were lost whereas there had been 146 strikes throughout 1933, in which 164,938 workers had taken part and 2,168,961 man-days were lost. More than half of the working-days lost during 1934 related to the strikes in Bombay

textile factories in which more than 90,000 workers participated, and which continued for more than two months. The Bombay strikes were followed by strike actions in Sholapur and Nagpur, which resulted in a loss of 460,000 man-days. Interestingly, 60 per cent of all the strikes, 83 per cent of the participants and 91 per cent of the lost man-days related to cotton textile factories and of all these strikes, 36 per cent ended in the victory of the workers.[12]

While the political horizon of India was thus getting beclouded with the threatening postures of the peasant movements and the massive strike-waves launched by the working class, the leadership of the national movement, at that time under the control of the Indian National Congress and its Gandhian ideology, showed its unreserved willingness to strike a compromise with British imperialism. Already in the '20s, the tendency towards vacillation, a readiness to compromise with imperialism and a desire to put a brake on the militancy of mass movements had been evidenced in Gandhi's withdrawal of the non co-operation movement at Bardoli. By 1928 the essentially reformist character of the Congress leadership became much more pronounced. In December 1928, at the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress, Dominion Status and not full independence was accepted as the goal of India's freedom struggle on the basis of the recommendation of the Nehru Report. Significantly enough, the resolution demanding Dominion Status was adopted, despite opposition from within the Congress, on the basis of a proposal initiated by Gandhi. However, in order not to alienate the elements critical of this resolution within the Congress, it was agreed that if the British Government did not accept it in one year's time the Congress would begin to organize non-violent non co-operation and recommend non-payment of taxes. As we know it today, in the period between the Calcutta session and the Lahore Congress of 1929, the Indian leaders made desperate efforts to come to a political settlement on the question of Dominion Status. However, since no assurance was forthcoming, the Independence Resolution was passed at the Lahore Congress and the call for full independence was given, with the resolve to begin the civil disobedience movement. But Gandhi's Dandi

March in 1930, his subsequent arrest and the growing tempo of the civil disobedience movement were very soon disrupted by the rather disquieting Gandhi-Irwin agreement, its endorsement at the Karachi session of the Congress in 1931, and the decision to join the Round Table Conference in London with a view to discussing a future Constitution for India. The Round Table Conferences, however, yielded no results. On the contrary the British Government adopted a sterner attitude towards the Congress and its organizations, banning it in 1932 thereby and helping the resumption of the civil disobedience movement. By 1934, however, despite massive repressions the civil disobedience movement gradually came to be suspended, and the Congress, under Gandhi's leadership, decided to contest elections in the Legislative Councils, as envisaged in the proposed Government of India Act, 1935.

Quite obviously, this continuous vacillation and compromise as manifest in the refusal of the Congress leadership to lend any militant orientation to the national movement, the emphasis on non-violence, and the inclination towards fighting imperialism within the framework of reformist manoeuvres were very largely decisive in the shaping of Comintern's policy towards India, particularly when the country was seething with massive political unrest, unleashing thereby the revolutionary potential of the working masses.

II

The above circumstances, the experience of the betrayal of the Chinese revolution by the Kuomintang, and the compromising policy of Social Democracy in Europe towards the emergent fascist leaderships, very deeply affected the Comintern's understanding of the role of the bourgeoisie in India in the anti-imperialist struggle.

Thus, an attempt was made to interpret the compromising and vacillating policy of the Congress leadership in the light of the sickening experience of the Kuomintang's betrayal of the Chinese Revolution by putting forward the argument that the bourgeoisie in India was more afraid of the working class than of imperialist oppression, that to them Canton was more terrifying a name

than London, that the revolutionary crisis in India was so extreme that even at the beginning of the rise of the wave of mass discontent the Indian bourgeoisie had surpassed the Chinese bourgeoisie in their hatred and panic for such actions.[13] In an ECCI Report prepared after the Sixth Congress it was also suggested that the Indian National Congress was quite prone to come to a deal with British imperialism in the latter's preparedness of a war against the Soviet Union, despite the fact that a Resolution against war on the Soviet Union had been passed by the Swarajists.[14]

Moreover, the Comintern leadership identified the role of the bourgeoisie in colonies like India with that of the Social-Democrats in Europe. As the latter, by its policy of reconciliation, had strengthened the possibility of fascism's seizure of power, so the national bourgeoisie in the colonies as well as petty bourgeois political groups represented by men like Wang Cheng-Wei and Jawaharlal Nehru practised 'undisguised treachery. . . . to the cause of national independence', and this they sought to conceal by resorting to pacifist and pseudo-revolutionary phraseology.[15]

Consequently, Comintern's understanding of India began to be featured by two significant political orientations. In the first place, by further radicalizing the spirit of the Colonial Theses of the Sixth Congress it was now concluded that the bourgeoisie in the colonies had become a completely counter-revolutionary force, and that since this was sought to be concealed by the so-called 'Left' elements within the parties that represented the bourgeoisie (i.e. Wang Cheng-Wei of Kuomintang, Subhas Bose and Nehru of Indian National Congress), the main attack would have to be concentrated on both imperialism and the national bourgeoisie, particularly on the so-called 'Left' petty bourgeois elements, so as to expose their subversive and hypocritical character. A major reason behind this attack was that by and large the peasant and the trade union movements in India during the early '30s were organized by these elements of the Congress. Conse-

quently, a barrage-fire began to be directed against the leadership of the National Congress, particularly against its 'Left' elements who were rather critical of the Gandhian leadership, as the former were treated as the more skilful collaborators of British imperialism so far as they diluted and thereby subverted the militancy of mass movements.

The other shift that followed logically from this position was the emphasis on the necessity to build up an organized mass Communist Party of India which would act independently as the sole leader of the anti-imperialist struggle. This position was deeply influenced by the growing militancy of mass movements in India, particularly when it was found that even after the Meerut arrests of the leading members of the CPI in 1929 the strike-waves and the peasant struggles continued unabated.

It was at the Tenth Plenum of the ECCI held in July 1929 that the impact of these major shifts could be felt. On the eve of the Plenum Dmitrii Manuilsky observed that, affected by the process of class struggle in the international arena, the national bourgeoisie had suddenly everywhere shifted to the right by capitulating before imperialism (e.g. China, India), and with the growing process of differentiation within the national revolutionary movement the petty-bourgeois elements were moving swiftly towards the right.[16] This position, theoretically speaking, was a definite break with the earlier position of Stalin on the colonial question. As shown in Chapter 2, Stalin originally made a distinction between the revolutionary, petty-bourgeois wing and the reactionary section within the camp of the national bourgeoisie. By the time of the Tenth Plenum the entire national-bourgeois camp, including the petty-bourgeois elements, was treated as having gone over to imperialism. It appears that Stalin had given a hint of this position when in April 1929, he had attacked Bukharin for not being sufficiently critical of the 'Left' wing of Social Democracy in the latter's presentation of the *Theses On the International Situation* at the Sixth Congress of Comintern in 1928.[17] It has been already suggested that criticism

of Social Democracy was closely interlinked with the criticism of petty-bourgeois elements in the colonies. Very soon, however, Stalin in his report to the Sixteenth Congress of the C.P.S.U. (B) in 1930 made his position more explicit on the undifferentiated approach to the analysis of the role of the bourgeoisie in the colonies, when Gandhi as well as the entire Indian bourgeoisie as a class was described by him as relying on police bayonets for flooding the country with the blood of the people.[18]

A number of speakers reiterated this position at the Tenth Plenum when referring to India. Thus Tsui Wito, the Chinese delegate, observed that the national bourgeoisie of India was engaged in active hostility against the working class and hence it was necessary to develop a new, revolutionary communist leadership.[19] A more leftist position was taken by Lozovsky who argued that the line of the Sixth Congress, which did not envisage all out opposition to national-reformism, was no longer fully applicable to India since the Indian bourgeoisie had openly gone over to the counter-revolutionary camp by throttling the labour movement and by making common cause with British imperialism in the suppression of revolutionary struggles.[20] Equally important was the position taken by Fimm who pointed to the impossibility of applying to India united front tactics that had been experimented in China because India possessed a far more numerous working class than China, as evidenced by the growing number of strike battles—in 1927 there had been 129 strikes in which 131,000 workers participated while in 1928 there were 203 strikes in which 506,000 persons took part. This, he pointed out, was an index of the heightened class consciousness and stubbornness of the Indian proletariat to be free of the hold of reformist leadership.[21] Finally, in the *Theses on the International Situation and the Immediate Tasks of the Communist International* it was stated,

The undisguised betrayal of the cause of national independence by the Indian bourgeoisie (the resolutions passed by the Swara-

jist Indian National Congress in favour of Dominion status) and their active support of the bloody suppression of the workers on strike, expose the counter-revolutionary role of the Indian bourgeoisie. This signifies that the independence of India, the improvement of the conditions of the working class and the solution of the agrarian problem, can be achieved only by means of the revolutionary struggle of the workers and peasants led by the proletariat in the struggle against British imperialism, the Indian feudal rulers and Indian national capital. The tasks of the Indian revolution can only be solved through struggle for the revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry under the banner of Soviets.[22]

This meant, on the one hand, that henceforth every effort would be geared to the building up of an organized Communist Party which would reach out to the working masses. For that the Comintern insisted on the necessity of the Communists to work in all reformist and 'yellow' mass organizations with the object of winning over the workers.[23] This meant, on the other hand, that the Communists in their bid for building up an organized party of the masses would have to come out of the existing Workers' and Peasants' Parties in which many Communists, together with members of the National Congress, worked. In fact, the Colonial Theses of the Sixth Congress had already given the call to the CPI to break away from the WPPs. The position was reiterated again at the Tenth Plenum by Lozovsky.[24] The actual reasons for such withdrawal, however, were stated in a letter of the ECCI dated 2 December 1928 to the All-India Conference of WPPs in Calcutta in 1928. Such parties—two-class parties as they were—the letter indicated, could in no way be a substitute for a revolutionary party of the proletariat, particularly because the WPPs consisted largely of petty-bourgeois intellectuals, actually influenced by the former 'Independence League', and they were tied up with either the system of landlordism and usury or straightaway represented capitalist interests. Hence, the letter urged, what was necessary was to politically strengthen the mass organizations of the proletariat and the peasants by first creating an independent class party of the proletariat. In fact, this perhaps

explains why at one stroke the Comintern urged the CPI not to pull back from the reformist trade unions and such other mass organizations of the basic classes, while asking for withdrawal from the WPPs.[25] Available evidence shows that the Comintern was particularly alarmed at the predominance of petty-bourgeois elements in the WPPs, especially after what had happened with the Kuomintang in China. In the following letter dated 29 November 1928 C. P. Dutt wrote to P. C. Joshi, referring to the WPPs,

> Our strength will depend very largely on how far it is possible to attract actual workers engaged in industry, to help them to organise themselves, and to help them produce leaders of their struggle from their own ranks. The experience of China is of overwhelming importance for us just on this point, for the history of the Kuo-Ming-tang has given us a gigantic lesson of the dangers confronting any mass movement which is led by the bourgeoisie or even by the petty bourgeoisie when the latter is left with sole control.[26]

Theoretically speaking, the analysis of India that emerged in the Comintern after the Tenth Plenum was in a way a definite reworking of the Colonial Theses of the Sixth Congress to further left. The Colonial Theses had not completely written off the role of the bourgeoisie but the position that was now taken by the Comintern was tantamount to virtually identifying the Indian bourgeoisie as a comprador bourgeoisie. This, in a way, was a major shift away from the line of the Sixth Congress and it is this line adopted at the Tenth plenum, together with the Colonial Theses of the Sixth Congress, that now virtually became the immediate guideline before the Comintern.

Very soon this found its echo in the Draft Platform of Action of the CPI, a document that came out in 1930. This crucial document virtually set the course of action followed by Indian communists in the years that followed. Reiterating the Comintern's position, the Draft launched a full-scale attack on the Gandhian leadership of the National Congress, but the edge

was directed more towards the 'left' elements, i.e. Nehru and Bose, particularly because these sections had a definite influence on the labour movement in the country. The document thus pointed out that under the cloak of revolutionary phraseologies these elements carried on a policy of confusing and disorganizing the revolutionary struggles of the masses, and helped the Congress to come to an understanding with British imperialism. Hence, what was necessary was a 'ruthless war on the "Left" national reformists', in order 'to isolate the latter from the workers and mass of the peasantry and moblise the latter under the banner of the Communist Party and the anti-imperialist agrarian revolution in India.'[27] Simultaneously, the Draft called for the establishment of an Indian Federal Workers' and Peasants' Soviet Republic by destroying the stronghold of feudalism and capitalism under the leadership of the Communist Party and asked the toiling masses to join its ranks and make it an effective weapon of people's struggles.[28]

It is quite true that this idea of waging the anti-imperialist struggle in terms of a class versus class strategy was the fallout of the new line on the colonial question initiated by the Comintern after the Sixth Congress. In fact, it appears that the formulations given in this rather remarkable document were perhaps considerably influenced by a series of articles published in the Comintern press, endorsing the new position that had emerged out of the Sixth Congress and that was given a more leftist orientation at the Tenth Plenum. The authors of these articles, intrigued at the continuously vacillating policy of the Congress leadership between the Calcutta session of 1928 and the Lahore session of 1929, followed by Gandhi's Dandi March and resumption of the civil disobedience movement, were groping for a theoretical rationale behind such manoeuvring actions. Accordingly the Comintern sought to explain, in the context of the growing tempo of the proletarian and peasant movements, the limited oppositional role of the Indian bourgeosie in terms of two factors. First, there remained a contradiction between the needs of capitalist development in India and the interests of British imperialism; this found its expression in the increasing

impoverishment of the Indian village and in the ceaseless addition to the superfluous millions of pauperized peasants, who just found no place in industry.[29] Secondly, the bourgeoisie was desperate in trying to safeguard its leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle which was growing increasingly militant, to retain its hold over the peasants, the proletariat and the petty bourgeoisie, and this could be ensured only by an oppositionist stance against imperialism.[30] British imperialism, too, launched its repression against the bourgeoisie (the Comintern obviously had in mind Gandhi's arrest in 1930 after the Lahore Congress) only when the mass struggles went beyond the control of bourgeois leadership, always being careful to isolate and remove the leaders from the ranks so as to keep open the path of future negotiation and settlement. In other words, imperialism calculated on the bourgeoisie's fear of the mass struggle and put up pressures, with the ultimate aim of suppressing the masses.[31] In fact, Gandhi's call for breaking the Salt Law in course of his Dandi March in March 1930 was reciprocated by unprecedented popular response and was followed by brutal repression. Thus, during 1930-1931, the number of arrests reached the 90,000 mark. The movement was fast assuming a revolutionary character. On 18 April 1930 the Chittagong uprising was followed by the heroic battle of the Jalalabad hill; on 25 April 1930 there was an uprising at Peshawar where the Hindu soldiers refused to fire on the Muslim demonstrators; Calcutta witnessed the unprecendented cart drivers' strike leading to brutal police action in April 1930; on 5 May 1930 there was the uprising in Sholapur following a *hartal* in protest against Gandhi's arrest on 4 May. Sholapur was brought under control only after the declaration of martial law.

Indeed, for the Comintern spokesmen, the growing tempo of mass struggles was the yardstick for interpreting relations between imperialism and the bourgeoisie in India.

It followed logically that the Comintern would exhort the

CPI to wrest control of the growing tide of mass struggles by exposing and removing the bourgeois leadership of the National Congress. This led to two types of discussion. Some of them pointed to an analysis of the factors that stood in the way of politically strengthening the working class movement in India; some others were concerned with the laying down of instructions that would enable the CPI to lend a true communist colouring to these movements. Thus it was acknowledged that the working class, despite the massive strike struggles, had not yet emerged as an independent political force with their own class political slogans and demands. What, however, had happened was that the militant strike battles waged all over India had begun 'infecting' a wider strata of the urban labouring masses as well as the peasantry, which had resulted in a quick transition from passive resistance—the slogan of the national bourgeoisie—to active action against imperialism.[32] What, however, were precisely the weaknesses of India's working class movement? These were, to follow Palme Dutt's observations; (1) the lack of organized political leadership, i.e. absence of a really organized Communist Party; (2) the concentration of trade unions in Bombay and Calcutta, involving mainly textile and jute workers and hardly touching the miners and plantation workers; (3) the dominant influence of bourgeois reformism in the trade union movement; (4) the void created by the Meerut arrests of leading communists who were the best organizers.[33]

Opinions, however, were voiced expressing the optimism that though the revolution in India was bourgeois democratic, the period of its growth into a socialist revolution in the not too distant future might not be too long, since in India the working class was far stonger than in China and since strategically the working class was placed in a far more advantageous position; thus, except in the South, proletarian centres of struggle had cropped up all over India.[34] Accordingly, the importance of organizing a mass Communist Party was reiterated and, in this respect, particular emphasis was laid on the coining of correct

slogans. Thus, the importance of popularizing the following slogans was highlighted: (1) for complete independence, political and economic; (2) for nationalization of land; (3) for an armed uprising, particularly for counteracting Gandhi's propaganda of non-violence; (4) for propaganda of Soviets as organs or uprising and power, and for a Soviet Republic.[35]

All this seems to point to the deep influence on the CPI's document entitled *Draft Platform of Action* of the formulations in the Comintern press following the Tenth Plenum. It cannot also be ruled out, as argued by one veteran associate of the Indian communist movement, that at that time Lenin's theses on the colonial question were not known to the Indian communists; moreover, it was precisely at this time that the Colonial Theses of the Sixth Congress were translated in different Indian languages.[36] Coupled with it was the disastrous impact of the Meerut arrests. All these factors have to be taken into account in explaining the 'left' swing of the Indian communist movement, at least till the first quarter of the '30s.

This orientation got a fresh impetus after the Gandhi-Irwin agreement endorsed at the Karachi session of the National Congress in 1931, which was followed by the decision of the Congress to join the Round Table Conference in London. This virtual betrayal of the anti-imperialist struggle, which was gaining momentum everyday, provoked particularly sharp reactions in the Comintern and the impact was felt very soon. *The Draft Platform of Action* was distributed at the Karachi session of the Congress in 1931 which, as shown earlier, uncompromisingly attacked the Congress leadership. At the Calcutta session of AITUC, held in July 1931, the communists got out of the AITUC and decided to form their own Red Trade Union Centre, so as to project the independent role of the Indian proletariat. Finally, the League against Imperialism, at its session on 19 March 1931, expelled Nehru and the Indian National Congress which had been given affiliation in 1927. The leadership of the CPI had already decided to form a separate Anti-imperialist League at a conference held in Bombay in October 1930, where Nehru and the Congress came under sharp attack.

The theoretical rationale behind this bargain with imperialism was expressed by a Comintern analyst (Safarov ?) in the following words:

So long as the question is one of dividing surplus value of which [*sic*] has been squeezed out of the Indian workers, so long as it is a question of distributing official positions, etc., the interests of the British and the Indian bourgeoisie are in conflict. From this objective contradiction of interests there arise the conditions for a restricted oppositional struggle between the Indian bourgeoisie and British imperialism. However, the interests of British Imperialism and the Indian bourgeoisie coincide when it is a question of a struggle against the revolution of the workers and peasants. The Indian bourgeoisie are enemies of the class struggle of the workers. It is not by chance, but it is the result of definite causes that the Congress takes its stand on the side of imperialism and counter-revolution everytime the workers and peasants take armed action for the anti-imperialist and agararian revolution. This double situation of the national bourgeoisie determines its position in the national-reformist camp. As the revolutionary struggle of the workers and peasants increases, the Congress comes closer and closer to English imperialism. . . . At the present time the National Congress is striving to make a counter-revolutionary bargain with British imperialism.[37]

It is in this spirit that the leadership of the CPI too in its Manifesto on the proposed Round Table Conference urged the ranks following the Congress to become aware of the national betrayal, to understand that the fight for complete independence involved 'not only a bitter struggle against imperialism but also against the native allies of imperialism—the Indian bourgeoisie, the princes and the Zamindars', to go to the villages, form revolutionary peasant committees (Soviets), organize peasant revolts on the basic programme of total repudiation of debts and rents and immediately organize the unorganized workers and the urban unemployed on a class basis.[38] In this context, the Comintern analysts of India were particularly critical of the ideological stance of the 'leftism' of Nehru and Bose who, it was argued, donning the cloak of leftism maintained contact with the masses, talked revolutionary language and held out infinite

promises even of a Workers' and Peasants' Republic, while the bargaining policy remained safe in the hands of the bourgeoisie.[39]

The positions of the Comintern and CPI leadership, after the Gandhi-Irwin agreement, were fully endorsed at the Eleventh Plenum of the ECCI (held in March-April 1931). In his speech R. Page Arnot exposed the treacherous role of Gandhi in coming to an agreement with imperialism by hoodwinking the masses and gave the call for striving for the hegemony of the proletariat by organizing a strong, centralized, disciplined and illegal Communist Party and, moreover, expressed the hope that while objectively the revolutionary upsurge was gaining ground, once the subjective factor, that is, the effective organization of the CPI took place the prospects of a real revolutionary overthrow of imperialism and its allies would brighten up.[40] Manuilsky too, in his report to the Plenum, expressed the optimism that the working masses of India, particularly the peasants and the workers, were slowly shaking off the influence of Gandhism, as manifest for instance in the militant peasant uprisings, and urged the CPI to (1) organize itself into a centralized, all-India Party; (2) strengthen the Red Trade Unions and form new ones; (3) strengthen trade union opposition by participating in the reformist trade unions; (4) organize peasant movement and fearlessly conduct propaganda for the slogans of the agrarian revolution; (5) carry on ruthless struggle against national reformism, especially against its 'Left' varieties.[41] The position was reiterated very soon by the argument that four years of struggle since 1928 indicated that the communist leadership in India was ideologically reinforced and that the communist organization and its influence among the masses was growing, particularly the effectiveness of its exposure of the 'Leftists' in the National Congress.[42] Perhaps the author had in mind the Young Workers' (or Comrades') Leagues which were formed in different parts of the country.

III

Despite such highly optimistic observations on the prospects of the revolutionary movement in India, in practice, however, things were not actually moving in that direction. Notwithstanding the growing tide of mass unrest the Communist Party till then had very little control over such movements. With the commencement of the Meerut trial, and in the absence of effective leaders who had been thrown in jail, the Communist Party, at that time working underground and virtually without any Central Committee, split into different factional groups all over the country. In spite of repeated calls to form a centralized party, nothing effective had as yet taken place in that direction. Consequently, although during this period some of the best cadres were recruited in the Communist Party, in the absence of a centralized political leadership and limited to merely attacking and exposing the bankruptcy of the Congress leadership without any involvement in the mass organizations which were mainly controlled by the Congress, the Communist Party was getting isolated from the masses. In other words, the dreams of achieving a communist leadership were not matched by corresponding actions which would lead to the formation of a real party of the masses. Quite obviously this required a serious, self-critical review of the weaknesses of the CPI—of its inability, despite highly explosive conditions that were prevalent all over the country, to emerge as the leader of the toiling people.

Interestingly, the leadership of the CPI, operating outside the jails, was quite unaware of this problem even till 1933. In an appeal the CPI gave the call for armed struggle repeating the same old slogan of exposing the Congress and pinning faith in the party of the proletariat, acknowledging, however, the urgent necessity of a Central Committee of the CPI.[43] It was the Comintern press which for the first time made the CPI leadership aware of the mistakes that were being committed. From the different evidences now available, it is possible to establish that there were at least two major factors that made the Comintern leadership aware of the disaster that had befallen the CPI after the Meerut arrests. In the first place, between July 1930 and

December 1931 the Comintern had sent, according to the British Intelligence reports, at least three emissaries to India to enable them to get in touch with the underground communist leadership so that they could, on their return, report to the Comintern about the real situation that was faced by the Indian Communists.[44] Thus, William Nathan Kweit and Harry Somers, two Americans, arrived in July 1930 and were deported by the British authorities by September 1930. They were followed by Henry G. Lynd, another American, who arrived in Bombay in February 1930 and remained in India till December 1931 when he too was deported. From available records it may be surmised that the Comintern's emissaries had got in touch with the nucleus of the CPI leadership operating underground from Bombay, which itself was ridden with factional conflicts. The Bombay group of the CPI was divided broadly in two factions, one led by S. V. Deshpande and the other by B. T. Ranadive. In Calcutta, another group operated under the leadership of Abdul Halim. In Bombay the Deshpande faction, which was predominant, was in favour of an extreme sectarian line, while the Ranadive faction appears to have opted for a more reasonable modification of this position. In a way, Deshpande's policy was largely instrumental in isolating the communists from the mainstream of the national movement, at least surely in Bombay. Deshpande's position in Bombay became particularly uncomfortable after the arrival of Tayab Ali Shaikh and Sundar Kabadi, two emissaries sent by M. N. Roy from abroad in the summer of 1930. They, taking advantage of the Bombay group's isolation, captured the Congress in Bombay through the Youth League and, most notably, the Girni Kamgar Union in early 1931. Arriving at this juncture the Comintern emissaries, especially Lynd, definitely got a firsthand impression of the isolation of the communists, engineered by the Deshpande faction that constituted the leadership. It is now gathered from the intelligence records that in course of his deportation to the USA, Lynd left the ship on his arrival in Marseilles and 'made a bee-line for Moscow, there to report his conclusions to those at whose instance he had un-

doubtedly gone to India."[45] The Comintern's knowledge about the extremely critical condition of the communist movement in India was further reinforced by the reports sent to Moscow by the end of 1931 immediately following Lynd's report. These reports were obviously smuggled out by Amir Haidar Khan, a very capable Comintern-trained organizer who had already been working frantically in Bombay for a reconciliation of the two factions. It appears that Amir Haidar Khan had preferred the line of the Ranadive faction[46] and this too might have affected the Comintern's subsequent rethinking on the Indian question.

Besides these reports sent by the emissaries of the Comintern there was another factor that was largely instrumental in shaping the Comintern's criticism of the CPI's mistakes, the importance of which cannot be too lightly brushed aside. Among the Meerut prisoners there was *indirect* disapproval, of course within the general framework of the Colonial Theses of the Sixth Congress, of some of extreme left positions of the Tenth Plenum concerning the situation in India. In the well-known General Statement of the eighteen accused communists there are at least two such indications, the theoretical implications of which are quite significant. First, while regarding the Indian bourgeoisie as basically reformist, vacillating, and in the long run even counter-revolutinary, the Meerut prisoners, however, were in no mood to accept that the bourgeoisie in India had completely gone over to imperialism and that its compromise with imperialism (i.e. the Gandhi-Irwin Pact) was final, disputing thereby the mechanical parallel that the Comintern had drawn between the Chinese bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie in India.[47] Secondly, the Meerut prisoners, while accepting the general framework of the Draft Platform of Action of the CPI, do not appear to

have been much enthusiastic about the feasibility of the slogan for setting up a Soviet Republic of India. They felt that since the stage of the Indian revolution remained basically bourgeois democratic and since India was industrially too backward to think of an immediate Soviet-type revolution, India was at best destined for a 'non-capitalist' development towards socialism, the establishment of the Soviet Republic being of course the ultimate goal, which too could not be established independently without the fraternal and material support of the USSR.[48] This veiled scepticism, historically speaking, was significant for the reason that the slogan of the 'Soviet Republic' as given in the Draft Platform of Action had been fully endorsed by the Comintern immediately after its publication in December 1930.

Significantly enough, according to British Intelligence Reports, the Meerut prisoners had already managed to send, before 1933, two self-critical reports to the Comintern on the erroneous functioning of the CPI's line. One was written in 1931 for the information of Lynd and the other, compiled a year later, was shown to J. M. Clark and William Bennett, two representatives of the Red International Labour Union who visited India. These reports, according to the Intelligence authorities of British India, 'were intended for perusal by the authorities in Moscow and it may be assumed that they reached their destination. They appear to have contained a lengthy analysis of the causes of the Party's downfall and instructions for reorganisation on an all-India basis.'[49]

It may be safely concluded that the rethinking in the Comintern on the Indian question, as soon evident in its critical remarks on the follies of the line that was being pursued by the CPI leadership, was affected by these self-critical reviews emanating from Meerut. In fact, the recommendations and suggestions that were put forward through these reports to the Comintern were very soon not only endorsed but put into practice, as manifest in the series of articles and documents that began to be publicized in the Comintern press immediately thereafter. This, of course, should not be construed by any means as any major break with the line adopted at the Sixth Congress, strengthened, reinforced and radicalized as it was subsequently

at the Tenth Plenum of the ECCI. But what is significant is the fact that even within the framework of sectarianism, the Comintern leadership was perhaps gradually coming to appreciate the serious difficulties and the disastrous political implications that logically followed from this position, at least surely in India.

In their reports the Meerut documents in tracing the causes of the CPI's political organisational collapse were said to have pointed to (a) the neglect of contact among the leaders of the Party operating in different provinces; (b) prolonged factional fight in Bombay causing serious damage to the organization; (c) the commencement of the civil disobedience movement that had presented the Party with a very difficult tactical problem. Thus by 1932, the reports admitted, the entire Party was split into three different groups in Bombay, Calcutta and Nagpur, which were operating virtually without any links.[50]

Consequently, the Meerut documents suggested a number of short-term as well as long-term measures for streamlining the Party politically, organizationally and ideologically.[51] First, it was suggested that a provisional Central Committee should be set up forthwith, comprising elected representatives on the following basis: four each from Bombay and Bengal, two from the Central Provinces and one or two from the Punjab. The Committee should adopt a suitable Constitution on the basis of the Draft Platform of Action, hear reports of the factional fight in Bombay, elect a Secretariat of three members and establish contacts with the Punjab, the United Provinces and Madras; secondly, the documents highlighted the importance of publication of vernacular weeklies, of free distribution of weekly/fortnightly newssheets in large numbers and of circulation of international material in order to enable the provincial leaders to develop theoretical maturity; thirdly, it was stressed that the Comintern should immediately issue an 'Open Letter' pointing out the mistakes of the past years of the CPI's line; fourthly, the Comintern was asked not to trust emigre representatives of the CPI (the reference was obviously to M. N. Roy and his associates) who had been away from the country for long periods, but was advised rather to rely for its information on periodic visits to

Moscow of CPI members or, if that was not possible, on reports direct from India.

As we will now examine, these recommendations and suggestions, supported by the fact that the Comintern through its own emissaries had already been informed of the extremely critical situation that the Communists were facing in India, began to be followed up in the form of a series of articles as well as Open Letters in the Comintern press identifying some of the gross sectarian mistakes which, at least according to the Comintern leadershtip, did not necessarily follow from the general theoretical line of the Comintern on the colonial question. In other words, the CPI leadership that carried on the work from outside the jail began to be censured for misinterpreting the Comintern's theoretical position from an extreme leftist or too sectarian angle. But this, in a way, constituted, of course within the general theoretical framework of the Colonial Theses of the Sixth Congress, the beginnning of a very slow but perceptible rethinking on not only the Comintern's analysis of India, but on its theoretical position on the colonial question as much.

Thus, the first detailed scrutiny of the mistakes committed by the CPI in the anti-imperialist struggles was made in October 1931. Valiya, a leading commentator on India during the '30s, made an analysis of the continued influence of bourgeois reformism on the Indian working class movement. The reasons for such bourgeois dominance were: (1) anti-imperialism being the main content of the liberation movement in India the Indian National Congress, despite its betrayal by its continuous maneouvres, could pose as an opponent of imperialism ; (2) immaturity of the Indian working class ; (3) the reformists were the first to organize the labour movement ; (4) the formation of the CPI had begun only very recently.[52] Accordingly, the author pointed to some of the serious weaknesses and mistakes of the Communist Party. First, while appreciating the spirit of the Draft Platform of Action, he emphasized the necessity of the CPI to build up party organizations in towns, workshops, factories, railway repair shops, plantations, mines, etc. Secondly, he harshly commented on the failure of the CPI to participate in street fighting

during Congress-led agitations. Since it was the Congress leadership which organized these anti-imperialist demonstrations, and the communists kept away by merely branding the Congress as a stooge of imperialism, it seemed to the toiling masses that the National Congress remained the only leader and defender of people's interests. This particularly helped the 'left' national reformists who tried to take over the same role by issuing pseudo-radical slogans. Thirdly, he impressed upon the CPI to educate its cadres in the spirit of marxism-leninsm and expose the Congress leadership ideologically. Finally, he pointed to the CPI's task of organizing the agricultural workers separately, so as to counteract the organizational work of the Congress in this sphere and emerge as the leader of the agrarian movement.[3]

Then came the oft-quoted Open Letter of the three Parties, sent by the CPC, CPGB and CPG in May 1932. This document for the first time made a detailed review of the errors of the CPI. It identified two sharply different trends prevalent at that time inside the communist movement in India. First, there was the tendency of mechanically contrasting the 'class' interests of the proletariat with the interests of the independence movement as a whole, which drove the toiling masses and the revolutionary ranks of the petty bourgeoisie into the arms of the National Congress, particularly towards its 'Left' wing. Theoretically speaking, this idea of contraposing the class question and the national question lay at the root of the isolation of the CPI. Consequently, the document pointed to the importance of maintaining a crucial distinction between the bourgeois leadership and the ranks of workers, peasants and revolutionary elements of the urban petty bourgeoisie who followed it. Accordingly, the CPI was asked to take the most energetic part in the anti-imperialist movement and be in the forefront in all activities, i.e. in Congress-sponsored demonstrations and clashes of the toiling masses with the imperialists. The CPI should also come forward as the organizers of the mass struggle everywhere by issuing communist slogans, exposing openly and by concrete examples the treachery of the bourgeois national congress and its 'left' wing. The other mistake was the tendency to forget about the bourgeoisie, about the instability, waverings and hesi-

tations of the petty bourgeoisie, which led sometimes to rallying round the latter, leading to the subordination of the proletariat to the leadership of the national bourgeoisie. Of course, of the two the first tendency was more predominant, and the tenor of the document was directed mainly towards a critique of this trend.[54] Finally, the Open Latter sharply criticized the prevalent leadership for its failure to build up a centralized, illegal, all-India Party, ideologically and organizationally united, by uniting the different groups that were functioning like certain isolated circles. This decentralized character of the Party, the letter urged, was leading to the failure of the Party to intervene in the all-India arena, i.e. in the strike in the railways, in the peasant struggles, in the movement for non-payment of taxes, etc. and this consequently was enabling the reformists to spread their influence and dominate thereby the all-India arena.[55] Particularly noteworthy in this context is an attempt to explore the weakness of the Indian communist movement in terms of an analysis of the structure of the Indian working class and the pervading influence of trade unionism and, consequently, of economism. Thus one perceptive commentator showed, on the basis of a case study of the Bombay textile industry, that 63 per cent of the workers came from village and 36 per cent of the wages received were sent to the villages. This village connection led to the growth of petty bourgeois and semi-feudal mentality, as manifest in religion, caste, tradition, lack of culture, etc. This, quite evidently, impeded the work of the Communist Party to revolutionize the proletariat.[56] Secondly, it was pointed out that the Indian communists had increased their ranks by forming communist groups primarily in the trade unions. As a result, communist groups became conglomerations of active leaders of the trade union movement, whose organizational formulations did not go beyond trade union fractions. It was urged that the communists must understand that the prerequisite for building up a powerful CPI was to develop a political perspective on questions of organization, and this meant the building up of town committees, district committees and cells in factories,

that is, building up a party organization which could work among trade unions, the different undertakings, the peasantry, the revolutionary youth and which would create not only trade unions but official press organs of the party and which would bring out, through its fractions, pamphlets not only on behalf of trade unions but also on behalf of the party organizations. Only such an illegal organization, it was pointed out, could take full advantage of the legal and illegal work by using legal forms of movement, without sliding back on the rails of economism or by resorting to legalism.[57]

Meanwhile, by August 1933 most of the Meerut prisoners were released and in December 1933 a provisional Central Committee was formed to meet the new situation that had emerged in the country. In 1934, G. A. Adhikari, who had been primarily instrumental in reorganizing the Party during this period, was temporarily elected the Secretary of the Central Committee (CC). At this stage there were two crucial developments which led to a further reassessment of the political line pursued by the communists. On the one hand the failure of the Round Table talks following the Gandhi-Irwin Pact led to resumption of the civil disobedience movement and the illegalization of the Congress in 1932, resulting in massive repression of the people's struggle by the British government. The arrests this time exceeded the 1930-31 figures; whereas by March 2 1930, 80,000 had been arrested, by March 1933 the figure reached the 120,000 mark. More large-scale arrests followed the attempt to hold the illegal session of the Congress in Calcutta in April 1933. On the economic front the colonial masters, in order to ward off the competition of Japanese textiles and the prospective competition of the USSR in the field of wheat, flax, etc. went in for the bourgeoisie's support by the introduction of preferential tariffs on cotton goods, paper, sugar, artificial silk, etc. Indeed, this rationalization scheme was an excellent device in the hands of imperialism to buy up the support of the Indian bourgeoisie and 'direct Indian capital into agriculture and those industries which [were] connected with the immediate treatment of agricultural produce and [did] not strengthen the contradictions with England, attempting at the same time to consolidate its influence

also by extensively interweaving and merging with Indian capital, as [had] been the case in the jute industry'.[58] This, of course, did not fully mollify the Indian bourgeoisie for the latter demanded further concessions,—a share in the State budget, the creation of a Reserve Bank to assist Indian capital, participation in the regulation of the financial system of the country, separation of the railway budget from the general State budget so as to restrain Britain from strengthening and assuming its predominance over the railways. But even this limited bargain was enough to stir up further strike struggles.

As a result of these developments there began further rethinking in the Comintern as well as among the leadership of the CPI to correctly take advantage of the tide of massive anti-imperialist struggle that was sweeping the country following the illegalization of the Congress and the resumption of the civil disobedience movement; moreover, the latest shift in British imperialism's economic policy opened up new vistas of working class struggles and, more particularly in the face of growing repression by the owners of industries, the question of trade union unity. For the Communist Party, understandably, this meant first, a fusion of the class tasks and the national tasks without slipping into reformism or sectarianism by fully utilizing all manifestations of the anti-imperialist struggle and, secondly, organization of the Communist Party on a scale as would enable it to emerge as the staunchest fighter in the anti-imperialist struggle. This alone could also expose the bankruptcy of national reformism. The CPI was thus urged to take a more tolerant attitude towards the different non-communist, petty bourgeois, terrorist groups, the different youth leagues, the Naujawan Bharat Sabha, etc. by always making the distinction between the positive, anti-imperialist content of their struggles and their ideology and forms of struggle.[59]

That among the Indian communists a rethinking along these lines, with a view to building up a mass Communist Party, had started was first evidenced in a Manifesto of the Calcutta Committee of the CPI in March 1933. In this document an appeal

was made to the intellectuals, peasants, workers, soldiers, and the police to take up the cause of armed overthrow of British imperialism, followed by an appeal for unity of all individual communists and isolated groups in the country to form an All-India Communist Party.[60] Highlighting the importance of the 3-party letter, a more detailed review of the functioning of the CPI was made by V. Basak in a series of articles published in *Inprecor,* although these were not at all sufficiently self-critical. It was acknowledged, however, that it was very much necessary to warn against two deviations, i.e. sectarianism, which led to emphasis solely on underground work and to the failure to appreciate the importance of work in mass organizations; the other deviation was the inability to grasp the task of the immediate formation of an underground Communist Party and training up the proletariat as a separate class force. Hence the CPI was urged to build up factory committees, trade union branches and communist fractions everywhere, and participate in and correctly lead all democratic movements, especially the national movement for independence.[61]

During this period, when the CPI was faced with the problem of overcoming its isolation from the mainstream of anti-imperialist struggle in the country, when the organization of the Party lagged far behind the spontaneity of the masses, amidst a vacillating policy pursued by the Congress leadership, another fraternal Party, the CPC, stepped in with an Open Letter to the Indian communists. This letter too, echoing the spirit of the 3-party letter, emphasized the importance of forming a powerful and united Communist Party of India, of leading the people by participating in mass struggles so that the masses could see in practice that the communists represented the only force capable of leading the revolutionary people to victory, of going everywhere with communist agitations, proposals and slogans, showing in practice that the path of national reformism was the path of defeat and slavery. It is in this perspective that the letter of the CPC, warning against gross sectarian tactics, urged upon the communist leadership of India to apply the tactic of the

united front in the national liberation movement by building up a revolutionary bloc of workers and the basic masses of the petty bourgeoisie, so as to paralyse the influence of the bourgeoisie and carry on the struggle for leadership of the national movement for independence, land and freedom.[62] Moreover, it was insisted that the communists must seriously work in the reformist trade unions and in every kind of mass reformist organizations with the aim of winning over the masses who belonged to these organizations, and thereby sharpen the agitation against the 'left' national reformists who used revolutionary phrases with demagogic aims.[63]

It is necessary at this point to counteract two major misinterpretations that have been voiced by Western scholars on the 3-Party Letter and the Open Letter of the CPC. It has been contended that the content of the 3-party letter gives one the impression that the Comintern was now reprimanding the CPI for precisely following the line given by the Comintern itself after the Sixth Congress;[64] in other words, the Comintern was now as if withdrawing from its own sectarian line and making the CPI a scapegoat; secondly, the authors further contend that the CPC's open letter reinforced this position and was the first sign of a major break in so far as it insisted on work in the reformist trade unions, with the sectarian formulations given in the Draft Platform of Action.[65] Both the positions are incorrect in the sense that despite the Comintern's critique of the CPI, it did not plead for any basic theoretical shift away from the original sectarian line of the Colonial Theses of the Sixth Congress. The main thrust of the Comintern's critique of the CPI line was directed towards the CPI's failure to organize its mass base and thereby it advised participation of communists in reformist mass organizations. But participation in mass organizations in no way amounted to a restoration of the united front line which had been the policy of the Comintern before the Sixth Congress. In other words, there was no basic shift in the Comintern's theoretical thinking from the time of the Sixth Congress. The letters contained primarily organizational direc-

tives in the changing situation so that the CPI could emerge out of its organizational isolation, but there was no basic change in the political understanding of the role of the bourgeoisie in India, especially of its 'left' variety. The national bourgeoisie, the leadership of which was wielded by Gandhi, together with its 'leftist' factions, continued to be regarded as counter-revolutionary elements by the Comintern.[66] The question of an anti-imperialist united front in political alliance with all anti-imperialist forces which would include the vacillating and reformist national bourgeoisie was not considered by the Comintern, at least till the Seventh Congress.

That the Comintern's critique of the organizational failures of the CPI was fully endorsed by the new CC leadership after the release of the Meerut prisoners in August 1933, is evident from the first self-critical assessment of the work of the CPI which found its expression in the *Draft Political Theses*. This document, released by the CC of the CPI, acknowledged that by mechanically placing the bourgeoisie completely in the counter-revolutionary camp the Communist Party had underestimated its influence on the masses, its contradiction with imperialism and, in the process, furthered its own isolation. The Theses warned that while the struggle against the bourgeoisie, particularly against its 'Left' reformists, should be carried on consistently, in course of the exposure the communists must not refuse to use the mass organizations of the toilers and the Congress platform systematically.[67] As regards the perspective of struggle, the Theses stated that though the immediate task of the revolution was the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat it was necessary, first, to mobilize the widest possible masses for the anti-imperialist and agrarian revolution.[68] The Theses acknowledged, quite openly:

It is a fact that during the C.D. [Civil Disobedience] movement of 1930-31 Communists did not realise the full significance of the movement and objectively isolated themselves from the

struggle of the masses.... The isolation of the national reformist organisation and leadership from the toiling masses can be achieved only when the Communists prove able to demonstrate in action their leadership in the anti-imperialist struggle and in the struggles of the peasants and workers. To do this the C.P. must come openly before the toiling masses,...., as the most consistent defender of the interests and demands of all the exploited classes against British imperialism, as the most resolute and determined fighter for national independence, land and a workers' and peasants' government.[69]

It is this growing rethinking about the organizational weakness and isolation of the Communist Party in a fluctuating situation that very largely paved the way for a basic shift to the Comintern's strategy of an anti-imperialist united front at the time of the Seventh Congress in 1935. For the communist movement in India the early '30s, therefore, witnessed fluctuating changes. Although the final shift came only after the Seventh Congress by mid-1934 the CPI leadership had started, at least theoretically, gradually reconsidering its original extreme sectarian position following the Sixth Congress.

IV

Interestingly, a glance at this period suggests that like the Communist Party of India the Communist Party of China too suffered from the problems posed by sectarianism. But, as shown earlier, there were powerful historical reasons operating behind the Comintern's policy towards the colonies. In the case of China, particularly crucial was the experience of the betrayal of the first United Front by the Kuomintang led by Chiang Kai-shek, followed by his continuous repression of the CPC through a series of encirclement campaigns and a capitulationist policy in the face of the military offensive of Japan in China in the '30s.

Following the Sixth Congress of the CPC in 1928 and the Autumn Harvest uprising, a 'Left' line represented by Li Li-san dominated the party from June to September 1930. Flushed with the initial success in creating a number of Red bases, the growth of the Red Army and the advances made by the revolutionary

forces as a result of the war between Chiang Kai-shek on the one hand and Feng Yu-hsiang and Yen Hsi-shan on the other in May 1930, the Li Li-san line began to gain ground. Accordingly, in June 1930 the Red Army was ordered to attack and capture Nanchang, Changsha, Wuhan, Canton and a number of cities. on the belief that the seizure of power in several cities and provinces would pave the way for a socialist revolution in China. It was at the Third Plenary session of the Sixth Central Committee of the CPC held in 1930 that the Li Li-san line was defeated. But this, in turn, led to the beginning of a new 'Left' line propagated by Wang Ming and Po-ku. Actually, the protagonists of this new line regarded Li Li-san's line as too 'soft' and thereby 'rightist'. Although the Comintern, as recent researches reveal, was sharply critical of the Li Li-san line, it is not exactly known what actually was the stand of the Comintern on the new 'left' line taken by the Wang Ming leadership.[70] This line was marked by an exaggeration of the significance of the struggle against the bourgeoisie and the rich peasants and the prospects of a 'revolutionary high tide' throughout the country. The acceptance of this 'left' line was reiterated at the Fourth

Plenary Session of the Sixth Central Committee of the CPC in January 1931, which was followed by Japan's military offensive against China and the establishment of the Kiangsi Soviet amidst pitched battles against the series of encirclement campaigns of Chiang Kai-shek's army. With the victory of the Red Army in Kiangsi, the Central Area of CPC's military operations now shifted to this place.

The 'leftist' line of the CPC leadership exaggerated the current crisis of the Kuomintang regime and the growth of revolutionary forces and grossly overemphasized the contradiction between the Kuomintang and the Red regime, leading to the abortive attempts to seize one or two major centres in order to achieve victory of the revolution in one or more of the three provinces—Hunan, Hupeh and Kiangsi. This led to the second error of ignoring the new contradiction of national interests between China and Japan and to the assertion that the intermediate groups were the most dangerous enemies of the revolution. This led to the characterization of all strata of the bourgeoisie as reactionary and to the failure of setting up a national anti-Japanese democratic government which would be based on an alliance of all those classes which were opposed to Japanese imperialism. This strategy of contraposing the national question and the class question in the context of anti-imperialist struggles, it may be mentioned, was also the line pursued by the leadership of the Communist Party of India during these years, of course in a different situation. And as far as the CPC is concerned, this 'left' line continued at least till the Tsunyi Conference in January 1935.

Till the Fifth Plenary Session of the Sixth Central Committee of the CPC in January 1934, the 'Left' line was manifest in a number of ways. First, they refused to accept that the working class movement in China was lagging behind the peasant movement and still believed that the most urgent task was to adopt a policy of 'active offensive' and seize the big cities. Secondly, they pursued an extremely adventurous policy with regard to the peasantry in the Kiangsi Soviet by pursuing 'ultra-Left' policies as regards labour and economy, which resulted in the alienation of a considerable strata of the peasantry. Thirdly, they regarded all factions within the Kuomintang and its government as counter-revolutionary and thus censured the formation

of a democratic government in Fukien,[71] which incidentally was formed with the active cooperation of a number of Kuomintang generals who had defected to the CPC in course of their encounter with the latter in Fukien.

It is undeniable that during this period Mao Tsetung played a crucial role in building up the Red Central Area in Kiangsi and the peasant base of the military detachments of the CPC which, despite the erroneous sectarian line pursued by the CPC leadership, could defeat the fierce encirclement campaigns of Chiang Kai-shek. In fact, it appears from all evidences that the leadership of the CPC although formally under the control of Wang Ming and Po-ku, had very little coordination with the Central Area in Kiangsi under the control of Mao Tsetung. Quite naturally, in the Comintern press during this period very little is reported about Mao Tsetung's activities, perhaps also because, preoccupied as he was with the countering of the encirclement campaigns of Chiang Kai-Shek, Mao had very little contact with the Comintern leadership. Very little is also known about any debate between the two lines inside the CPC.[72]

The erroneous line of the CPC leadership reached its climax at the Fifth Plenary Session of the Sixth Central Committee in January 1934 when, ignoring the losses the CPC had already suffered by quick erosion of its influence in a number of bases, and in the face of the impending threat of the fifth encirclement campaign of Chiang Kai-shek, it was contended that the socialist revolution was on the agenda in China. The most disastrous decision, however, was the military blunder not to withdraw the main forces of the Red Army in the face of superior enemy offensive on the ground that the enemy had to be struck 'with both fists', which, however, ultimately led to the historic Long March by way of withdrawal from Kiangsi,[73] and which ended

in the Red Army's occupation of Tsunyi on 6 January 1935. It was here that the 'Left' line was discarded and a new shift in the CPC's line took place.

In a later document prepared by the CPC on the mistakes of the 'Left' line during this Second Revolutionary War Period, the roots of the errors were identified.[74] First, the leadership, suffering from subjectivism, grossly underestimated the importance of the peasant question and agrarian revolution, pinning instead a kind of hypothetical faith in the proletariat and, consequently, in the utopian prospects of an immediate socialist revolution in China; secondly, the leadership neglected the importance of building up a mass peasants' army in the rural areas, since armed struggle would become the main form of struggle in the Chinese conditions. At the same time the leadership neglected mass work in the cities which would have to be channelled, on the basis of Liu Shao-Chi's model, by utilizing all legal opportunities so that the 'party organizations could go deep among the masses, work under cover for a long time and accumulate strength, and always remain ready to send people to develop armed struggle in the rural areas, and thereby to coordinate with the struggle in the countryside and advance the development of the revolutionary situation'. Thirdly, the leadership made the tactical blunder of failing to utilize the contradictions in the enemy camp. Thus it could not utilize the rifts among the Kuomintang warlords while the latter were attacking the Red Army and refused to come to a compromise with those forces who were not willing to attack (i.e. the Fukien event). Instead, the leadership went in for indiscriminate adventurous actions like big strikes, setting up large unprotected party organizations, staging armed insurrections, divorced from the masses.

Besides, it is acknowledged today that the Comintern too, at least during the period following the Sixth Congress of the CPC in 1928 till 1934, made certain gross sectarian mistakes in China. These were, to follow the observations of one leading commentator on the subject: (1) a tendency towards schematization in place of concrete analysis, as mainfest in a sectarian

attitude towards the intermediate strata; (2) incorrect assessment of the prospects of a 'revolutionary growth' in 1931; (3) the idea of a 'general national revolutionary crisis' in 1932; (4) the idea of an 'immediate revolutionary situation' in 1933.[75]

In the case of India the position was fundamentally different although very similar sectarian mistakes, i.e. overestimation of the prospects of a revolutionary situation, failure to work in mass organizations of the bourgeoisie, refusal to utilize legal opportunities, etc. were committed by the rather young communist parties of both the countries. In the case of India, however, the Comintern played a crucial role in making the CPI leadership aware of rethinking in a fluctuating situation; in China the Cominterns' role, at least during this period, was not always definitely correct. Meanwhile the Comintern, too, was getting ready for a major shift in its political line in the background of the world economic crisis together with the coming to power of fascism in Germany. The destiny of the communist movement in the colonial countries was integrally connected with this tide of coming changes. This shift, which in practice meant a revival of the idea of an anti-imperialist united front, came up at the Seventh Congress of Comintern in 1935. How the Communist Party of India as well as a number of major communist parties in the colonies and backward countries responded to this move constitutes the next field of inquiry.

6

The Turn of the Tide

I

THE SIXTH CONGRESS had ended with a note of optimism about the imminent collapse of the capitalist world in the face of the deepening erosion of its stability. The communist movement, too, speculated on its possible glorious triumph in the uncertain future that lay ahead. Indeed, the anti-capitalist struggles in Europe and the anti-imperialist movements in the colonies witnessed a major upswing in the years following the Sixth Congress. These were particularly precipitated by the threatening shadow of the Great Crash of the '30s. It is not therefore quite unnatural that the Comintern's assessment of the revolutionary potential of this decade was too often marked by a tendency to stage an all out attack on the bourgeoisie, whether in the capitalist countries or in the colonies. In Europe this was manifest in the severe castigation of Social Democracy, particularly in view of the latter's compromising policy towards the emergent threat of fascism in a number of countries. In colonies like India this led to denunciation of the leadership of the Indian National Congress in the context of the reformist policy pursued by the latter towards British imperialism, and to the speculation of a dream of establishing a 'Soviet Republic' in India in the immediate future.

Such dreams, however, were never realized. On the contrary, by the time the Seventh Congress drew near, an assessment of the revolutionary growth during the period following the Sixth Congress showed a rather bleak picture. In the first place, in face of the massive working class upsurge, capitalism sought to get over its crisis of instability by the institutionalization of fascism. It was this approaching night of the long knives in almost all the countries of Europe, except the Soviet Union, that led to the gradual awareness among the leaders of the Comintern that the menace of fascism, which might very soon

lead to the outbreak of another world war, had to be fought out by building a broad anti-fascist united front, and that Social Democracy, despite its grossly reformist political stances, was not an altogether spent force in the struggle against fascism. Secondly, in the colonies the position of the communist movement was not at all encouraging. The communist parties in these countries, most of them working in deep underground conditions of ruthless terror, had not yet been able to achieve any significant breakthrough in the struggle for overthrow of colonial oppression by the mere denunciation of the nationalist leadership. On the contrary, the Communist party of Indonesia, after its defeat in 1926, had not been restored as an organized group; the Communist Party of Phillipines, with its leaders thrown in prison, was routed; the Communist Party of Turkey still remained a very small group; the Korean communists remained as before very few in number; the Communist Party of Palestine, having very little contact with the Arab working people and having from the end of the '20s weakened its influence among the Jewish workers, was without any serious popular base; the communist organization of Tunisia remained a union of a few circles of European workers; the communists of Egypt were represented by a small group subjected to systematic attacks; the communists of Iran, too, were in the same position giving, under conditions of cruel terror, adventurous calls for workers' strikes. In India the communists were caught in a dilemma on the question of taking a correct attitude towards the anti-imperialist struggle that was sweeping the country under the leadership of the reformist National Congress. Thirdly, even in China, the only country in the East where the communist party had a mass influence, there was considerable erosion of its base and serious damage was suffered by the party following the Wang Ming-Po-ku leadership, which had succeeded the disastrous Li Li-san line following the Sixth Congress, at least till the Tsunyi Conference of 1935.

In the new situation the Comintern's shift to the united front line was guided by the impending threat of the fascist offensive, particularly across the boundaries of the first socialist state, viz. the Soviet Union, and by the rather dismal experience of the consequences of a sectarian line pursued by the communists in the colonial countries, which increasingly was leading to their

isolation from the mainstream of the anti-imperialist struggle. It is this bitter experience of class struggle in the decade following the Sixth Congress that explains the context of Comtern's shift to the united front line, which finally crystallized in 1935 at the Seventh Congress. This requires special emphasis. In the literature on Comintern that has come out in the West, one cannot miss a tendency to interpret this shift in the Comintern policy in terms of certain 'opportunist' considerations of Soviet foreign policy. These were, namely, the threat posed by Germany and Japan to the defence potential of the USSR; the diplomatic efforts of the Soviet Union to attempt a patch up with the imperialist states,—implying that the Soviet Union was no longer willing to encourage revolutionary movements of the colonial people which might, according to this impeccable logic, jeopardize the Soviet Union's relations with the metropolitan countries.[1] In other words, the quite obvious implication of these positions is that the new orientation in the Comintern's line amounted to a virtual betrayal of the national liberation movement in the colonies.

There is enough evidence to prove that the shift in the Comintern's line, despite the predominant influence of Stalin, was in no way guided by the political expediency of Soviet leadership. A number of distinguished personlities representing the mainstreams of the world communist movement, i.e., Dimitrov, Kuusinen, Togliatti, Bela Kun, Smeral, Varga, Manuilsky, Wang Ming, contributed most significantly to the formulation of the new orientation. It all began after the Presidium of the ECCI on 28 May 1934 fixed up the agenda of the Seventh Congress. At its first meeting on 14 June 1934 Manuilsky, representing the CPSU (B), at the meeting of the Preparatory Committee on Item 1 of the forthcoming Congress suggested that slogans of proletarian dictatorship and class struggle in capitalist countries were no longer enough, what was more important was to draw the masses to the struggle for proletarian dictatorship and socialism. However, the real major breakthrough came in the form of a series of letters written by Dimitrov to the ECCI and in his speech on 2 July 1934 at the meeting of the Preparatory Com-

mittee on Item 2 of the Congress agenda. In these documents Dimitrov sharply criticized the sectarian tactical line followed by the Comintern as manifest in its appraisal of Social Democracy as Social Fascism, and highlighted the importance of winning over the members of the Social Democratic parties in the anti-fascist struggle. Then, on 22 August 1934, at a meeting of the Preparatory Committee on Item I of the Agenda and in his speech delivered on 29 August 1934, Kuusinen emphasized the need for a sober analysis of the situation and implored the communist parties to wage a serious fight against the sectarian deviations, criticizing thereby the tendency to overrate the degree of maturity of the revolutionary crisis. All this later paved the way for the era of the Popular Front in Europe in the late '30s.[2]

As regards the Comintern's re-examination of its line in the colonies, Bela Kun, Lozovsky and Wang Ming at first put up stiff opposition. On further discussion they considerably modified their views. The switchover to the new line on the colonial question was particularly precipitated by the fruitful results that had already been gained by a small number of communist parties in the colonies pursuing united front tactics. Thus the Communist Party of Algeria, one of the first to adopt the policy of creating an anti-fascist front, had started wielding influence among the wide masses of the Arab working people; the Communist Party of Syria had been carrying out from 1933 active work for winning the masses and had started acting as the vanguard of the strike struggle of the working people, and had strengthened its positions in trade unions by adopting measures for coming closer to the national-revolutionary parties with a view to creating an anti-imperialist united front. Particularly instructive was the experience of some of the Latin American countries, especially of the Communist Party of Brazil, at whose initiative a National Liberation Alliance, a political organization of revolutionary anti-imperialist forces, was created in early 1935, which united mass organizations of workers, peasants, servicemen, students, democratic sections of the army and the navy, different socialist and petty-bourgeois parties and national reformist groups, giving the slogan: 'All power to National

Liberation Alliance!' Significantly, the Government of the Alliance was not thought of exclusively as an organ of the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the working class and peasants; the task was about the creation of a naional-revolutionary or people's revolutionary government which would include representatives of all classes who had taken part in the struggle for national liberation of the Brazilian people, including the representatives of a section of the national bourgeoisie. Then, at a joint Conference at Montevideo in October 1934, the communist parties of Latin America arrived at the view that the agrarian peasant revolution had a close bearing on the national liberation struggle, and put forward the task of forming the widest possible anti-imperialist front. This had its influence on the tactical line of the communist parties of Cuba and Chile.

Especially important in this connection was a long article dealing with the problems of the struggle for a united anti-imperialist front in the colonial and dependent countries as published in *Kommunisticheskii Internatsional*, No. 20-21, 1935 on the eve of the Seventh Congress. This article reffected, in a generalized form, the political line of the world communist movement on the national-colonial question as applicable to the new conditions of struggle and was a clear evidence of the fact that, from mid 1934, a shift in the Comintern line had begun. The article, which was an authoritative write-up on behalf of the ECCI, emphasized, first, that the main support of imperialism in the backward countries was the feudal-comprador elements used by imperialism in the struggle against the national bourgeoisie. The support of the national liberation struggle by the national reformist bourgeoisie was described not simply as a manoeuvre meant to prevent the masses from going over to the communist party for, given its very class position, the national bourgeoisie used to oscillate between imperialism and national revolution. Moreover, the article acknowledged that left-wing groups in the national reformist parties could become for the masses a 'bridge to the side of the revolution'. In this context the ECCI appreciated the first steps taken by the CPC towards creating a united anti-imperialist front and the work of the Communist Party of Brazil in the formation of the National Liberation Alliance. Secondly, the ECCI article criticized the slogan of the establishment of Soviet power in backward countries as

propagandist, and stressed that this slogan, as also the demand for taking away the landlord's land without compensation, could not be put forward without taking into account the stage of the revolution—for the masses in these countries were still largely under the influence of the reformists while the communist parties were still too small. In this context the line pursued by the Communist Party of India, leading to its isolation, was censured. Finally, the ECCI article criticized the erroneous notions that the proletariat of the colonial and semi-colonial countries had already attained hegemony in the national liberation movement, that all non-proletarian parties were counter-revolutionary and that the communists could afford to remain 'neutral' in the struggle against imperialism. There is nothing more erroneous, the article pointed out, than the notion that the proletariat would lose its hegemony if the communists temporarily collaborated with the national-reformist organizations and formed a closer bloc with the national-revolutionary parties for struggle against imperialism, while retaining their organizational and political independence.[3]

In India, the first major self-critical review of the sectarian line pursued by the CPI and of its consequences was published in the form of a document entitled *Problems of the Anti-Imperialist Struggle in India,* in *Inprecor* of 9 March 1935. Although, as shown in the previous chapter, the *Draft Political Theses* had indicated the first sign of rethinking it was in this new document that an exhaustive and far more thorough self-criticism is to be found.[4] In the first place, the document acknowledged that the CPI had committed serious mistakes with regard to participation in the anti-imperialist struggle by limiting itself simply to general appeals to fight for an anti-imperialist and anti-feudal

revolution, without going into the midst of the struggling masses. This had resulted in the separation of the struggle against national reformism from the struggle against imperialism, from the struggle for immediate demands of the workers as well as of the peasants.[5] This inability to link up the two struggles, the document pointed out, facilitated the growth of sectarianism and the isolation of the CPI. Secondly, emphasizing the importance of united front tactics, it pointed out,

> The whole situation bears witness to the fact that the power and influence of these organisations will grow infinitely if, as organisations, they join the local organisations of the Congress, on the basis of collective membership, while preserving their independence and face. Their affiliation to the Congress organisations is dictated by the necessity of seriously and widely developing the anti-imperialist struggle. After joining the Congress, they can take up the task of uniting all honest elements, ready to fight against imperialism not in Gandhian fashion, but in actual deed.[6]

The rationale behind this move for united front from above was that since the CPI had been formally declared illegal in July 1934, and since the Congress alone had the legal opportunities for work, the communists could, by joining the Congress organizations and putting up the minimum platform for the anti-imperialist struggle, make common cause with the masses in every action, whether it was against wage-cuts or against landlords or the usurers. Moreover, the document hinted at the possibility that such participation of the communists could be utilized not only for agitating for the minimum platform of a united front, but also for defending the programme of the anti-imperialist and agrarian peasant revolution under the leadership of the working class.[7] Finally, the document took care to mention that united front tactics did not mean renunciation of the irreconcilable struggle against national reformism and it was necessary to exercise a check so that the communists did not slip into the road of compromise with reformism. At the same time, it was also stressed that the CPI must effect, outside

the Congress organizations, an independent mobilization of the masses for the struggle against imperialism so as to expose every national-reformist manoeuvre.[8]

While the document, it goes without saying, was a major departure from the earlier ones, the note of scepticism regarding the 'manoeuvres' of national-reformism, however, continued to persist. The CPI had to wait till the Seventh Congress of Comintern to get over this understanding and to arrive at a more mature understanding of the united front tactics.

II

At the Seventh Congress of the Communist International, which opened in Moscow on 25 July 1935 and concluded on 21 August, the main report was delivered by Georgi Dimitrov. Referring to India, Dimitrov stated,

> In India the Communists have to support, extend and participate in 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 liberation movement of the Indian peoples against British Imperialism.[9]

The perspective of this formulation, which was in continuation of the new orientation that had been taking place in the Comintern since mid-1934, was outlined in the two Resolutions on the Report of the Activity of the ECCI and on the Report of Dimitrov as adopted by the Congress. In the Resolution on the Activities of the ECCI it was noted that the Congress was particularly concerned about the inability of a number of communist parties to carry out the tactics of the united front, to realize the necessity of struggling in defence of the remnants of bourgeois democracy to appreciate the necessity of creating

an anti-imperialist People's Front in the colonies and dependent countries, to work in the reformist and fascist trade unions and in the mass organizations of toilers formed by the bourgeois parties and, finally, to understand the importance of work among the toiling workers, the peasantry and the petty bourgeois masses in the towns.[10] For the colonial countries the working out of this perspective meant, in terms of the Resolution on Dimitrov's Report, that the most important task facing the communists in the colonial and semi-colonial countries was to build up an anti-imperialist people's front by drawing the widest masses into the national liberation movement against imperialist exploitation, by taking an active part in the mass anti-imperialist movements headed by the national reformists and by striving to bring about joint action with the national revolutionary and national reformist organizations on the basis of a definite anti-imperialist platform.[11]

A review of proceedings of the Seventh Congress, however, shows that a number of delegates representing the communist parties and groups in the colonial countries were not yet in a position to fully appreciate this turn in the Comintern's policy, although there were also parties that were in a mood to reassess their earlier sectarian line. Thus, while the communist parties of Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Syria, Egypt and Indonesia came forward with self-critical reviews of the earlier line pursued in the '30s, the communist parties of Iran and Turkey, for instance, continued to stick to the earlier position.[12] Particularly interesting was the position of the Indian delegate, especially if one compares it with that of the delegate representing Indo-China. Van Tan, the Indo-Chinese representative, referring to the anti-imperialist struggle in Indo-China, pointed out that what was

most urgent was the rallying of all the oppresed nationalities in one united anti-imperialist People's Front. Moreover, he stressed that mass organizations of considerable size had been formed under the tutelage of the national reformist bourgeoisie and that it was necessary for the communists to work in these organizations and establish a broad basis for their work, by means of energetic day-to-day struggles for the demands of the masses.[13] On the contrary Tambe, the Indian delegate,[14] while acknowledging on the one hand that the communists in India had committed sectarian errors by neglecting work in the reformist trade unions, thereby enabling the latter to take lead in the struggle, on the other hand, directed the main thrust of his speech against the menace of reformism posed by the national bourgeois leadership.[15] At least from this evidence of the position of the CPI at the Seventh Congress it appears that the rethinking that had started in the Party had not yet definitely crystallized.

It should be stressed in this connection that the Comintern leadership, while advocating united front tactics, also took care to caution the participants in the Congress that temporary co-operation with the bourgeoisie in the national liberation movement must never lead to the abandonment of class struggle, that is, it must never develop into a reformist co-operation. Thus, cautioning the delegates Ercoli pointed out,

> It is all the more necessary to stress this because we know that even when the bourgeoisie is compelled to take up arms at a given moment to defend national independence and freedom it is prepared at any moment to go over into the camp of the enemy in face of the danger that the war may be transformed into a real people's war and in face of the rising of the working class and peasant masses for the fulfilment of their class demands.[16]

It is evident that Ercoli had in mind the experience of the betrayal of the first United Front in China by the Kuomintang. Indeed, the two phases of the Chinese Revolution in the decade preceding the Seventh Congress had influenced the colonial countries in a rather contradictory way. On the one hand, the first phase, the period of the united front till its collapse, pointed to the dangers of reformism. On the other hand, the years that followed the Li Li-san line showed the costly mistakes of sectarianism. In a way, a number of colonial countries that stuck to the sectarian line at the Congress were largely influenced by the second phase of China's experience, unaware as they were of the mistakes of this sectarian line and being in the habit of shifting the Chinese model to their own soil. A classic example in this regard was the position taken by the Communist Party of Peru at the Congress. Thus at the Seventh Congress the question of an anti-imperialist united front was, as some commentators have rightly suggested, very largely guided by the necessity of weaning a number of communist parties in the colonies away from such mechanical and unrealistic experiments.[17] This, quite understandably, required a comprehensive analysis of the situation in the colonies and semi-colonies by the Comintern. Interestingly, it was Wang Ming, who had by then realized the futility of the sectarian line of the CPC pursued till the Tsunyi Conference of 1935, who spoke at length on the subject while commenting on Dimitrov's report. In his speech Wang Ming, while dwelling on the growth of revolutionary movements in the colonies, semi-colonies and backward countries (i.e. mutiny in the Chilean navy, mutiny of the Dutch fleet in Indonesia, upsurge of the workers' and peasants' movement in India, armed struggle of the peasants in the Phillipines, growth of the strike movement in Korea, mass strike of the oil workers in Persia, armed uprisings in the Arabian East, development of revolutionary struggle among the Negroes, armed resistance to the Italian forces in Ethiopia, etc.) pointed to three significant developments in these countries that demanded a reconsideration of the sectarian line pursued so far. First, there was an increase in the *national* discontent with and indignation against imperialism and its native agents, giving rise to the most favour-

able conditions for the creation of an anti-imperialist united front. Secondly, the accentuation of antagonisms between the colonial and the imperialist bourgeoisie, between the colonial bourgeoisie and the landowners, created the possibility of utilizing these contradictions for the development of a mass revolutionary movement. Thirdly, the course of anti-imperialist struggle was leading to a weakening of national-reformism among the masses and to the formation among a number of national-reformist and petty bourgeois parties of national-revolutionary left wings.[18]

It is in this context that Wang Ming proceeded to make a detailed criticism of the CPI's wrong tactical line and pointed out possible means of rectifying its mistakes. Wang Ming particularly emphasized that by their sectarian errors the CPI had objectively helped to retain the influence of Gandhism and national reformism over the masses. Secondly, while acknowledging that the Indian communists had started veering away from this line he nevertheless criticized the CPI leadership for simultaneously calling for an anti-imperialist united front with the Indian National Congress and putting forward such demands as 'the establishment of an Indian Workers' and Peasants' Soviet Republic', 'confiscation of all lands belonging to the landowners without compensation', etc. that is, demands which would frighten the reformists away.[19] Rather, Wang Ming suggested that the anti-imperialist struggle in the immediate future should be waged on the basis of the following demands: (1) against the slavish Constitution (viz. the Government of India Act, 1935); (2) immediate release of all political prisoners; (3) abolition of all extraordinary laws and decrees directed against the broad masses of the people; (4) against the lowering of wages, lengthening of the working day and retrenchment of the workers; (5) against burdensome taxes, high land rents, and

against confiscation of the peasants' land for non-payment of debts and obligations ; (6) the establishment of democratic liberties.[20] Thirdly, Wang Ming insisted that while the Indian communists should in no case disregard work within the National Congress and in the national reformist organizations affiliated with it, they must maintain their complete political and organizational independence and work within and without the National Congress to consolidate all the genuine anti-imperialist forces, so as to prove to the people, by their deeds, that the communists were the real vanguard in the struggle for national emancipation.[21] Wang Ming particularly pointed to the experience of the Communist Party of Brazil in forging such a front in this regard.

In fact Wang Ming, while reiterating the united front tactics, never put any lesser premium on the question of achieving the hegemony of the proletariat in the national liberation movement. Rather, the united front tactic was now treated as the most important political mechanism through which a communist party, while aligning with the colonial bourgeoisie in the anti-imperialist struggle, would be in a position to establish its hegemony in the national liberation movement. Thus, Wang Ming observed :

> ...., in those countries where the Communists were for a long time unable to create an anti-imperialist united front, the Communist Parties have not yet become strong, mass parties. These facts show that without the active participation of the Communists in the general people's and national struggle against imperialist oppression it is inconceivable that the Communist groups or the young, numerically small Party can be transformed into a real mass party, and without this the hegemony of the proletariat and Soviet power in their country is not to be thought of. Without a doubt imperialism is the principal and basic enemy of all the colonial peoples, and if the Communists are unable to come out against imperialism in the front ranks of the people, how can the people recognise in the Party its vanguard and leader ?[22]

This deserves special emphasis. There are opinions quite fashionable among the Western scholars that the new orientation

in the Comintern's analysis of the colonial question was a deceptive exercise, since this was incompatible with the call for building up a united anti-fascist front in Europe, because a front of the latter type could not be ensured without enlisting the support of the ruling parties and governments in the West many of whom, incidentally, had colonial empires. The result was, the argument runs on, that ultimately the interests of the liberation movement in the colonies were to be sacrificed for defending the overwhelming necessity of an anti-fascist front which alone could ensure the security of the Soviet Union.[23] In other words, support to anti-imperialist liberation movement in the colonies and support to the anti-fascist front in Europe could not go together. It is necessary to recall at this stage that the two fronts (i.e. the anti-imperialist and anti-fascist) had grown out of two different historical circumstances in course of two different types of revolutionary struggles and to raise the question of determination of one by the other is to miss completely the historical context. This, of course, does not mean that the two streams of revolutionary movement were not historically interlinked. But it is one thing to suggest the historical linkage between the two types of struggles, while it would be a complete travesty of truth to state that the tactics of anti-imperialist struggle were eclipsed by the considerations of strengthening the struggle against fascism. Moreover, as the information provided suggest, in pleading for an anti-imperialist united front in the colonies the Comintern leadership was very much emphatic on defending the question of proletarian hegemony. Hence the question of sacrificing the cause of the colonial countries appears to be an utterly fanciful exercise quite often indulged in a rather lurid manner.

III

In India, the fallout of the Seventh Congress began to be felt very soon in the years that followed. Already certain significant developments had taken place in the national arena. In 1934, with the decision of the leaders of the Indian National

Congress to suspend the civil disobedience movement and participate in the elections of the Legislative Councils, as per provisions of the Government of India Act, 1935, a section of the members, quite obviously agitated at this reformist policy of compromise and feeling restive for quite sometime, formed the Congress Socialist party (CSP) in 1934, particularly with a view to retaining the hold of the Congress on the growing militancy of the labour movement. For the communists this meant, in the first place, that the CPI, in the light of the decisions of the Seventh Congress, would have to strengthen its alliance with the CSP inside the organizations of the National Congress so as to pressurize the leadership to discard its compromising and grossly reformist postures which had considerably defused the militancy of freedom struggle and, secondly, while not posing a wholly negative attitude towards the elections, to oppose the so-called Constitution under the Government of India Act, 1935, and to give the call for a Constituent Assembly which, based on universal suffrage, would frame a Constitution for the people of India.

This new direction in the CPI's policy found its first concrete and comprehensive expression in 'Suggestions on the Indian Question', a motion approved by the Secretariat of the ECCI in February 1936. This document set before the Indian communists the task of displaying initiative in the struggle for the formation of a broad, popular, anti-imperialist front on the basis of a struggle against the 'Slave Constitution' imposed by the British colonial masters, and for the fulfilment of the urgent demands of the working masses. The CPI was urged to establish a united front with the Congress Socialists, supporting those suggestions of the CSP which corresponded to the interests of the masses. The task of the Indian communists, the document continued, was to raise the slogan of a Constituent Assembly on the basis of universal, equal, direct and secret suffrage, juxtaposing this slogan to the 'Slave Constitution', and to explain thereby that a real Constituent Assembly was possible only as a result of the movement of the widest masses. The ECCI document at the same time emphasized the crucial importance of organizational work so that the Party could be built in such a way that its members might carry out day to day persistent work in the mass organizations and actually participate in the struggle of

the masses for their concrate needs and political rights by a combination of legal and illegal forms of struggle.[24]

This suggestion of a united front from above with a view to strengthening the united front from below was followed by a more detailed policy statement, in the form of the oft-quoted Dutt-Bradley thesis, published in *Inprecor* on 29 February 1936. With the forthcoming Lucknow session of the Indian National Congress in mind this document, making a sharp departure from the earlier position of the CPI in the '30s that there was nothing to choose between the 'right' and the 'left' factions of the Congress and that the latter, in particular, was the most crafty element to be fought against, now argued:

What shall be the future line of direction of the national struggles to defeat imperialism? The Left-wing elements are pressing for a line of irreconcilable struggle against imperialism, for an advance of the programme to reflect the growing influence of socialist ideas, and for the organisation of the workers and peasants as the decisive political task. The Right-wing elements are making gestures for unity with the Liberals and other elements outside the Congress who have abstained from participation in the common struggle and stand for cooperation with imperialism. . . .[25]

In this context the thesis called for strengthening the CSP-CPI alliance, urging the communists to be aware of the special responsibility that lay on them in forging the anti-imperialist front against imperialism. To cite the words of the thesis:

The Congress Socialist Party can play an especially important part in this as the grouping of all the radical elements in the existing Congress. It is of the greatest importance that every effort should be made to clarify questions of programme and tactics in the Congress Socialist Party.

It is this way the first stage of the Anti-Imperialist People's Front could be built up already in the common fight, stressing particularly the local, district and provincial basis.

At the same time it is essential to recognise that the task of consolidation of the Left-wing forces renders more necessary and responsible than ever the role and activity of the Communists in this process, since they have the most responsible role to play in ensuring the political clearness of the fight, in pressing forward the drive to unity in action, and guiding the aims of the movement towards the goals of political and social liberation.[26]

Of particular significance was the emphasis of Palme Dutt and Ben Bradley on the importance of amending the Constitution of the Indian National Congress so as to make possible collective affiliation, with delegate representation, of trade unions, peasant's unions and youth organizations on district and local levels, the purpose being to facilitate the formation of the united front from above. Quite obviously with the radical and democratic sentiments of the CSP in mind the authors put particular stress on making the Congress organization truly democratic, by incorporating in its Constitution provisions such as widening of facilities for raising issues and putting forward resolutions from the members, prior circulation of agenda with opportunities for discussion, active political discussion in all the local organizations, election from below of all committees, etc.[27] Pending, however, such drastic revision of the Constitution of the National Congress, the authors pointed to the immediate necessity of setting up on a local, district, provincial, and, if possible, on an all-India scale, joint bodies of the Congress committees, trade unions, peasant unions, youth associations, Congress Socialist groups and other groups of anti-imperialist organizations, for a joint campaign against imperialism in the Anti-Imperialist People's Front.[28]

The question that now quite naturally comes up is, how did the CPI leadership under the Secretaryship of P. C. Joshi react to the decisions of the Seventh Congress, reiterated further by

the Dutt-Bradley thesis ? For an understanding of the position of the CPI during the period following the Seventh Congress one has to go through the then illegal *Communist,* the only available materials and documents published by the Party leadership at irregular intervals. After the publication of the Dutt-Bradley thesis the Politbureau of the CPI came out with a statement fully endorsing the formulations given by Palme Dutt and Ben Bradley and resolved to orient the direction of the anti-imperialist movement in India along those lines, hoping that this gesture would be reciprocated in a comradely spirit from many quarters.[29] Earlier, soon after the Seventh Congress, the CPI leadership, in making its observations on the new orientation provided at the Comintern Congress, pointed out that the decisions of the Seventh Congress did in no way undo the work of the Sixth, but carried it forward by basing itself on the decisions of the Sixth Congress, and thus formulated a new tactical line for the changed objective situation.[30] Interestingly, the CPI was not yet in a position to appreciate that the stand taken by the Comintern at the Seventh Congress was a definite break with the tactical line on the colonial question decided upon at the Sixth Congress ; this was also perhaps because the Comintern itself had not yet explicitly acknowledged that the new orientation was a departure from the earlier position adopted at the Sixth Congress.

The CPI leadership now decided to utilize the forthcoming elections by taking whatever little legal advantages that were provided by such opportunities, declaring at the same time that the CPI had no illusion about the 'Slave Constitution' and Parliament.[31] Inside the CPI, however, there was not yet any absolute unanimity regarding individual communist affiliation to the National Congress which, as the Seventh Congress had explained, had become necessary because of the legal ban on the CPI till then and, moreover, because the National Congress was the only organization which had the opportunity to function legally. Although by mid-1936 the CPI Politbureau had decided in favour of such affiliation, there were certain dissenting voices

that challenged this position.[32] The Politbureau's position was reflected in several articles published in *Communist* and rather interestingly was completely different from the stand taken earlier in the '30s. While prior to the Seventh Congress the 'Left' elements in the National Congress were belived to be the most treacherous force to be reckoned with, it was now contended, after the experience of the consequences of a sectarian line, that the task of the working class was not to strengthen the National Congress but the revolutionary force inside the National Congress so as to help the emergence of an Anti-Imperialist People's Front. The Politbureau felt that such a distinct possibility was very much there because the conflict between the 'Right' and the 'Left' in the Congress was now more intense and a rift had ensued not only between the rank and file and the leadership but inside the leadership itself. Accordingly, the suggestion was put forward that to do even effective fraction work ordinary membership of the Congress was not enough; workers and intellectuals had to come in the Congress committee, had to get elected as delegates to conferences, etc. so that the 'Left' inside the Congress could be strengthened and the different committees could be given an anti-imperialist character.[33]

Historical evidences suggest that this position of the CPI's Politbureau was in all probability stimulated by two developments. In January 1936 the CSP at its Meerut Conference, on the recommendation of Jayaprakash Narayan, the General Secretary, unanimously adopted a resolution to admit communists belonging to the illegal CPI to membership in the CSP, of course on the basis of individual affiliation. This, in a way, was a big victory for the communists towards the fulfilment of the objectives of the new tactical line that had emerged after the Seventh Congress. The other very significant development was the Lucknow session of the National Congress in April 1936 where Nehru, in his Presidential Address, expressed deep sympathy for the 'Left' and 'Socialist' elements, sharply criticized the growing

isolation of the Congress from the masses, highly praised the Soviet Union by highlighting the linkage between the struggle waged by the colonial people and the struggle of the working class on a global plane, expressed strong opposition to the 'Slave Constitution', and defended the idea of an Anti-Imperialist People's Front.[31]

The stand taken by Nehru undeniably helped the communists to strengthen the alliance with other progressive forces. Very soon, at the initiative of the communists this led to the formation of the All India Kishan Sabha, the All India Students' Federation and the Progressive Writers' Association which, quite certainly, were able to draw into their respective folds the finest talents and the best organizers of the time. For the first time, after years of isolation, the CPI was slowly emerging as a mass party in an organized fashion.

Meanwhile, the time for provincial elections under the Constitution was drawing near and the National Congress met at Faizpur in December 1936 to prepare for the new situation. Quite legitimately the CPI had the apprehension that at the Faizpur session the Congress leadership might again go in for a compromise by participating in the elections and then by joining the ministries without issuing the slogan of a Constituent Assembly, letting down in the process the tide of anti-imperialist struggle. With this in mind the CPGB leadership came out with a signed article written by Harry Pollitt, Palme Dutt and Ben Bradley on the eve of the Faizpur session. In this article the authors called for linking up the struggle for democratic rights (meaning thereby the fight for opposing the Constitution and defending the cause of the Constituent Assembly) and the struggle of the masses and urged that the latter must not stop at passive resistance, that it must pass over from lower forms to higher, more effective and active forms—'from boycotts to mass demonstrations, from demonstrations to strikes, from strikes to mass action by the people'. It was particularly stressed that the slogan of the Constituent Assembly was in no way contradictory

to the earlier slogan of Soviets, since this opened the way for further activity of the masses and for advance to a higher form of democracy.[85]

This was soon followed by the appeal of the CPI to all progressive forces to step up the anti-imperialist struggle, issued just on the eve of the Faizpur session. In this impassioned call, which came out under the title *Gathering Storm*, the CPI's position on the perspective of the struggle for building up the united front was stated in no uncertain terms. It was argued that a united front could not be realized by mere negotiations or by agreements between friendly groups. It would have to be built up rather on the basis of class struggle, since a united front had to be forged on the basis of a united struggle of the workers against the capitalist offensive of wage-cuts and against imperialist oppression and certainly on the basis of class organization of the peasantry against oppression and exploitation. In other words, the appeal urged, the active section of the Congress rank and file would have to come out of the 'constructive programme' of Gandhism and move towards an organization of the workers and peasants on the basis of their class demands.[86] The building up of the united front, therefore, meant not simply the bringing together of the existing left forces from above, but building up from below, at the level of grassroots, the unorganized masses into politically conscious participants in the anti-imperialist struggle. The theoretical importance of this appeal is highly suggestive in the sense that it completely disproves such ideas, quite fashionable among those belonging to the Fourth International, that the united front tactics on the colonial question that emerged after the Seventh Congress meant virtually tailing behind the bourgeoisie, abandonment of class struggle and therby a virtual betrayal of the liberation struggle of the colonies.

The Faizpur session, as apprehended, did not accept the communists' proposal of preparing for a struggle to fight for a Constituent Assembly nor the motion that the Congress, even though it might obtain a majority of seats at the coming elections, should not accept office. Although as a result there was some

immediate flutter in the CPI, as manifest in certain statements very strongly denouncing any move to form ministries[37] and reiterating forcefully the slogan of the Constituent Assembly,[38] there was no question of openly opposing the decisions of the Faizpur session. The rationale for this policy was that the masses were not yet disillusioned with the whole of the National Congress leadership and that independent class aims of the proletariat did not preclude the immediate necessity for unity in the common struggle for independence, since the working class alone was not yet in a position to realize the preconditions for its own future emancipation. This was particularly so, the CPI leadership contended, because in India at that hour the question of abolition of capitalism and the establishment of a Socialist Soviet Republic was not on the agenda; rather what was necessary was the establishment of a democratic regime, the accomplishment of a bourgeois democratic revolution. Adventurous ideas on the contrary, the Party leadership observed, fostered romantic dreams, aiding thereby the agent provocateurs of imperialism. In this connection particular emphasis was laid on the costly mistakes of the sectarian line of the Party prior to the Seventh Congress.[39]

Against this background, it is now not difficult to imagine why the CPI did not oppose the decision of the Indian National Congress to form ministries in nine Provinces of British India in July 1937 (viz. the Wardha Resolution of 1937) and thereby leave the united front undisturbed. The CPI's position, as all evidences show, was not guided by any opportunist consideration but by the broader historical necessity of building up the widest possible front of all forces opposed to imperialism, for this alone could ensure the mobilization of masses for the final battle for independence which would be the first step towards the emancipation of the people. Moreover, for the CPI it was also an opportunity to put mass pressure on the Congress ministries to con-

cede the demands of the people and widen democratic liberties. As Ben Bradley put it, immediately after the decision of the National Congress to form ministries:

At this very critical juncture everything must be done to maintain and strengthen the United National Front; while all efforts to organise the workers and peasants in their respective organisations must be redoubled thus bringing in new strength to the United Front.

The Communist Party of India, and all genuine anti-imperialists, have a special responsibility at the present moment of rallying support to the United National Front. The mass pressure from outside will strengthen the hands of the Congress majorities inside the Provincial Legislative Assemblies. A programme of immediate demands should be drawn up and submitted by the Trade Union, Peasant or Socialist members of the Assembly. Mass support should be rallied outside, behind those Congress Cabinets who take the immediate steps of fulfilling the Congress election pledges.[40]

The shift in the CPI's policy orientation following the decisions of the Seventh Congress of Comintern was, therefore, the outcome of the experience of class struggle in the country and had a very distinct theoretical perspective not only of the present but of the future too, although apparently the new direction in the Comintern's tactical line as well as in the Indian communist movement may appear to be a volte-face, if the positions prior to the Seventh Congress are kept in mind. The essence of this new policy shift was pursuance of united front tactics, from below as well as from above. The CPI's decision to support the Congress ministries in the provinces was in justification of this tactical line.

IV

It would be quite pertinent in this connection to take a close look at the tactics of the CPC in forming the Anti-Japanese United Front in 1937, especially if one takes into account the fact that the communist movement in China too, like its Indian

counterpart, had been a victim of sectarianism of the CPC's tactical line in the early '30s, and that the CPC also, like the CPI, was now looking forward to the application of the united front tactics in China, although of course under different historical conditions. It all began with the 'Appeal to Fellow Countrymen Concerning Resistance to Japan and National Salvation', issued by the CC of the CPC on 1 August 1935, after the beginning of the shift in the CPC line at the Tsunyi Conference a few months earlier. This Appeal virtually coincided with the Seventh Congress of Comintern in Moscow, where the CPC's sectarianism was subjected to criticism. At the Congress, in the Resolution on Ercoli's Report, the CPC was urged to make every effort to extend the front of the struggle for national liberation and to draw into it all the national forces that were ready to repulse the campaign of the Japanese and other imperialists.[41] The most searching self-critical analysis of the sectarian mistakes of the CPC, despite the latter's ability to create a mass base, was given by Wang Ming (i.e. the criticism of the mistakes committed at the time of the Fukien incident).[42] While criticizing the sectarian mistakes of the CPC the Comintern, however, highly appreciated the attempts of the new leadership that had emerged after the Long March to enter into an agreement with any political/military group for joint action against imperialism. In this connection the Comintern spokesmen highly appreciated the political and military wisdom of the Long March.[43]

In the rather sprawling literature on the CPC-Comintern relationship during this period, one is quite often confronted with the position taken by Western scholars that the Comintern under Stalin began to show less and less interest in the prospects of a revolution in China, and that the idea of an Anti-Japanese United Front was mooted by Stalin to ward off a possible threat of Japanese militarism to Soviet security and, consequently, the Comintern's primary interest was not so much in the exercise of

the CPC's hegemony as in the formation of a CPC-Kuomintang alliance against Japan.[44] Such an interpretation can be rebutted on two counts. In the first place, during the early '30s, when communications between the CPC leadership and the Comintern had almost completely broken down, there were elements in the CPC who in course of the experience of class struggle were already feeling the urgency of building up a united front against Japan and Chiang Kai-shek. For instance, in an Appeal signed by Mao Tsetung, Chu Teh and others, as early as 1932, the CPC called upon the people of China to become united for fighting against Japanese militarism and the reactionary Kuomintang agents.[45] Moreover, in the Appeal of 1 August 1935 issued by the CPC a positive stand was taken by the Party leadership with regard to an alliance with the Kuomintang, in the face of the growing Japanese onslaught on North China, and particularly after the humiliating 'Ho-Umezu' agreement, which indicated virtually the complete bankruptcy of the Kuomintang leadership. The Declaration urged the establishment of a united national defence government and an anti-Japanese allied army by a Workers' and Peasants' Democratic Government, the Red Army, other anti-Japanese troops and all people who were willing to resist Japan and save China. This idea of a united front from above as manifest in this Appeal was, it should be stressed, felt by the CPC leadership and not dictated by Stalin. This becomes particularly evident if one takes into account the fact that the Appeal had been prepared prior to the Seventh Congress and was distributed at the Congress among the Delegates.

The second point of dispute concerns the allegation about the Comintern's growing indifference towards the Chinese revolution. Historical evidence shows that the Comintern had taken quite a number of crucial steps which had greatly helped the CPC in implementing the united front tactics and this was done, unfortunately for these critics, not in a spirit of indifference but

with a feeling of comradely cooperation. Moreover, the Comintern organized with great risk the distribution of *Chiukuo pao* (later renamed *Chiukuo Shihpao*), the organ of the CPC, in the leading urban centres of Kuomintang-held areas of China, i.e. Peking, Tientsin, Shanghai, Wuhan, etc. in the months following the Seventh Congress. Not only that, when in response to the August Appeal of the CPC the students of Peking and Tientsin organized massive demonstrations against the terror unleashed by the Kuomintang government and the Japanese militarists on 9 and 16 Decemeber 1935, a number of leading Komsomol members joined the movement and, moreover, the Communist Youth International played a key role in organizing solidarity campaigns in their support.[46]

The peculiar complexity of the situation was that despite Chiang Kai Shek's undisguised hostility towards the CPC and despite his capitulationist policy towards Japanese militarism, the Kuomintang had not even in 1935-36 completely lost its credibility. This made the tasks of the CPC particularly difficult, especially when Japanese imperialism was treated as the main enemy. Historically, it thus became an imperative for the CPC at the Wayaopao Conference of December 1935 to formulate afresh the tactics of the CPC for fighting Japanese imperialism by winning over the Kuomintang and thus reiterating the necessity of the Anti-Japanese United Front. A crucial role in this Conference was played by Mao TseTung whose Report acted as the guide for pursuing the united front tactics of the CPC.[47] It should be stated in this connection that by the time of the Wayaopao Conference, the Politbureau of the CC of the CPC had acquainted itself with the resolutions of the Seventh Congress of Comintern.[48] Meanwhile, Wang Ming continued to high-

light the importance of the united front tactics through a series of articles in the Comintern press.[49]

It was in the summer of 1936 that radio communication between the CC of the CPC in North Shensi and the Comintern was restored. Immediately thereafter the ECCI pointed out in its analysis of the decisions of the Wayaopao Conference, that while the CPC had been correctly working towards an Anti-Japanese United Front, in order to really win over the Kuomintang it was necessary to change the slogan of a 'workers' and peasants' republic' by a slogan of 'people's republic'. On 25 August 1936 the CC of the CPC published a letter to the Kuomintang formally proposing the creation of a united front of the Kuomintang and the CPC. During this period the CPC, having lost its southern revolutionary bases and having withdrawn into remote rural districts, was increasingly assuming a peasant character under Mao TseTung's leadership.[50] A crucial role in organizing the urban proletariat in the Kuomintang areas, under extremely difficult underground conditions, was played by Liu Shao Chi, during these bitter moments of risk and hardship.

Despite these overtures of the CPC, Chiang Kai-shek's ruthless anti-communism continued unabated until the much publicized Sian incident in December 1936, when Chiang was detained by two Generals, who had come under the influence of the Red Army, for putting an end to the period of the second revolutionary civil war. This in a way was the turning point. On the one hand, Chiang's detention heightened the danger of occupation of the Nanking government by the anti-Chiang but staunch pro-Japanese elements. On the other hand, there was the danger of Chiang's liquidation by the CPC, which had till then been fiercely persecuted by the supreme leader of the

Kuomintang. Today it is quite well known that it was at the ECCI's directive that Chiang Kai Shek was let off but the CPC, in return, was for the first time in a position to force Chiang Kai Shek to cease hostilities against the CPC and, subsequently, to officially recognize the status of the CPC and to come to a formal agreement with the latter in forming the Anti-Japanese United Front in 1937 after the famous Yenan Conference of the CPC. Concering the Sian incident, Edgar Snow's account gives one the impression that the release of Chiang was a mistake, since had he been detained longer the prospects of a revolutionary coalition government at Nanking could have brightened.[51] In all probability this is a wrong conjecture. This completely underestimates the fact that Wang Cheng Wei and Ho Ying-chin, two staunch pro-Japanese elements, had assumed control of the Nanking government and large forces had been mustered in preparation for an attack on Sian. Under the circumstances, the release of Chiang greatly diffused the situation helping, in the bargain, the CPC to force Chiang Kai Shek to ultimately come to terms with it in the formaion of the united front in 1937. Indeed, it was a CPC delegation, headed by Chou En-lai that had to persuade Chang Hsueh-liang and Yang Hu-cheng, the two Generals who had detained Chiang, to release him. The subsequent course of the Chinese Revolution that entered a new phase in 1937 with the formation of the second united front fully vindicates the stand of the ECCI over the Sian incident.

Finally, it should not be forgotten that although by 1937 a united front from below as well as from above was established between the CPC and the Kuomintang, the Comintern in no way cherished any illusion about the Kuomintang led by the CPC. Recent researches convincingly disprove the standard canard that the Comintern, by wooing the united front line and thereby Chiang Kai Shek was working towards the liquidation of the CPC. In August 1937 the ECCI Secretariat heard and endorsed the report of Wang Ming on the situation in China. In that report, while reiterating the stand of the CPC on the need for an anti-Japanese front, Wang Ming at the same time pointed to the necessity of retaining the CPC's independence, keeping

control of the Red Army, and maintaining vigilance in regard to Chiang Kai shek, who was out to smash the communists and the Left forces.[52]

The shift in the Comintern line, as manifest in its endorsement of the united front tactics in the colonies, indeed marked a turning point. The working out of this line tremendously helped the spread of communist influence among the masses in these countries. In India, the CPI for the first time began to emerge as a mass party with a well-knit organization ; in China, this led to tremendous gains for the CPC which ultimately paved the way for the victorious Chinese Revolution of 1949 ; in the Arab countries, the communists were recommended to join the mass revolutionary organizations and carry on active positive work in them. In Latin America too the new line met with great success. In 1939, with the active cooperation of the Communist Party, a popular front was established in Chile and following the victory of the popular front at the parliamentary elections in 1938, a government of the popular front was established in Chile. In July 1937 the Comintern endorsed the stand taken by the Communist Party of Argentina towards securing a democratic alliance against imperialism, reaction and fascism. In 1937 a popular-revolutionary bloc, consisting of the Communist Party, trade union organizations and peasant leagues, was formed in Cuba which forced the government to give legal status to the Communist Party. Finally, the Comintern fully supported the tactic of the Mexican Communist Party to join the Party of the Mexican Revolution without losing its independence which, under the leadership of Lázaro-Cardenas, ruled the country.

Thus, by 1937 the fallout of the tactical line adopted at the Seventh Congress was quite manifest. Quite evidently the united front from above tactic was now being defended by the communist parties precisely with the aim of strengthening the united front from below at grassroots which alone could, at that stage of the anti-imperialist, bourgeois-democratic revolution, enable the communist parties to accomplish the historical task destined for them. Of course, this also probably opened up new fissures within the communist movement, leading to what is quite often

labelled as 'reformism'. In India, for instance, this opened up an era of communist movement which later, in the '40s, is said to have culminated in a much too soft policy towards the bourgeoisie that was bargaining with British imperialism on the question of independence and which perhaps also explains, at least to some extent, the revival of an extreme sectarian line in the years following Independence. In a way, the united front line came under serious stress almost too soon with the outbreak of the second World War, and especially after Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. The much controversial policy of the CPI during the war-years constitutes an interesting episode and belongs precisely to this period. In China, too, the Second United Front gave way quite soon, although the CPC's tackling of the crisis was highly novel and instructive for all those who wish to be trained in the experience of revolutionary struggle in the colonial and backward countries. These issues however require, in view of the growing complexity of the situation and also because of the fact that the Comintern too was gradually in the process of winding up its activities, a detailed analysis which quite certainly does not fall under the purview of the present study.

7

A Postscript

AN ANALYSIS of the period under review suggests some significant historical lessons which have an important bearing on the experience of national liberation movements in our time. This has to be emphasized also for the reason that it is generally belived that the Comintern's working out of the colonial question has very little relevance to the national-specific paths of liberation struggle in different countries. Hence, to set things in the correct perspective, it might be instructive to have a fresh look at the experience of the Comintern.

In the first place, the Comintern's very active involvement in the working out of the strategy and tactics of the anti-imperialist struggle in the colonies and semi-colonies shows that the national liberation struggle was emerging as a very powerful stream, together with the struggle of the working class in the capitalist countries, of the revolutionary process that had started changing the face of the world since the October Revolution. This precisely indicates the context of the comradely cooperation extended by the Comintern to the revolutionary, anti-imperialist struggles in the colonial countries throughout its life. On this score, the standard Anglo-American historiography gives one the impression, as shown in the preceding chapters, that gradually over time, especially since the death of Lenin, the Comintern was fast becoming an instrumnt of Soviet foreign policy, that is, the interests of the revolutionary movement were being sacrificed bit by bit to the cause of construction of socialism in one country. This kind of rather curious allegation has to be rebutted on two grounds. In the first place, as already examined, distinguished leaders of the international communist movement participated in the formulation of major policy decisions of the Comintern throughout its life, especially at certain crucial junctures (i.e. at the time of the Seventh Congress), and it was not simply the authority of the CPSU that decided everything.

Secondly, there was certainly a legitimate reason for acknowledging the primary importance of the Soviet Union. Indeed, the defence of the construction of socialism in the Soviet Union and the militant championing of the cause of the first workers' state in history were regarded by the communist parties very much as integral elements of their political and ideological identity at a most decisive turning point of history, when the Soviet Union was the only hope of the toiling people all over the globe, when the looming shadow of the Great Crash, of hunger, poverty and unemployment, together with the haunting spectre of fascism, was fast making people sceptical of the very fabric of their existence. In a situation when world history was in the throes of rather uncertain shifts, it was historically inconceivable for any communist party not to identify the cause of the Soviet Union, of the construction of socialism in that country, with the interests of its own people for whose cause it was fighting, and thereby to move forward with conviction in the face of cruel terror and pitiless repression that was let loose against the communists in almost all these countries, dominated by either capitalism or colonial rule. The cause of socialism and its construction in one country, therefore, was a cause to be championed with revolutionary vigilance—a cause the defence of which was natural and spontaneous[1]—ushering in an act of international solidarity not certainly guided by any chauvinist *diktat* manipulated by the leadership of the CPSU.

Next, it was for the Comintern to formulate on the basis of Lenin's Colonial Theses that the national liberation movement had assumed a qualitatively new character in the post-October period and to work out the theoretical questions of strategy and tactics at this new stage. The uniqueness of this new phase was that the peasant masses and the working class were emerging as the principal motive forces of the bourgeois-democratic revo-

lution in these countries. In the pre-October period the bourgeoisie remained the principal force of revolutionary struggle, while in the historical situation that had emerged the participation and active involvement of the basic masses in the struggle against imperialism, although temporarily under the leadership of the bourgeoisie, opened up new vistas in the understanding of the colonial question. Very soon, especially after the collapse of the colonial empires at the end of the second World War, and with the heightening of class struggles in the newly liberated countries, the anti-imperialist struggle against the forces of neo-colonialism and imperialist reaction began to be gradually fused with the anti-capitalist struggle of the working masses in the countries that had chosen the capitalist path of development. The revolutionary democratic content of the new type of national liberation struggle, emphasized first by Lenin in his celebrated Colonial Theses, was successfully elaborated by the communist parties in a number of colonies, notably in China and Vietnam.

Thirdly, the Comintern's experience points to the crucial importance of united front tactics in the anti-imperialist stage of the national liberation movement, indicating that the working class-peasant alliance would constitute the main driving force of this front. In the colonial countries an especially crucial significance was attached to the millions of poor peasants who would play a significant role in the anti-imperialist struggles. Thus, while a united front from above in political alliance with the bourgeoisie might be effected, its class essence would be determined by the working class-peasant alliance from below.

Besides China, this was especially manifest in the policy followed by the Communist Party in Vietnam where the national bourgeoisie being 'weak economically and flabby politically' the peasants, unlike in other countries, never followed the lead of the bourgeoisie and the revolutionary fervour and aspirations of the peasants far outweighed the bourgeoisie's limited aims.[3] It is the appreciation of this basic strategic question, i.e. that the peasantry and bourgeoisie are to be treated on two fundamentally different levels when the question of looking for the best ally of the working class comes up, that enabled the Communist

Party of Vietnam to successfully apply the united front tactics in its fight against French colonialism.

Finally, while repeatedly calling for united front tactics in the anti-imperialist struggle, the Comintern had all along stressed the necessity of upholding the independent role of the Communist Party in forging the working class-peasant alliance which would constitute the main pillar of this front. The rationale behind this move was to strive for ultimately establishing the hegemony of the working class in the national liberation movement, although at the initial stage the anti-imperialist struggles were led by the bourgeoisie. Of course, an oversimplified understanding of this position quite often led to certain serious sectarian mistakes, as discussed earlier. But it is again this repeated emphasis on the organization of communist parties that eventually led to the fanning out of revolutionary movements everywhere, paving the way for the triumph of socialism in a number of countries.[3] Moreover, a crucial significance of the independent role of the communist party was that, without the leadership of the working class, the revolution could not be carried forward as all other classes, including even the peasantry, could not be treated as historically capable of identifying the social goals of the revolution in which they were participating. It was particularly stressed in Vietnam that even the agrarian revolution could not be accomplished by the peasantry itself unless the guidance of the working class was ensured—over the years the Vietnamese peasantry has followed the leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam, forging thereby the working class-peasant alliance in a most effective manner.[4]

Historical experience tells us that the most successful manifestation of the above positions in the colonial question was the victory of socialist revolutions in China and Vietnam. The Communist Party of India had to suffer too often for failing to take lessons from the experience of the past and deviating from the above positions, leading to alternate spells of reformism and sectarianism in the communist movement in India. Even today a full-scale analysis of these mistakes at crucial junctures of our history remains to be done. This has not yet perhaps lost its topical relevance.

INDEX