Marxism and the Question of Nationalism
in a Colonial Context:
The Case of British India

by
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This is to certify that this thesis, entitled "Marxism and the Question of Nationalism in a Colonial Context: The Case of British India", is entirely my own original work.

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June 1989
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Abstract

This work examines how Marxism, a theory born in Europe, came to conceptualize Asia. It traces the ways in which Marxists theorised and engaged with nationalism in the colonies, and specifically, with Indian nationalism. It assesses the implications and consequences of this for Marxist theory.

The first part of this work follows the process by which Asia came to be incorporated into Marxist theory. The manner of this incorporation was such that nationalism was declared to be the central theoretical and political issue in the colonies. The question of 'the East' came to be treated, within Marxism, as 'the national and colonial question'.

The second part examines how Marxists in India theorised and engaged with Indian nationalism. In seeking to understand Indian nationalism in Marxist terms, Indian communists also sought to define their own tasks and role, as communists, in relation to the nationalist movement. They sought to define the relationship between class struggle and nationalist struggle, and between the goal of national liberation and their own goal of socialism. In this part we examine the different answers they gave to these questions.

Its 'engagement' with nationalism had certain consequences for Marxist theory. We conclude by suggesting that the manner of this engagement - one in which Marxists endorsed colonial nationalism, and then sought to harness class struggle to nationalist struggle, thereby failing at any point to develop a critique of the nation-state - resulted in Marxism itself becoming 'national'. Marxism, we conclude, is in its content, structure and intent a non-national, universal theory; but it is also one which has come to identify the political project to which it is wedded with the nation. Marxism has become 'nationalist', in the sense that it has come to see in the nation-state the necessary form through which, and in which, other goals - such as democracy and socialism - are realised and embodied.
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Introduction

Nationalism and Marxism have proved to be two of the most important and enduring ideologies of modern history. Both were born in Europe. In our century, both moved to Asia. This work is about Marxism's move to Asia, and its encounter with nationalism there.

That this is a study of Marxism's engagement with nationalism reflects the historical fact that this encounter was an asymmetrical one. In Asia it was Marxism which sought to understand, theorise, influence and woo or capture nationalist movements. This was partly due to the fact that, in most cases, nationalist sentiment and nationalist parties were already established in Asian countries before Marxism arrived there. Marxists thus had to address the question of nationalism, if for no other reason that it was an important aspect of the political landscape in which they sought to act.

There were, however, other reasons; the asymmetry of this encounter, as well as other important features of it, were also due to the nature of these two ideologies, and the differences between them. A few words on this - introductory comments, rather than attempts at definitions - are in order.

Nationalism draws from a number of intellectual sources, most notably from the complex of ideas which constituted the Enlightenment and Romanticism. It does so somewhat indiscriminately and inconsistently, with variations according to time, place and the preferences of nationalists. The generality of the phenomenon, as has often been remarked, is not matched by any corresponding depth of its ideas.
It would be more accurate to speak of 'phenomena' as well as 'phenomenon', for another feature of nationalism is the manner in which it combines the universal and the particular. Most nationalists have accepted that all nations, and not simply their own, are entitled to constitute themselves as sovereign political and territorial units. Some, most notably Mazzini, elevated the 'unique' qualities which each nation allegedly possessed and was able to contribute to the world into a defining feature of nationalism - nationalism as a truly universal philosophy and project. At the same time nationalism is, by its nature, *sui generis* - it is always Indian nationalism, or German nationalism, and so on, precisely because its object, the nation, is seen as the form and expression of an irreducible (cultural, linguistic or other) *particularity*. The universalism of nationalism lies in particularism, and is not merely achieved by particularistic means. It is only when each nation has formed a state that the universal message and mission of nationalism has been achieved.

By contrast with this, Marxism is more self-consciously related to its intellectual predecessors, and also to the historical and social circumstances of its own birth; and it is a universal philosophy in a very different sense. In the eyes of its founder it was at once inheritor of the Enlightenment and critique of it, product of a certain stage in the development of bourgeois society and prophet and instrument of its doom.

From the outset, strong claims were made for the universal relevance, and applicability, of Marxism. Whatever else it was, it was also held to be a theory of history. As such, it was a theory of Man in history, and not just of Marx's times, nor just of European Man. Indeed, it was other things, such as an analysis and critique of bourgeois society, by virtue of its being a theory of history - a theory capable of identifying the *differentia specifica* of different societies and different epochs in history, and of the mechanisms of change and transition between them.

Marxism was also conceived as a 'universal' theory in a second sense; it might be more accurate to say, a 'general' theory. Here its universalism lay, not in its claims for itself as a theory, but in how it conceived its object. Marx believed (a belief shared
by Hegel and by many of Marx's predecessors and contemporaries) that with the advent of capitalism history was becoming one, was becoming world history. 'Bourgeois society' was not, for Marx, an 'ideal type', which in the concrete displayed an infinite number of variations. In his theory the 'bourgeois' nature of society structured all other aspects of it. According to the taste of the interpreter, Marx argued that capitalist 'economic' relations determined all others, or else that the wage labour-capital relation, as a relation which was at once economic, legal, cultural and so on, shaped all other 'levels' of a society. Thus if the world was becoming bourgeois, it was also thereby becoming a single world. The struggle for socialism, therefore, was 'universal' in a number of senses. It was common to most people of the world; it had a universal 'soul'; and it could only be achieved at the level of humankind.

This did not mean that Marx or his followers ignored or overlooked the existence of differences. Marx recognised that the creation of a single, bourgeois world was a tendency, not yet complete. He also recognised that there were important differences between societies which were bourgeois.

In the history of Marxism the latter differences - those between societies which are bourgeois or (as in Lenin's Marxism) between the different units of 'world capitalism' - have been conceived of, much of the time, as 'national'. That is, the move from the general to recognising and grasping the specific has been seen as (and has taken the form of) a move from 'bourgeois society' or 'world capitalism' to specific national economies, polities and cultures.

This has been particularly pronounced in the way in which Marxists have defined their political project. The vision of a socialist future, which until Stalin and 'socialism in one country' was seen to make sense only as a global phenomenon, was nonetheless from the outset seen as something which would be achieved through a series of revolutions in European nations. Prophesising the collapse of capitalism in the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels wrote:
Though not in substance, yet in form, the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie is at first a national struggle. The proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie.¹

In this passage Marx and Engels 'concede' that since the class struggle occurs in a world also divided into nation-states, its 'form' will reflect that fact, whilst reasserting that the 'substance' of this struggle is universal, and that it can only be achieved on a European scale. Why this universal struggle and goal should take a national form, however, is not explained. That the proletariat must first vanquish its 'own' bourgeoisie simply restates what has to be explained, namely that class divisions and struggles necessarily take a national form. Pace Marx and Engels, there is no 'of course' about it.

As with the founders of Marxism, so with Marxism since. 'The nation', by-and-large, has figured within Marxism as a 'brute reality' of modern existence, a given datum which has been treated as being of sufficient importance to shape the way in which the struggle for socialism is conducted, but without this being explained, or even investigated. Benedict Anderson makes the same point well when he writes that it is not so much that Marxism has failed to theorise nationalism as that nationalism (and, we would add, the phenomenon of nationhood) "has proved to be an uncomfortable anomaly for Marxist theory and, for precisely that reason, has been largely elided, rather than confronted".²

Marx, and Marxists since, believed that socialist revolution was on the political agenda in much of Europe, although this would initially take a national form. In what, after Marx, came to be characterised as the 'backward' and 'oppressed' countries - most of them in the non-Western world - national liberation was found to be the next historical phase in the evolution of these countries, and was found to be the main political project there. As Marxism proceeded to realise its claim to being a universal theory, by extending its scope to include what in communist terminology was frequently referred to as 'the East'³, it did so by declaring that the 'specificity' of the
Eastern countries lay not simply in their 'nation-ness' (their division into nations), but also in their nationalism.

This had a number of important consequences, the first of them being that Marxism in West and East followed different trajectories, predicting and pursuing socialist revolution in the former, and national liberation in the latter. Furthermore, because the chief 'particularity' of the East was seen to be the centrality of its struggles for national liberation, Marxism's involvement in the East took the form, first and foremost, of an engagement with the nationalisms of the East. To amend Anderson's observation, what was still an anomaly within Marxist theory, something unexplained, came nevertheless also to be endorsed, and engaged with. By contrast, nationalists engaged with Marxism where it became a movement to be reckoned with; or because of the support they received from the Soviet Union; or because they found some of its ideas persuasive, or useful. This varied according to circumstance; it was not a sustained engagement. The relationship between the two was asymmetrical because Marxism was never a central question for nationalists, as nationalism in the East came to be for Marxists.

A third consequence was that Marxism's engagement with nationalism in the East took the form of engagements with so many nationalisms. This would no doubt have occurred in any case, precisely because Marxists identified the 'concrete' application of Marxism to 'specific' situations as proceeding from a recognition (and identification) of national particularities. But this was given an added impetus, and took a specific form, from the identification of nationalism as the chief particularity of the East. Nationalism by its nature being *sui generis*, Marxism's involvement with nationalism in the East took the form of an engagement with Chinese nationalism, Indian nationalism, and so on.

This 'evolution' of Marxism - how it came to extend its theoretical and political scope to the East, and how and why the 'colonial question' came to be seen as a 'national question' - forms the subject of Part One of this study. Part Two focuses
upon how Marxists sought to understand, theorise and deal with a particular colonial nationalism. It examines the encounter of Marxism with Indian nationalism - the forms this took, and some of the implications and consequences of this for Marxist theory.

Chapter 1 looks at how the non-Western world first appears within Marxism. It examines Karl Marx's writings on Asia. Chapter 2 looks at Lenin's development of Marxist theory, and in particular at the place the East comes to occupy within Marxism in Lenin's theory of imperialism. Chapter 3 traces the process by which, and the grounds on which, the Communist International came to be characterise the 'colonial question' as a national question.

Chapter 4 looks at the writings and activities of M.N. Roy, a prominent Indian Marxist, in the nineteen-twenties. It traces how the general framework within which the East was to be approached, established by the Comintern, first came to be developed specifically for India; and also at how, in the process, Roy sought to amend that framework.

Roy's analyses of Indian nationalism and his interventions in Indian politics occurred from abroad. In Chapter 5 we look at the theory and practice of the first communists and communist organisations in India. In defining and creating a role for themselves, these individuals and organisations tried to define the relation between the socialist goal and the nationalist one, and between the class struggle and nationalist struggle. How this was done - and thus what the term 'communist' came to mean in India - is assessed in this chapter.

Chapter 5 concludes with the Communist International's 'left turn' in 1928, following which communists came to denounce non-communist nationalist organisations, and to declare that national liberation could be achieved only by the exploited classes of colonial society, under the leadership of a communist party. At the same time, however, the engagement between Marxism and nationalism was continuing, in another quarter. Chapter 6 examines the thought of Jawaharlal Nehru in
the period 1927-1937, during which period Nehru sought to synthesize Marxism and nationalism. The nature of this attempt, the intellectual content and historical meaning of 'Nehruvian socialism', and what these reveal about Marxism and its relation to nationalism are issues taken up here.

With Chapter 7 our attention reverts to the communist movement in India. In the aftermath of the Seventh Congress of the Communist International Indian communists resumed seeking to define their relation to the nationalist struggle and nationalist organisations, other than by appropriating the former and denouncing the latter. This chapter analyses the politics of the 'united anti-imperialist front', the presumptions which informed it and the consequences of the pursuit of this strategy.

That this work comes to focus upon India, out of a wide range of possibilities, reflects the interests and areas of knowledge of the author. But there is perhaps a special interest and value in a study of Marxism's engagement with a colonial nationalism which ended in 'failure' for Marxism. Some of its successes - particularly the case of China - have been extensively written about. But success of one sort often obscures other failures which are contained within it. An examination of what is quite evidently one of Marxism's failures might have something to add to our understanding of Marxism's relationship to Asia and to Asian nationalism, apart from what it reveals about Marxism in India and in relation to Indian nationalism.

Our study comes to an end in 1941. It would perhaps have been desirable to trace Marxism's involvement with Indian nationalism up to 1947, the year when India became an independent nation. To cover the years 1941-1947, however, would have resulted in a work of unreasonable length, and would have delayed its completion. In any case, Indian nationalism did not cease to exist in 1947, and nor did Marxism's involvement with it. As we suggest in the conclusion to this work, Marxism in India - and not only in India - is deeply engaged with, indeed 'enmeshed' in, nationalism.
This work comes to focus upon Marxism in India, but it is not a history of the communist movement in India. A number of studies of the communist movement in colonial India, or of aspects of it, already exist. This work is not an addition to their number. It overlaps with such existing studies at certain points, and of course makes use of them. However the framework within which the material is approached, and the questions asked of it, are quite different.

We are concerned with Marxism primarily as a body of theory, which in the period studied was not simply limited to the Communist Party of India, and in fact was always something more than it. This also means that our focus is throughout on theories and concepts, as revealed in the writings of important individuals, in party programmes and documents, and so on. We do not examine the day-to-day activities of communists, the 'nitty gritty' of building and consolidating unions, establishing peasant organisations, etc. Similarly, we are not concerned with classes, institutions and struggles as such, but rather with how Marxists approached and analysed them. We do not attempt to assess the empirical accuracy of their characterisations of the Indian bourgeoisie and so on, though we do consider the political efficacy of strategies based upon these analyses.

Of course, a history of ideas cannot be written without reference to the material circumstances which produce, and are produced by, the ideas of men and women. No attempt is made to do so. Where the theoretical positions we study were constantly interacting with and were directly influenced by relations between parties, institutions and the like, we make use of the historians sources and methods, as in Chapters 5 and 7. Nonetheless, the distinction remains: this is a work in the history of ideas, rather than history as such.

In introducing a study of an aspect of a major theoretical and political tradition, it is as well to indicate where one stands in relation to that tradition. This is a work about Marxism, and it is also a work within Marxism. Nationalism, it has often been observed - by Marxists as well as others - is one of Marxism's great theoretical and
political failures. We do not attempt to 'redress' that failure by providing a new and better Marxist theory of nationalism. But in tracing, with reference to a specific case, what form this failure took, and some of the reasons for it, we do hope to indicate what sort of rethinking is required before Marxists can begin to redress it.
Notes

1. "Communist Manifesto", in K. Marx, *The Revolutions of 1848* (edited by David Fernbach), Penguin and New Left Review, 1973, p. 78. Marx and Engels go on to write that "the proletariat must first of all acquire political supremacy, must rise to be the leading class of the nation, must constitute itself as the nation...", though they immediately add, "not in the bourgeois sense of the word" (p. 84).


3. This term was commonly used in the international communist movement, without it being specified whether it was Asia that was being referred to (as was usually the case), or the non-Western world as a whole. Despite its obvious Orientalist overtones, it has been used in a similar fashion in this work, reflecting the communist usage.

Chapter 1

Marx and India

Lenin once wrote that Marx "continued and completed the three main ideological currents of the nineteenth century...classical German philosophy, classical English political economy, and French socialism". Whatever other merits this well-known characterisation may have, it does accurately, if unselfconsciously, point to the fact that Marx's theory had its foundations in a long tradition of European thought.

Marx was a European thinker not primarily in the sense that he paid more attention to Europe than to Asia, or because he shared in some of the cultural prejudices of his times, but in a more fundamental sense. It was as heir to a long European intellectual tradition and critic of it, as the man who 'laid bare' the 'anatomy' of the new bourgeois society born in Europe and America and who also foretold its doom, that Marx was a deeply European thinker.

However Marx and Engels, in developing their theory, also claimed a universal relevance for it, and proclaimed the universal nature of the political project to which it was wedded. As a philosophy and as a theory of history, Marxism claimed its relevance to Man and to human history, not just European Man and European history. Marx did not postulate the existence of some universal and trans-historical human 'essence', nor did he suggest that categories and concepts derived from his study of European history were adequate to understanding non-European societies. But he did suggest, and strong claims to that effect have been made by his followers, that his
theory was universal in its scope and message, because it laid bare the 'secret' of social development in its materialist conception of history.

This chapter examines how a profoundly European theory, which nonetheless claimed universal validity, first came to include Asia within its purview. It looks at Marx's writings on Asia, and particularly India, the Asian country about which Marx knew and wrote most.

Asian Exceptionalism

Prior to 1853 Marx and Engels seldom referred to the non-Western world, and where they did so it was usually only to repeat a few phrases from Hegel. However in 1853, when the English parliament began to debate the question of whether or not to renew the charter of the East India Company, Marx and Engels began to read more seriously about the East, and especially India. Marx read or reread Richard Jones and James and John Stuart Mill, read Campbell's *Modern India*, the Rev. C. Foster's *A Historical Geography of Arabia*, Stamford Raffles' *History of Java*, Wilks' *Historical Sketches of South India*, the *Voyages* of Francois Bernier (who for a period was personal physician to the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb), some of the works of the pioneering orientalist William Jones, and British parliamentary reports on India.³

In a letter to Engels in June 1853 Marx wrote, "Bernier correctly discovers the basic form of all phenomena in the East - he refers to Turkey, Persia, Hindustan - to be the absence of private property in land. This is the real key even to the Oriental heaven". By the absence of private property Marx understood (following Bernier) that the King owned the land. In the same letter Marx wrote, "the King is the one and only proprietor of all the land in the kingdom..." ⁴
In his reply Engels concurred that "The absence of property in land is indeed the key to the whole of the East", and went on to offer an explanation as to why private landed property never developed in the Orient:

I think it is mainly due to the climate, taken in connection with the nature of the soil...Artificial irrigation is here the first condition of agriculture and this is a matter either for the communes, the provinces or the central government.5

Marx, who was regularly writing for the New York Daily Tribune at this time6, took up this theme in one of his articles for that paper, "The British Rule in India". He wrote:

Climate and territorial conditions, especially the vast tracts of desert, extending from the Sahara, through Arabia, Persia, India and Tartary, to the most elevated Asiatic highlands, constituted artificial irrigation by canals and waterworks the basis of Oriental agriculture...The prime necessity of an economical and common use of water, which, in the Occident drove private enterprises to voluntary association, as in Flanders and Italy, necessitated in the Orient where civilization was too low and the territorial extent to vast to call into life voluntary association, the interference of the centralizing power of Government. Hence an economical function devolved upon all Asiatic governments, the function of providing public works.7

Marx recognised that the need for irrigation was not in itself sufficient explanation for the rise of the Oriental state and for its ownership of land, as elsewhere this need had been met by 'voluntary association'. This did not occur in Asia because 'civilisation was too low' - Marx's significant addition to Engels observations, and one linked to his discovery of the village community. The same article refers to state provided irrigation and the "domestic services of agricultural and manufacturing pursuits" as the "two circumstances...that have brought about, since the remotest times, a social system of particular features - the so-called village system..."(p. 87).8

This addition was important, for it pointed to the social foundations of the political phenomenon of the Oriental state. The village system, Marx wrote, "had
always been the solid foundation of Oriental despotism". Herein too lay the secret to
the 'timelessness' of Asia - despotisms rose and fell, but their social foundation, the
village community, remained unchanged. Echoing a famous passage from a British
parliamentary report, which described the Indian village as unchanging, Marx wrote,
"However changing the political aspect of India's past must appear, its social condition
has remained unaltered since its remotest antiquity, until the first decennium of the
nineteenth century" (p. 86).^9

The key elements in Marx's view of Asiatic society which emerge from the
correspondence and articles of 1853 are as follows.

The village community, based upon a unity of agriculture and manufacture that
made it self-sufficient, was the social basis of Asiatic society. The state arose as a
response to the need for irrigation, a need the villages could not meet, individually or
in association. Because of the 'directly economical' function it performed, the state
came to own the land, and to appropriate the social surplus on the basis of this
proprietary right. The low level of development of the villages and the state's
appropriation of the surplus combined to make Asiatic society stagnant - they
prevented the development of classes, and the growth of towns that were anything
more than appendages to the royal court.10

Marx's views on Asian society were to be developed further in 1857, in a section
of the Grundrisse subtitled "Formen die der Kapitalistischen Produktion
vorhergehen". The "Formen" is concerned with the historicity of capitalism: in Marx's
words, "What we are concerned with here is this: the relationship of labour to
capital...presupposes a historic process which dissolves the different forms, in which
the labourer is an owner and the owner labours".11 The "Formen" investigated the
ways in which this 'historic process' had or had not occurred, and Asian society was
one of the four forms of pre-capitalist society studied in this context.
In the "Formen" Marx characterised Asian society not in terms of state ownership of land, but in terms of communal ownership. His argument in the *Grundrisse* was more complex and sophisticated than that which he had developed a few years earlier in his *NYDT* articles. Marx argued that in Asiatic society, as indeed in all societies where labour and the instrument of labour had not been separated, the community was the prerequisite for the appropriation of nature through labour. Thus the community was the real owner of the land. However the unity of numerous such communities could be symbolized by the state, usually a monarchical state. Where this state was genuinely (and not only symbolically) necessary to the unity and survival of the community, as was the case in Asia, where it provided the irrigation which was the precondition to agricultural production, it came to appear as the real owner of land:

the all embracing unity which stands above all these small common bodies may appear as the higher or sole proprietor, the real communities only as hereditary possessors. Since the unity is the real owner, and the real precondition of common ownership, it is perfectly possible for it to appear as something separate and superior to the numerous real, particular communities...The despot here appears as the father of all the numerous lesser communities thus realizing the common unity of all. It therefore follows that the surplus product...belongs to this highest unity. Oriental despotism therefore appears to lead to a legal absence of property. In fact, however, its foundation is tribal or common property, in most cases created through a combination of manufacture and agriculture within the small community which thus becomes entirely self-sustaining and contains within itself all conditions of production and surplus production.12

Here Marx describes the individual as the occupant or possessor of the land, the community as the real owner, and the state as a body which appears to own the land, but in fact has a claim to the social surplus. Of the four forms of society originally based upon communal property which Marx discusses in the "Formen" (the other three being the ancient, Germanic and Slavonic, the latter mentioned rather than discussed), "The Asiatic form", he concludes, "necessarily survives longest and most stubbornly".13 The self-sufficiency of its village units and state appropriation of the surplus make it unchanging. There is no significant exchange within or between
villages (although there may be exchange between the state and other societies), and
nor do classes develop.

Thus Marx's model of Asian society, first developed in 1853, was modified in 1857, in the Grundrisse. In the 1859 "Preface" to his A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, a work which developed directly out of the notes which are the Grundrisse, Marx felt that Asian society was important and distinctive enough to merit mention as one of the major epochs in human history. He wrote:

In broad outlines, the Asiatic, ancient, feudal and modern bourgeois modes of production may be designated as epochs marking progress in the economic development of society. 14

The inclusion of the "Asiatic mode of production' alongside the other three and better known of his 'epochs' indicated clearly Marx's belief that Asian societies and Asian history were very different to those of Europe, and could not be understood in terms of the categories which he used distinguish and characterise different periods in European history. And while the Asiatic mode appears as the first and therefore least developed in Marx's list of 'epochs marking progress in the economic development of society', it is nonetheless clearly distinguished from 'primitive communism'. 15 Marx saw Asian society as backward and lacking in dynamism, but he also recognised that it was socially complex and developed; this was precisely one of a number of peculiar characteristics of Asian society which led Marx to invent a new category for it.

Marx did not use the term 'Asiatic mode of production' again, but nor did he alter in his view that Asian societies were very different from the societies of pre-capitalist Europe. In Capital I he echoed the themes of the NYDT articles and the "Formen", describing the village community as a self-sustaining unity of agriculture and handicrafts based on ownership in common of the land, the state as the body appropriating the social surplus, and the structure as a whole as one where "the economic elements of society remain untouched by the stormclouds of the political sky". 16
Marx returned to a study of Asia late in his life, reading about and taking notes on Indian history\textsuperscript{17}, and also in the course of his studies on the original communal constitution.\textsuperscript{18} These notes reveal a better appreciation of the complexity of systems of land tenure in India than that displayed in Marx's earlier writings. It is possible that had Marx, at this point, tried to systematise his views on Asia, he would have been less likely to describe the village as a community based upon common ownership of land; less likely, in fact, to make broad generalisations on such subjects. He was also less confident as regards the transformational power (and 'progressive' impact) of the bourgeois mode of production on pre-capitalist communities, as his letter(s) to Zasulich demonstrate. But these late studies also reveal Marx's continued refusal to treat Asia as a mere 'variant' on the pattern of European history. He took issue with Kovalevsky for suggesting that the existence of benefice and sale of office in Mughal India made it a feudal society, and called Phear a 'donkey' for describing the Bengali village as feudal.\textsuperscript{19}

From this brief survey of Marx's comments on the social structure of pre-British India we can see that Marx saw Indian society (and by his extrapolation, Asian society) as fundamentally different from European societies of the past and present. He sought, albeit very briefly and without the systematic study he gave to capitalism and (less so) to pre-capitalist Europe, to identify the 'peculiarities' of Asia, and thus indicate this 'difference'. It is possible to identify four features which Marx saw as defining or constitutive elements of Asiatic society.

First, Marx saw the village community, resting upon ownership in common of land and a rigid division of labour which created and sustained a 'unity of agriculture and manufactures', as the basic social unit of Asian society. The village community was economically self-sufficient, isolated and more-or-less unaffected by the rise and decline of empires.

Second, Asian society was characterised by 'Oriental despotism'. By this Marx did not mean total state control and supervision of the villages nor, following Hegel,
the 'generalised slavery' of the populace. For Marx the term 'Oriental despotism' referred to the existence of a centralised government which provided the irrigation necessary to agricultural production, and appropriated the social surplus on the basis of its performance of this function.

It was the combination of these two elements - the self-sustaining village and the irrigation providing and surplus appropriating state - which was central to Marx's concept of the Asiatic mode of production, and which was unique to him. As Perry Anderson writes, "The hydraulic state 'above' and the autarchic village 'below' were linked into a single formula, in which there was a conceptual equipoise between the two".20 Following from this 'combination' - and this was the third feature of Asiatic society - it was marked by the absence of classes. The normal route for the break-up of communal ownership of land, and the rise of classes - a development in the division of labour and increased exchange, resulting from the production of a social surplus - was blocked off by the self-sufficiency of the village on the one hand, and state appropriation of the surplus on the other. 'Exploitation', of a sort, existed, because there was a social surplus appropriated by non-producers, but it was effected by and through the state rather than classes.

Marx was of course aware of the Indian caste system, and he regarded it with great distaste, because it subjugated man to nature and tradition. But he did not point to its role as a source of inequality within the village; indeed, he seemed unaware of this aspect of it, referring to the Indian villages as inoffensive and more-or-less egalitarian communities. In this respect Hegel, from whom Marx borrowed much in developing his views on the Orient, was better informed and more perceptive.

Fourth and finally, and following from these first three features of Asian society, it was seen by Marx as unchanging. Communal ownership of land, village autarchy, the appropriation of the surplus by the state, the absence of production of goods for exchange except in cities which were mere appendages of the state (royal camps) - all these combined to produce a mode of production that had no classes, no 'laws of
development', and no internal contradictions propelling it forwards. "Indian society", Marx wrote, "has no history at all, at least no known history". It was the British who, in his view, effected "the greatest, and, to speak the truth, the only social revolution ever heard of in India" (p. 88).

If such a coherent concept of Oriental society or the Asiatic mode of production can be reconstructed from Marx's various writings on the subject, as we suggest it can, it is nevertheless necessary to note that Marx did not always adhere to this model. In particular, the 'conceptual equipoise' between the autarchic village and the state underwent a frequent slippage.

On more than one occasion Marx stressed the importance of the village community in Asia but neglected to mention the Oriental state, as in Theories of Surplus Value III, where he wrote, "The original unity between the worker and he conditions of production...has two main forms: the Asiatic communal system (primitive communism) and small-scale agriculture based on the family...". Once the highly developed and ubiquitous Oriental state was forgotten (one of the 'peculiar' features of Asian society which Marx sought to explain with his theory of Asian society was precisely how such a high degree of political development and flux could coincide with social simplicity and stagnation), the inevitable result was to assign the Orient to a distant and universal prehistory, which Europe emerged from but Asia did not. The result, as here, was to identify Asiatic society with primitive communism.

Conversely, Marx sometimes relapsed into the pre-Grundrisse position of describing the monarchical state as the owner of all land, most notably in a passage in Capital III:

Should the direct producers not be confronted by a private landowner, but rather, as in Asia, under direct subordination to a state which stands over them as their landlord and simultaneously as sovereign, then rent and taxes coincide... Sovereignty here consists in the ownership of land concentrated on a national scale.
Some of these inconsistencies can be explained if Marx's comments are read in context. For example, the tendency to ignore the importance of the state in Asian society frequently occurred where Marx was contrasting pre-capitalist societies with the bourgeois mode of production. In such instances Marx often overlooked not only the differences between Oriental society and primitive communism, but also between these and European feudalism. This did not of course indicate that Marx was unable to distinguish between these different types of society, but rather that on occasion Marx 'bracketed' certain differences in order to highlight the difference between all pre-capitalist societies and a mode of production characterised by generalised commodity production.

Nonetheless, all of Marx's departures from his model of Asian society cannot be explained away, and his inconsistencies should be acknowledged. In summation we could say that Marx was consistent in regarding Asia as 'exceptional', but less consistent when it came to specifying what constituted Asian exceptionalism.

From the above sketch the debt that Marx's views on the Orient owe to a long European tradition will immediately be apparent. Contrasting the political systems of the East with those of the West goes back to Aristotle, was revived and elaborated during the Renaissance, and was of course a common feature of Enlightenment thought. It was taken up by some of the English political economists, who added to this model a contrast between two fundamentally different types of economy. And it was to culminate, in one sense, in Hegel, in whose thought Asia was assigned its place in world historical development - as the beginning of history, in contrast to Europe, which was its end.

Thus almost all the elements which in Marx's view characterised Asian society are prefigured in the writings of others. The description of the Indian village as isolated, self-sufficient and so on is to be found in Hegel, and in the writings and
reports of scores of British administrators of India - Munro, Metcalfe, Elphinstone and others. The importance of the Asiatic state in providing irrigation works is a point made by J.S. Mill and Adam Smith. Descriptions of Asian towns as mere adjuncts to royal courts, lacking the permanence and civic autonomy of towns in feudal Europe, are present in the accounts of Bernier and Richard Jones. The notion that the East was 'timeless' and unchanging is to be found not only in Hegel, but also in Montesquieu and Jones.24

Marx's views on India and Asia, then, are very much indebted to a European tradition of 'Orientalism'. Nevertheless, there is something distinctive and original about Marx's views. For if all the elements Marx sees as characteristic of (and peculiar to) Asia are prefigured in the writings of others, the manner in which these elements are combined is such that Marx's distinctive mark, the 'Marxian method' if you like, has left its imprint on the final model. The 'despotism' that so intrigued Europeans is explained not in terms of the servility of Asians (Aristotle) or the failure of 'Spirit' to attain subjectivity in Asia (Hegel), but with reference to its social foundation in the village, and its functional role in providing irrigation. Similarly, Asia's alleged historical immutability is explained in terms of the combination of social foundation (village) and political superstructure; the form of their articulation, unique to Asia, is advanced as the reason why the Orient has failed to undergo any social transformation.

It was precisely Marx's recognition, indeed insistence, on Asian exceptionalism which led some later Marxists to find his views on Asia unacceptable. In the latter half of the nineteen-twenties the concept of the Asiatic mode of production was the subject of a heated debate in the Soviet Union, centreing around its empirical validity (primarily with reference to China, since most of the participants in the debate were Sinologists), but overdetermined by political considerations and the tendency of the period to transform Marxism into a dogma asserting that historical development was universal and unilinear. The debate concluded with the concept, and its suggestion that
Asian history and society might differ from that of Europe, being 'purged' from Marxist discourse, and with its proponents being similarly purged.25

A revival of the concept of the Asiatic mode of production in Marxist discussions in the last two decades has been closely connected with the very reasons which earlier led to the suppression of it. Those seeking to develop a less dogmatic and more open Marxism have used the concept to demonstrate that Marx himself did not believe (as the later Stalinist orthodoxy had it) that history everywhere followed the same stages in the same order. They have similarly found in this concept a grounds on which to argue that Marx did not regard feudalism as ubiquitous in history, and to suggest that the indiscriminate application of the concept of feudalism to Asia, Africa and so on have not contributed to an understanding of the history of these regions, and moreover have rendered the category itself so broad as to be meaningless.26

There is a certain irony in the fact that the revival in fortunes of the concept of the Asiatic mode of production should be connected with efforts to 'improve' Marxist historiography. For in Marx's writings this concept not only recognises Asian exceptionalism, the concept itself is 'exceptional'. That is, Marx's views on Asian society are in some ways decidedly un-Marxist.

In his general theory Marx suggests that the state comes into being with the development of class divisions in a society, and that it serves to consolidate and secure the interests of the dominant classes. Thus the Marxist classics refer to the state as a 'special armed force', an 'engine of class despotism', and so on. But in Marx's own formulation, this is not true of Asia. Here the state does not function to preserve the dominance of pre-existing ruling classes; instead, economic and social privilege derive from service to the state. Further, because it provides irrigation, the Asian state is a necessary precondition to production. In Marx's account of the Asian state it is not a 'superstructure', arising out of an economic base; it is present in the base itself. Another defining characteristic of Asian society, for Marx, is its historical immutability- defying what is generally understood as a fundamental Marxist
proposition, that societies develop and are transformed through the progressive unfolding of their internal contradictions.

Thus in developing his model of a specifically 'Oriental' mode of production, Marx contradicted some of the defining and distinctive concepts of his general theory of modes of production and social change. Marx recognised and sought to explain the 'peculiarities' of the East, as he saw them; but he did not reconcile these with, or discuss their implications for, his general theory. As Avineri comments, "Marx's basic failure to incorporate his insightful understanding of non-European society into the universal framework of his method of historical explanation is plainly visible."^27

Why are the contradictions between his understanding of Asian society and his general theory simply registered by Marx, with their theoretical implications left unpursued? Posing this question brings us to Marx's views on colonialism, for a major part of the answer lies here.

Capitalism and Colonialism

Marx anticipated that capitalist Europe would destroy the 'peculiarities' of the East. The bourgeois mode of production was impelled, by its very nature, to extend its sway over the entire world, dissolving pre-capitalist modes of production everywhere. The Communist Manifesto declared that the bourgeoisie had drawn "even the most barbarian nations into civilization...has made barbarian and semi-barbarian countries dependent on the civilized ones...the East on the West", and was thereby creating a "world after its own image."^28 The distinctive features of the East, Marx thought, were in the process of being effaced in his own lifetime; they therefore had little theoretical or political importance. Real historical processes were bringing Asia 'into line' with his general theory.
In the *Communist Manifesto* these observations were made in the course of a
discussion - indeed, a tribute - to the restlessness, dynamism and transformational
powers of the bourgeois mode of production. In his *NYDT* articles Marx made the
same point with specific reference to the effects of capitalism and British colonialism
on India:

England has broken down the entire framework of Indian society, without
any symptoms of reconstitution yet appearing. The loss of his old world,
with no gain of a new one, imparts a particular kind of melancholy to the
present misery of the Hindoo, and separates Hindostan, ruled by Britain,
from all its ancient traditions, and from the whole of its past history. (pp.
84-85).

British free trade, assisted by 'British steam and science', had destroyed the self-
sufficiency and isolation of the village, the basis and the framework of Indian society:

English interference having placed the spinner in Lancashire and the
weaver in Bengal, or sweeping away both Hindoo spinner and weaver,
dissolved these small semi-barbarian, semi-civilized communities, by
blowing up their economical basis.(p. 88).

Marx also pointed to the corrosive effects of contact with the West on traditional
Chinese society. However in China he saw this process as a slower and less pervasive
one. For the full destructive impact of the bourgeois mode of production to be felt its
extension needed to be accompanied by *political* control, thus facilitating the incursion
of bourgeois society in the East. That is, capitalist expansion needed to take a *colonial*
form. In *Capital III* Marx ascribed what he saw as the greater resistance offered by
traditional Chinese society to "the corrosive effects of commerce" to the absence of
European political dominance in China:

In India the English lost no time in exercising their direct political and
economic power as rulers and landlords to disrupt these small economic
communities. English commerce exerted a revolutionary influence on these
communities...And even so, the work of dissolution proceeds very
gradually. And still more so in China, where it is not reinforced by direct
political power.29
The effects of capitalism and colonialism were not, however, only destructive. In "The Future Results of British Rule in India" Marx wrote,

England has to fulfil a double mission in India: one destructive, the other regenerating - the annihilation of old Asiatic society, and the laying of the material foundations of Western society in Asia. (p. 125).

The two processes went hand in hand, even if the first was more visible - "The work of regeneration hardly transpires through a heap of ruins. Nevertheless it has begun" (p. 126). Marx did not suggest that the British sought the regeneration of Indian society; on the contrary they were motivated "only by the vilest interests" (p. 89), as "The aristocracy wanted to conquer it, the moneyocracy to plunder it, and the millocracy to undersell it" (p. 126-27). Nevertheless, such a regeneration, such a "laying of the material foundations of Western society in Asia", was proving to be an unintended consequence of British rule, and in this way the British were serving as the "unconscious tool of history" (p. 89).

For the British gave India a political unity "more consolidated, and extending farther than it ever did under the great Moguls", a unity which Marx described as "the first condition of its regeneration" (p. 126). The land settlements introduced by the British - the Permanent Settlement in Bengal and the ryotwari settlement in Madras - were introduced to facilitate and maximise the East India Company's collection of land revenue, but they had the effect of introducing private property in land, hitherto "the great desideratum of Asiatic society" (p. 126).

One result of the transformation of India from a source of revenue and plunder into a market for British manufactured goods in 1813 (with the abolition of the East India Company's monopoly of trade with India) was the devastation of the Indian village. Its cottage industries could not compete with cheap manufactured goods. But another result, in Marx's view, was that the accompanying introduction of new forms of technology and communication established the material and technological conditions for the rebirth of Indian society. He wrote:
I know the English millocracy intended to endow India with railways with the exclusive view of extracting at diminished expenses, the cotton and other raw materials for their manufactures. But when you have once introduced machinery into the locomotion of a country, which possesses iron and coals, you are unable to withhold it from its fabrication. You cannot maintain a net of railways over an immense country without introducing all those industrial processes necessary to meet the immediate and current wants of railway locomotion, and out of which there must grow the application of machinery to those branches of industry not immediately connected with railways. The railway system will therefore become, in India, truly the forerunner of modern industry. (pp. 128-29).  

Marx recognised that none of these symptoms of regeneration of themselves improved the lot of the Indian people, an improvement which was conditional upon "not only the development of the productive powers, but of their appropriation by the people"(p. 129). Thus symptoms of India's regeneration offered only a basis, a 'potential' for improving the economic and social conditions of the Indian population. This potential would be realised if one of two things occurred:  

The Indians will not reap the fruits of the new elements of society scattered among them by the British bourgeoisie, till in Great Britain itself the now ruling classes shall have been supplanted by the industrial proletariat, or till the Hindoos themselves shall have grown strong enough to throw off the English yoke altogether. (pp. 129-30).

The noted historian of medieval India, Irfan Habib, concludes a recent article on "Marx's Perception of India" by paying tribute to this passage - "In 1853, to set colonial emancipation, not just colonial reform, as an objective of the European socialist movement; and, still more, to look forward to a national liberation attained through their struggle by the Indian people, as an event that might even precede the emancipation of the European working class - such insight and vision could belong to Marx alone".  

The above passage from "The Future Results of British Rule in India" is indeed remarkable, given it was written thirty-two years before the founding of the Indian
National Congress, and some seventy-five years before full national independence became a mass demand in India. But let us also note that this was one of very few occasions in which Marx linked the colonial question to the national question - in which he raised the possibility of a colonial country gaining national independence.\textsuperscript{33}

The occasional stray reference (such as this one) aside, the only instance where Marx seriously and consistently linked the colonial and national questions was in the case of Ireland. And the Irish case, of course, was different - Ireland was European, it had been settled by the English and, though oppressed and exploited, it was (formally at least) not a colony but part of the Union.

Even so, let us acknowledge Marx's prescience. Can one not say that his prophecy has been fulfilled? Yet...a closer examination reveals some inconsistencies.

Marx, to recapitulate, suggests that British rule is simultaneously destroying the existing mode of production in India, and establishing capitalism in its stead. He sees three factors as particularly important to the regeneration of Indian society: the introduction of private property in land, the flooding of the Indian market by British machine goods, and the introduction into India of technology corresponding to the age of capital - British railways, steam and telegraph. Marx raises the possibility that this process of regeneration may culminate in 'the Hindoos' fighting for and gaining national liberation.

But the introduction of private property in land bore no relation to, say, the historical process which in England saw landed property become private property in its capitalist form. Marx himself recognised this. In one of his NYDT articles he wrote of the Permanent settlement and the ryotwari settlement, "But a curious sort of English landlord was the zemindar, receiving only one-tenth of the rent, while he had to make over nine-tenths of it to the Government. A curious sort of French peasant was the ryot, without any permanent title to the soil, and with the taxation changing every year in proportion to his harvest".\textsuperscript{34} Similarly in Capital III he described the land settlements effected by the British as "futile and really absurd (in practice, infamous)
experiments", which in Bengal created a "caricature of large-scale landed estates", and in Madras "a caricature of small parcelled property".35 Thus, as Marx on occasion recognised, even if the British had introduced private property in land to India, they had not introduced forms of property corresponding to or conducive to capitalist development.

Similar considerations apply to Marx's analysis of the revolutionary effects of British textiles on Indian industry. Marx persuasively argued for the devastating consequences of the availability of cheap mass-produced cottons for village industry. But it did not logically follow (and certainly did not follow historically) that such destruction entailed the transformation of village production (for consumption in the village) into commodity production. Marx did not adduce any evidence to suggest that the destruction of village handicrafts was or would be being followed by the establishment of the factory system in India; but he implied such a transformation, and it was necessary for him to do so to sustain his argument that India was being 'regenerated'. Again, at points Marx himself acknowledged that the decline of village industries did not include within itself, as some sort of dialectical antithesis, the development of capitalist industry.36

Finally, what of English steam, telegraph and railways? These figure very prominently in Marx's sketch of the regeneration of Indian society. Indeed; too prominently. For in Marx's analysis of the development of capitalism in Europe technological advances (introduction of machinery etc.) are seen as dependent upon, and interacting with, changes in social relations - an increased division of labour, etc. In the case of India, however, technology is made to function as an explanation, a cause, of changes in social relations. It is not the development of wage-labour and capital but rather railways which will prove 'the forerunner of modern industry' in India.

For Marx, capitalism was never simply the factory or machinery; it was, above all else, the wage-labour / capital relation, which was a social relation. The emphasis
he placed on the role of externally introduced new technology in facilitating capitalist development in India would not have been misplaced (particularly in the course of discussing a country which, in his view, lacked the internal resources to develop in such a way) if at the same time changes in social relations capable of utilising this technology for the purpose of capitalist development could be located. But they are not. Instead, technology takes their place as cause and proof of the development of capitalism. Marx's account of the regeneration of India conflicts with his general analysis of capitalism, even though he seems to have been unaware of this.

There is, then, a gap between Marx's prophecy and his account of the means by which it is to be fulfilled. That the destruction of traditional Indian society and the beginnings of capitalist development and regeneration are two sides of the same process is asserted rather than established; or, more accurately, is not convincingly established.

Wherein lies the source of this gap, this inadequacy? Part of the answer, we suggest, lies in the fact that Marx 'transfers' an argument he applied to the wage-labour/capital relation to his analysis of the effects of British rule on India.

In his account of the internal mechanisms for change in bourgeois society Marx suggests that the bourgeoisie, in the same measure that it extends its sway and develops its strength, also develops the strength and increases the numbers of its nemesis, the proletariat. Similarly the British in India, though "actuated by the vilest interests", are "the unconscious tools of history in bringing about the revolution". They will revolutionize Indian society, and this may ultimately result in their own overthrow. In both cases Marx employs the same dialectic, or rather discovers the same historical dialectic to be at work; a historical process will develop its opposite, resulting in its overthrow and supersession.

This helps explain not only the content of Marx's analysis of India, but also the tone of his remarks. This dialectic contains a delicious irony, and Marx revels in it. It
allows him to combine an exposure and powerful condemnation of the horrors of primitive accumulation, or of the hypocrisy of John Bull in India, with the almost Olympian detachment of the observer who knows that the 'Cunning of Reason' (in Marx's case, the cunning of history) contains a certain 'law of retribution'.

Powerful and persuasive when used to explain the overthrow of capitalism, when extended to India this argument proves inapt. The meeting of two modes of production (the Asiatic and bourgeois) is not analogous to the meeting of two classes within the same mode of production. In the latter case the two classes are structurally united in their opposition; in the former the relationship between the two elements is 'contingent' rather than structural.

The inaptness of Marx's analogy reveals itself at a crucial point, where his argument breaks down. In the case of capitalism, the means for its overthrow are specified. It is not 'objective forces', or some 'dialectic of history' which Marx imposes upon social phenomena, but a subjective, conscious force - the proletariat. It is the combination of objective historical processes and subjectivity which will combine to overthrow capitalism. Schematically, we can present Marx's account as follows. The development of the bourgeoisie and of capitalism mean simultaneously the development of the proletariat; the periodic crises of bourgeois society and its many other contradictions, with their attendant miseries, create in this class of proletarians the desire and the need for revolution; the socialization of production, and the growing numbers, strength and self-confidence of the proletariat create the means, the capacity to make revolution.

In the case of his account of British colonialism in India the dissolution of the old society is clearly - indeed vividly, if impressionistically - sketched. But the basis upon which regeneration will occur is not convincingly outlined. The reason is that here Marx does not locate a social force internal to India which will become the bearer of capitalist relations, and thus perhaps eventually the moving force behind a national revolution in India. Here the dialectic does not operate through the agency of a social
force, but rather is artificially imposed; the destruction of the old Indian society is, almost by definition, also symptomatic of a regeneration.

There are in fact two passages where Marx does mention new social groups in India, and refers to them in a positive way. Both occur in "The Future Results of British Rule in India". One - "The native army, organized and trained by the British drill-sergeant, was the sine qua non of Indian self-emancipation, and of India ceasing to be the prey of the first foreign intruder" (p. 126). And the other - "From the Indian natives, reluctantly and sparingly educated at Calcutta, under English superintendence a fresh class is springing up, endowed with the requirements for government and imbued with European science" (p. 126).

There is at least a suggestion here that social groups have been created which are products of the impact of Western culture, and which are therefore also possible sources of 'regeneration' along Western lines. But neither of these, it should be noted, is a class, is the product of an emergent Indian capitalism; and in any case the thought is not developed.

Two important episodes in Asian resistance to capitalism and Western colonialism which occurred in Marx's lifetime - the Indian 'Mutiny' of 1857-59, and the Taiping Rebellion in China - did not excite his hopes for a regeneration of Asian society. Marx did indeed attribute the sources of the Taiping revolt to the destructive effects of contact with the West on traditional Chinese society. But far from discerning signs of regeneration in this revolt, Marx described the Taipings as a rabble, seeking the destruction of China "without any seeds for a renaissance".

Initially dismissive of even the disruptive potential of the Indian Mutiny, Marx was forced to modify his opinion as the revolt gained momentum, until he eventually came to describe it as "a national revolt". He also wrote of this uprising against the British, "There is something in human history like retribution; and it is a rule of historical retribution that its instrument be forged not by the offended, but by the
offender himself.41 However this act of retribution was not in his view also a symptom of regeneration. Despite his at times obvious sympathy for the rebels, and despite his exposures of British atrocities and hypocrisy in quelling the Mutiny, Marx was not sympathetic to the revolt as a whole. He saw it, not as the first act of a regenerated India, but as an eruption of the 'old' India.42

Conclusion

India appears as a two-fold object in Marx's writings. On the one hand it appears as 'Oriental society' or the 'Asiatic mode of production', a social order very different from that of the bourgeois societies of Europe, and also from Europe in pre-capitalist times. On the other hand it appears as a society in the throes of a transformation, as one in the process of becoming a 'mirror' of the West. Separating but also forming the bridge between these two India's, and thus severing 'the Hindoo' from his 'ancient traditions', is the intrusion of bourgeois society into India, through the mechanism of British colonialism.

With this intrusion the alien and 'fabulous' Asia whose peculiarities Marx sought to explain becomes recognisable and almost familiar. Asia, Marx suggests, is becoming Western. British India has been launched on the road to becoming British. A radical reformulation of his categories and concepts is not necessary for this Asia to brought within the purview of Marx's theory; it is Asia which is being 'reformulated' under the impact of the West, and which thus becomes recognisable and explicable in Marxist terms.

In both these guises Asia appears in Marx's writings as passive, as lacking any capacity for self-activity. As Oriental society this passivity is a principle of its being, for Marx describes such societies as unchanging and stagnant. As the object of Western conquest it is precisely that - an object, which Europe acts upon and transforms. The only point at which Marx considered that the East might have an impact on the West was in the context of his hope (particularly pronounced during the
eighteen-fifties) that commercial crises connected with the colonial markets might precipitate a social revolution in Europe. And here it was not the self-activity of the East but the operations of the capitalist world market which, he anticipated, might have reverberations in Europe.

Because Marx saw the destruction being wreaked by Western bourgeois society in Asia as simultaneously being a process of regeneration, he did expect that at some future point Asia would progress from being the object of Western domination to becoming an active historical subject. The seeds of Western society and capitalism having been planted in India, Marx at one point even suggested that their fruit may be a national uprising against the British.

However this suggestion, we have argued, is not only not developed by Marx, it is not sustainable in terms of his more general argument. The suggestion that the ultimate symptom of regeneration may be national liberation cannot be sustained because the evidence for an inevitable regeneration is itself shaky. Marx does not locate, as he must to make his argument plausible, new social relations in India. Specifically, he does not point to classes in Indian society which have arisen out of the 'elements of the new society' scattered by the British and which can therefore be the bearers and instruments for social regeneration. Instead, Marx treats technology as evidence for and cause of capitalist development; more generally, 'British rule' comes to function as a metaphor for the development of capitalism in Asia. That is, the incursion of bourgeois society into Asia comes to be equated with the establishment of capitalism in Asia.

A question arises. Was it because Marx could not yet see or point to new classes in India that he made technology function as a substitute for them, in order to be able to maintain his central contention, that bourgeois society was being implanted in the East? Alternatively, was it because he effected such a substitution that he failed to find, or even look for, the sort of evidence which his argument required in order to be convincing?
By their nature questions such as this one do not permit of definite answers, and none will be attempted here. What is important to note, for our purposes, is that the concepts and metaphors which dominate Marx's analysis are those of the capitalist West transforming the East after its own image; that Marx fails convincingly to argue and sustain this analysis; and thus that when he suggests that this regeneration of the East may take a nationalist form this rests upon shaky foundations, because the case for 'regeneration' has not been established, and also because the 'model' informing this suggestion is borrowed from the quite different case of the proletariat's struggle against capitalism.

In conclusion we might note that even if Marx's writings had been theoretically unproblematic, their political implications were highly problematic. Regarded from an evolutionary viewpoint the transformation of Asia along bourgeois lines might be a welcome development, and it was so welcomed by Marx. But this still left Asia a full historical 'stage' behind Europe, where proletarian revolution was on the agenda. Viewed from a more narrowly political perspective, and within a correspondingly shorter time frame, this was a possible reason for concern. Marx expressed such anxiety in a letter to Engels in 1858:

The specific task of bourgeois society is the establishment of a world market, at least in outline, and of production based upon this world market. As the world is round, this seems to have been completed by the colonization of California and Australia and the opening up of China and Japan. The difficult question for us is this: on the Continent the revolution is imminent and will immediately assume a socialist character. Is it not bound to be crushed in this little corner, considering that in a far greater territory the movement of bourgeois society is still in the ascendant?

In the years after Marx's death the manner in which the East was incorporated into Marxist theory came to differ greatly from his own. How this was done, and the more reassuring political conclusions which were drawn from this, are taken up in the chapter to follow.

2. Many of Marx's successors were to interpret him in this way, but as his writings on the non-Western world as well as the section on pre-capitalist societies in the *Grundrisse* clearly demonstrate, Marx did not believe that all societies went through the same stages of history, from primitive communism to (ultimately) socialism. His now oft-quoted letter to the editors of *Otechestvenniye Zapiski* (d. Nov. 1877, but never sent) explicitly warned against ignoring the specificities of different societies and different periods of history, thereby "using as one's master key a general historico-philosophical theory, the supreme virtue of which consists in being super-historical" - in Shlomo Avineri (ed.), *Karl Marx on Colonialism and Modernization*, New York, 1968, p. 445.


6. The *New York Daily Tribune* was a 'progressive' paper (albeit one for whose radical pretensions Marx had great contempt) with a circulation of some 250,000. Between October 1851 and March 1862 Marx and Engels published 487 articles in the *NYDT* (125 by Engels, 12 jointly and the remainder by Marx) on a range of subjects, the articles on India being published in 1853 and 1857-58 - see "Introduction" (by C. Blitzer) to H.M. Christman (ed.), *The American Journalism of Marx and Engels*, New American Library, 1966. For much of this period in Marx's life payments from the *NYDT* were a major source of his income.

7. "The British Rule in India* (NYDT*, June 25, 1852), Avineri, *op. cit.*, p. 85. Hereafter page references to this article and to "The Future Results of the British Rule in India" are given in the text of the chapter; all references are to Avineri's collection.

8. Marx goes on to quote from the 1812 Fifth Report of the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company which, after describing the division of labour within the Indian village, concludes, "Under this simple form of municipal
government, the inhabitants of the country have lived from time immemorial... The inhabitants gave themselves no trouble about the breaking up and divisions of kingdoms; while the village remains entire, they care not to what power it is transferred, or to what sovereign it devolves; its internal economy remains unchanged" - p. 87. On the sources for this image of the Indian village, and its widespread dissemination and popularity in the nineteenth century, see L. Dumont, "The 'Village Community' From Munro to Maine", Contributions to Indian Sociology, Vol. IX (Dec. 1966)

9. Marx makes similar comments in a letter to Engels (June 14, 1853) - see Avineri, op. cit., pp. 430-431.

10. In a letter to Engels (June 3, 1853) Marx describes Indian towns as "virtually nothing but military camps" - ibid., p. 450.

11. PCEF, p. 97.

12. ibid., pp. 69-70.

13. ibid., p. 83.


15. In PCEF, it will be remembered, Marx treats the Asiatic mode as one of the four forms of development out of primitive society.

16. Marx writes of the village, "These small and extremely ancient Indian communities, some of which have continued down to this day, are based in possession in common of the land, on the blending of agriculture and handicraft and on an unalterable division of labour...". As a result of this peculiar structure there is no exchange of products between villages, and no impetus for further development in the division of labour. Appropriation of the surplus by the state further precludes this - "It is the surplus alone that becomes a commodity, and a portion even of that, not until it has reached the hands of the State, into whose hands from time immemorial a certain quantity of these products has found its way in the shape of rent in kind" - Capital I, Moscow, 1978, pp. 337-339.

17. The notes Marx took on India from his readings of Sewell, Elphinstone and others are collected in Marx, Notes on Indian History, Moscow, n.d.

18. Marx's excerpts from and comments on Kovalevsky are reprinted in L. Krader, The Asiatic Mode of Production, Van Gorcum and Co., 1975. His notes from
Phear, Maine and others are collected in L. Kräder (ed.), *The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx*, Assen, 1972.

19. Of Kovalevsky Marx writes, "Because 'benefices', *farming out of offices* (but this is not at all *feudal*, as Rome attests) and *commendation* are found in India, Kovalevsky here finds *feudalism* in the Western European sense. Kovalevsky *forgets*, among other things, *serfdom*, which is not in India... In regard to the *individual role of defence* ... by the feudal lords (who play a role as wardens), this plays a limited role in India... Of the *poetry of the soil* which the Romano-Germanic feudalism had as its own... as little is found in India as in Rome. The *soil* is nowhere *noble* in India, so that it might not be alienable to commoners. Kovalevsky himself finds a principal difference, however: there is no *patrimonial jurisdiction* particularly in regard to *civil law* in the empire of the Great Mogul" - Kräder, *Asiatic Mode of Production*, p. 383. For his comment on Phear see *Ethnological Notebooks*, p. 256.


21. Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value, Part III*, Moscow, 1978, p. 422. Engels' position oscillated wildly. In his *Anti-Duhring* he described Asian society in terms similar to those used by Marx, but added that the state functionaries of Oriental despotism came, in time, to constitute a class. In his later *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State* Asian society was not mentioned as a distinct category at all - the four 'epochs' of Marx's "Preface" were reduced to three.

22. Marx, *Capital III*, Moscow, 1977, p. 791. It is not the case, as Perry Anderson suggests (op. cit., pp. 480-81), that in *Capital* Marx returns to seeing the King as landlord in Asia, only in order to revert to the position he had taken in the *Grundrisse* in notes and writings subsequent to *Capital*. In *Theories of Surplus Value* Marx refers to *communal* property predominating in Asia (see note 21 above). Even the reference to the king as landlord in *Capital III* is contradicted at another point in the same work, where he describes "common ownership of land" as the "broad basis of the mode of production" in India and, in earlier times, China - pp. 333-34. Marx's inconsistencies on this matter do not divide neatly into a pre-*Capital* period, the phase of *Capital*, and a subsequent phase; they run through the body of his work.

23. See, for example, *Capital III*, pp. 786-87. Here Marx contrasts 'natural economies' - in which category he includes European antiquity, the Middle Ages and India - with the capitalist mode of production. The contrast serves to illustrate how the latter mode dissolves the combination of agriculture and handicrafts which
characterizes pre-capitalist modes of production which, nevertheless, are very different in other respects.

24. These two paragraphs are largely based upon accounts of Western images and descriptions of the Orient before Marx (and of Marx's borrowings from these) in Marian Sawer, *Marxism and the Question of the Asiatic Mode of Production*, Martinus Nijhoff (The Hague), 1977, Chapter 1; Kräder, *Asiatic Mode of Production*; and Perry Anderson, *op. cit.*, pp. 462-72. Anderson very conveniently presents the views of major figures in this tradition in tabular form - p. 472.


26. The literature on this is far too vast to list, but for efforts at denying the legitimacy of Stalin's five-stage theory of history by using Marx's references to the Asiatic mode see the debate on 'stages of social development' in *Marxism Today* in 1961-62, and Sawer, *op. cit.* For this and other reasons Marxists are today less prone to characterise everything agrarian as 'feudal'. However it is questionable whether treating the concept of an Asiatic mode as a serious and usable empirical description of anything that ever existed, let alone extending its scope to Africa and so on (as Godelier and Suret-Canale, among others, have done), is any improvement.


30. Marx's analysis of changes in the nature of economic relations between Britain and India over time, and of the different classes in Britain which benefitted from the Indian colony at different times, was developed in greatest detail in his "The East India Company - Its History and Results" (*NYDT*, July 11, 1853), in Avineri, *op. cit.*
31. In the same article Marx adds the telegraph, steam vessels and improved forms of irrigation to his list of important technological improvements the British have introduced into India.


33. One of few other instances where Marx refers to an Asian country as 'active', as capable of setting and pursuing its own projects, is also one where Marx is very clearly being ironic. In an article on China (untitled) for the Neue Rheinische Zeitung (Feb. 1850), Marx suggested that socialist doctrines were finding favour in China. He concluded his article by suggesting that the Chinese Wall, to the consternation of 'our European reactionaries', might soon have inscribed on it the words, "Republique Chinoise : Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite!" - in Avineri, op. cit., p. 45. This suggestion, and indeed the article as a whole, was aimed more at baiting 'European reactionaries' than at reflecting seriously upon China.

34. Marx, "Indian Affairs" (NYDT, Aug. 5, 1853), in ibid., p. 122. Marx goes on to describe the Permanent Settlement as a bastardized hybrid of English landlordism, the Irish middleman system and the original Asiatic system.

35. Capital III, pp. 333-34, fn. 50.

36. In "The Approaching Indian Loan" (NYDT, Feb. 9, 1859) and "Taxes in India" (NYDT, July 23, 1858) Marx referred to the ruinous effects of British rule on India without pointing to any compensatory signs of regeneration (in Avineri, op. cit., pp. 251-54 and 310-15 respectively).

37. An analogy with the bourgeoisie under feudalism would in some respects be more appropriate, as the bourgeoisie was in a sense 'outside' feudalism, but exercised a dissolving effect on it - as with the British in India. However this is not the analogy which Marx draws, for the coupling of 'destruction / regeneration' as two sides of the same coin parallels the binary opposition, 'bourgeoisie / proletariat'.

38. Marx, "Chinese Affairs" (Die Presse, July 7, 1862), in Avineri, op. cit., p. 418.

39. In the first of his articles on the Mutiny Marx predicted, "the rebels at Delhi are very likely to succumb without any prolonged resistance" - "The Revolt in the Indian Army" (NYDT, July 15, 1857), in ibid., p. 184.


41. "The Indian Revolt" (NYDT, Sept. 16, 1857), in ibid., p. 212.
42. As with the Mutiny, Marx saw Chinese resistance to Western exploitation during the Second Opium War as the last struggle of 'Old China'. This resistance was not diagnosed by Marx as a symptom of regeneration; rather, it was the defeat of the Chinese which marked, in his view, "the opening day of a new era for all Asia" - "Persia - China" (NYDT, June 5, 1857), in ibid., p. 180.

43. Donald Lowe cites a number of examples of this from Marx and Engels writings—see "China" in Marx, Lenin, Mao, University of California Press, 1966, pp. 16-18.

44. Marx to Engels (Oct. 8, 1858), in Avineri, op. cit., p. 439.
Chapter 2

Lenin’s Theory of 'Imperialism': The Colonial Question as a National Question

In 1889, six years after Marx's death, the Second International was founded. Within a few years, it had become an important force, not only within the European working class movement, but also, to some extent, as an 'actor' on the world stage.1

In these years the number of militant and politically conscious workers greatly increased; they were organised into trade unions and social-democratic parties; and, in Europe, the number of nations so affected increased. The task of establishing Marxism as the dominant trend within those sections of the European working class which were organised in social-democratic parties was largely accomplished. Julius Braunthal sums up these developments:

In the twenty five year history of the Second International, the Socialist movement became established as a force. In 1914, on the eve of the First World War, membership of Socialist parties, and of trade unions closely connected with them, ran into hundreds of thousands, while in parliamentary elections they numbered their votes, in some countries, by the million.2

These years also saw the rapid industrialization of hitherto relatively backward parts of Europe, and, relatedly, an extraordinary scramble for colonies. The number of colonial powers increased; the number and extent of their colonial possessions expanded enormously. Most of Africa, a large part of Asia, and many Pacific islands were annexed. The process of the carving up of China advanced rapidly.
Thus a growing socialist movement was confronted by the non-Western world, in the form of the 'colonial question'. The extent and pace of the process of conquest forced its attention on, and demanded a response from, this movement.

The London Congress of the Second International, held in 1896, adopted a political resolution which referred to the colonial issue, declaring the Congress's view that "colonial extension is only another name for the extension of the area of capitalist exploitation in the exclusive interest of the capitalist class".3

At the Paris Congress of the International, in 1900, the colonial question was listed as a separate item on the agenda. A resolution was passed calling upon the proletariat to "fight the colonial expansion of the bourgeoisie", and urging the socialist parties of European nations to seek to establish socialist organisations in their country's colonies. Little was done in this direction, but in 1903 the International's executive body, the International Socialist Bureau, issued a May Day appeal which condemned the 'capitalist expeditions' of European countries and of the United States in Africa, China and the Philippines.4

At the Amsterdam Congress of 1904, as at the Paris Congress before it, the colonial issue was listed as a separate item on the agenda. The Congress was addressed by the veteran Indian nationalist Dadabhai Naoroji, and at one point in the proceedings Plekhanov and Sen Katayama, leaders of socialist parties in an Asian country and a European country at war, symbolically shook hands. Such displays did not, however, obscure the differences of opinion which were emerging within the socialist movement on the issue of colonialism. The resolution adopted by the Amsterdam Congress condemned colonialism and even declared "complete emancipation of the colonies" to be the ultimate goal of the socialist movement; but this was qualified by the clause that for the moment it was necessary "to claim for the natives that liberty and autonomy compatible with their state of development".5 This ambiguous statement was possibly the product of an attempt to accommodate differing views on the subject, for the remarks of the two rapporteurs on the colonial question
were at odds with each other. The British socialist H.M. Hyndman had condemned colonialism in emphatic terms. By contrast the Dutch socialist van Kol had suggested that blanket condemnations of colonialism were inappropriate, as even a socialist Europe of the future would be compelled to pursue a colonial policy.⁶

The differences of opinion apparent at the Amsterdam Congress erupted into a major dispute at the Stuttgart Congress of the International in 1907. The committee established to produce a draft resolution on the colonial question proposed, by majority decision, a resolution which whilst condemning 'present, capitalistic colonization' also declared that:

The Congress...does not condemn in principle and for all time, every colonial policy; under a socialist regime, colonization can be a work of civilization.⁷

This clause was opposed by a minority in the committee, and the matter was debated at a plenary session of the Congress. Here a number of delegates, headed by van Kol (the chair of the aforesaid committee), made it clear that they saw the prosperity of the European working class as being dependent upon the existence of colonial markets, and were thus unwilling to countenance the prospect of a socialist Europe abandoning its colonies. A number of delegates also made their contempt for non-Western peoples evident. Van Kol's remarks (in response to Kautsky's speech in opposition to the above-quoted clause) are unpleasant enough to be worth quotation, as is the reaction of a section of the audience:

If we send a machine to the Negroes of central Africa, do you know what they will do? Very probably they will execute a war dance around our European product (hilarity) and it is probable that the number of their innumerable gods will be increased by one (further hilarity)...It could even be possible that they skin us alive or else that they eat us and then (rubbing his stomach) I strongly fear, as my corporal development somewhat exceeds that of Kautsky, that I would be given the preference by my Negro friends (hilarity). If we Europeans went to Africa with our European machines, we would be the victims of our expedition. We must, on the contrary, have arms in our hand in order eventually to defend ourselves,
even if Kautsky calls this imperialism (Very good' from some of the benches ).

The resolution of the committee was narrowly defeated (127 to 108) on the floor of the Congress, which voted to excise the offending passage. Significantly, the resolution was supported by a majority of the German delegation, representatives of the largest socialist party in the world and citizens of a late but energetic arrival to the race for colonies.

Thus the colonial question was a matter for debate and even controversy in the Second International, as it was not in the First International. However, what were being debated and decided were the attitudes European socialists should adopt toward the process of colonization and toward the colonial countries. For many, the non-Western world was still, as in Marx's time, an object. It was of great importance, of course, because it had now become an object of Western competition and conquest; as such, it had also become a possible trigger for war, an issue central to the International's concerns in this period. But it was an object nevertheless, upon which the West was acting, and which therefore required a response from European socialists.

This meant that for the Second International, as for Marx, the national and the colonial questions remained two distinct issues. The national question pertained to those nationalities which were seen to be on the move, were seen as active historical subjects - Poland, the Balkan nations, generally, the oppressed nationalities of Europe. The colonial question was the question of the East - of those nations being subjugated by the West. In the Second International 'the East' received more attention than it had hitherto received within Marxism, but it continued to be treated as an object of Western activity. The fact that this 'activity' had increased in scale and importance was the cause of greater consideration of the East - and thus 'the East', in the form of the colonial question, continued to be an essentially European question. The capacity of the non-Western world to set and pursue its own projects was throughout, implicitly,
denied; and thus the possibility of the fusing of the national and colonial questions within Marxism - of colonial nationalism being considered - was foreclosed.

**Lenin Before Imperialism**

This can be seen in the early writings even of V.I. Lenin, the Marxist who was to do most to bring the colonial and semi-colonial countries within the theoretical and political ambit of Marxism.

Prior to 1900, the East hardly figures at all in Lenin's writings. This was a function of lack of interest and knowledge and perhaps, as Donald Lowe has suggested, of Lenin's concern to assert the 'Westernness' of Russia against the Populists.¹⁰

Significantly, Lenin's earliest articles which do touch more seriously on Asian nations are written in response to contemporary events, events involving a clash between an Asian nation and Russia.

Neither "The War in China" (1900) nor "The Fall of Port Arthur" (1905) are about Asia as such. Rather, they are about the appropriate attitude and response the Russian working class should adopt to events involving the tsarist government - the European intervention to crush the Boxer Rebellion and the Russo-Japanese war. Lenin poses the question, "What attitude should the socialists adopt towards this war? In whose interests is it being fought?"¹¹

The structure of the argument is the same in both cases. The war is being fought by, but not for, the Russian people; it raises certain dangers, such as the danger of national chauvinism infecting the Russian proletariat; these must be avoided, and the Russian proletariat must continue to oppose the autocracy; indeed, these events must be seen as further evidence of the need to struggle against tsarism. Thus both articles
end by focusing attention on the Tsarist government - one calling for its overthrow, the other 'announcing' its impending collapse.\textsuperscript{12}

Here, Lenin treats the East as an essentially European problem. The 'wrong' attitude towards it could be disastrous, could corrupt and mislead the European working class. It was in these terms that Lenin interpreted the debate at the Stuttgart Congress - "it revealed a negative feature in the European labour movement, one that can do no little harm to the proletarian cause, \textit{and for that reason} should receive serious attention."\textsuperscript{13}(emphasis added). Conversely, the 'right' attitude would promote the development of a democratic and socialist class consciousness amongst the European working class, would act as a spur to militant struggles against the real enemies.

At this stage, then, the East figures in Lenin's writings as the occasion for developing his 'negative internationalism'. 'Internationalism' because Lenin urges his readers to side against their own country; 'negative' because they are being warned against errors, not being urged to side 'with' their nations opponent. For what China and Japan are fighting for is of only incidental importance; the crucial question is what \textbf{Russia} is fighting for, and the task is to demonstrate that this battle is not in the interests of the Russian working class, that it in fact runs directly counter to its interests. Thus although these articles are written in response to events at least partly resulting from Eastern 'initiatives' or actions, this is not registered in any significant way in the articles themselves.

In later writings, however, it is precisely this point - the 'awakening' of the East - which is acknowledged and raised to a level of importance. "Inflammable Material in World Politics" (1908) is not about Asia specifically, but about the development of "a new and incomparably higher stage in the international proletarian struggle"\textsuperscript{14}, characterised by increasing polarization and conflict between progressive and reactionary forces in the world. Developments in Asian countries, however, have contributed to this 'new and higher stage', and are an important aspect of it - events in Persia, Turkey, China and India are referred to\textsuperscript{15}. 
These events are characterised as an 'awakening' in "The Awakening of Asia" (1913):

World capitalism and the 1905 movement in Russia have finally aroused Asia. Hundreds of millions of the downtrodden and benighted have awakened from mediaeval stagnation to a new life and are rising to fight for elementary human rights and democracy.16

This awakening which Lenin points to is constantly linked to a new phase in the revolutionary struggle; Lenin stresses its significance beyond Asia. Thus in 'The Historical Destiny of the Doctrine of Karl Marx' (1913), where Lenin surveys the fate of Marx's theory since its inception, he divides this history into three periods - the period up to the Paris Commune, the long period of the stabilization of capitalism and of muted class struggle until 1905, and the new period since. The latter is characterised by heightened struggle, which began in Russia and Asia. "The Russian revolution was followed by revolutions in Turkey, Persia and China. It is in this era of storms and their 'repercussions' in Europe that we are now living."17

Whereas once the 'repercussions' of events in Asia were discussed without the fact that events in Asia had come to influence developments in Europe being registered or commented upon, it is now precisely the latter point which is at the centre of analysis. The awakening of Asia has repercussions in Europe. Events in Asia are not only characteristic of a new period of world history, they help define this new period; they are not merely symptoms of polarization and an intensification of the class struggle on the world stage, they are an important cause of this intensification.

If Asia has now been raised to a new level of importance, it is not as a result of Lenin rethinking his views of the history of Asia. The very image of an 'awakening' presupposes a prior state of slumber and stagnation. That, in fact, is precisely the assumption from which Lenin operates. Asia's 'own' history was one of 'medieval stagnation', of 'deep slumber'. Its 'awakening' is a metaphor for the fact that "the East has definitely taken the Western path"18, and that too as a result of factors external to
itself, not generated by its own history - the Russian revolution of 1905 and 'world capitalism'.

In other words, the Orientalist baggage has not been entirely discarded. Nevertheless, an important change - a 'breakthrough' - has occurred in Marxism's relationship with the East. For, whatever the reasons, Asia is now being regarded, by Lenin, as an active historical subject. It has not simply 'entered history'; it has forced its entry into history, by its own actions and its own struggles. In doing so, it has not only ended its own stagnation and established a claim to having a history - it has immediately become a part of world history. Lenin attaches a global significance to events in Asia; in his assessment of revolutionary possibilities and the balance of forces on a world scale, the East figures as a prominent factor.

This opens the door to examining events in Asia 'in themselves'. If Asia is an active historical subject, whose actions have a global and not only Asian significance, then these 'actions' are worthy of investigation. In "Democracy and Narodism in China" (1912) "Regenerated China" (1912) and "Struggle of the Parties in China" (1913), Lenin attempts such an investigation for the Chinese revolution of 1911.

Lenin describes the Chinese revolution as a victory of the Chinese bourgeoisie and peasantry over reactionary, essentially pre-capitalist, forces. Sun Yat-sen, despite his Narodnik illusions of utilising China's backwardness to bypass capitalism, is a representative of 'revolutionary bourgeois democracy'. He is a representative of "a class that is rising, not declining". While the bourgeoisie in Europe, having played out its historically progressive role, is now an enemy of progress everywhere, in Asia "there is still a bourgeoisie capable of championing sincere, militant, consistent democracy, a worthy comrade of France's great men of the Enlightenment". Aligned with this bourgeoisie, in the absence of a proletariat, is the peasantry. Together these two classes made the revolution; its survival depends on the extent to which the former draws the latter into active political struggle. Arrayed against them are
bureaucrats, landowners and the 'reactionary bourgeoisie', the latter led by Yuan Shih-kai.²²

As an analysis of social forces and ideologies in China, all this is quite superficial, even glib. Lenin, as he was later to admit, wrote with only a slight acquaintance of Chinese affairs.²³ What is significant is that the exercise is attempted at all, and that the 'differentiated' nature of Chinese society is registered. Whereas Marx wrote of a future regeneration of India, through British rail and telegraph, some sixty years later Lenin finds the source of China's regeneration in the victory of two classes - a revolutionary bourgeoisie and a peasantry - in the class struggle.

By the eve of the First World War, then, we can see the distance which had been traversed by Marxists in their treatment of Asia. From being seen as an object for exploitation and transformation by the West, as in Marx's day, the East had become a historical subject, setting its own projects, which had an impact on the world scene. It was a subject, moreover, which had its own particular class structure and struggles - which was amenable to analysis by means of these Marxist categories.

It is clear, however, that this development did not represent some internal 'evolution' of Marxism, whereby, in Lenin's writings, Marxism was gradually and smoothly led to a 'rethinking' of Asia. It was, in fact, a patchy and incomplete development. Instead of an evolution in Lenin's thought, events in Asia forced themselves upon Lenin's attention, demanding a response. That is precisely what these writings constitute - a response, an attempt to grasp events and developments of obvious importance. The observations and generalizations of these writings are of a practical rather than a theoretical nature. No new concepts are developed; instead, certain facts are registered, and their implications considered.

Why has Asia awakened? Why do events in Asia reverbrate in Europe? What is the relationship between East and West, and what are the effects of this on each? These questions are not answered, except in the most gestural way. These writings
create an 'opening', create the possibility of a fresh analysis which will incorporate Asia into Marxism - but they do not constitute or undertake such an analysis. We might say - the geographical scope of Marxism has been extended, but without any corresponding theoretical broadening.

This latter task is begun with Lenin's theory of 'imperialism'.

**Lenin's Theory of 'Imperialism'**

With the onset of the Great War, the flow of Lenin's occasional writings on the East dries up altogether. From 1914 to the October Revolution, there is not a single piece by Lenin devoted primarily to the colonial question, or to a particular Asian nation. Lenin's main preoccupations in this period are the war, the collapse of the International, imperialism, the right of nations to self-determination, the 'state and revolution' and, of course, the Russian revolution itself.

However, if Asia no longer receives independent attention, it also no longer receives accidental and episodic attention; it is incorporated into the dominant concerns and concepts of this period. For in Lenin's theory of imperialism, Asia's connection with Europe ceases to be accidental and episodic, a matter of 'events' (the Russo-Japanese war, etc); it comes to be seen as structural and necessary. The conquest and competition for colonies which provoked increasing interest in the colonial question in the Second International comes to be 'theorised'.

This was not, of course, unique to Lenin, nor did it begin with him. The late nineteenth century scramble for colonies saw a trend, in the early twentieth century, to try and grasp this phenomena theoretically; to discover, in a number of seemingly interconnected events and processes, an underlying logic or structure. Thus within the European socialist movement the patchy and occasional debate on the 'colonial
question' came to be assimilated to a broader, and more sophisticated, debate on imperialism.

Imperialism was the subject of a major debate and controversy for the German Social-Democratic Party, at its Congress at Chemnitz in 1912. It was one of the major items on the agenda for the never-held Vienna Congress of the International in 1914, with Juares, Haase, Vliegen and Keir Hardie commissioned to prepare papers on the subject.24

Apart from debate in the forums of the socialist movement, a number of influential works on the question of imperialism were published. Hobson, a non-Marxist, published his *Imperialism: A Study* in 1902. Rudolph Hilferding's *Finance Capital* was published in 1910, although most of it had been written in 1905. Rosa Luxemburg's *The Accumulation of Capital* was published, to a storm of criticism and debate, in 1913, and Bukharin's *Imperialism and World Economy* was written two years later, although it was not published until 1917. Kautsky did not contribute a book length study to the subject, but was an influential participant in the debate through the pages of *Neue Zeit*.25

It was Lenin's conception of imperialism, however, which came to dominate the international communist movement which emerged out of the war and the ignominious collapse of the Second International. Lenin's theory was also the most systematic and determinist, and thus, as we shall see, most emphatically stressed the structural link between East and West.

Lenin's borrowings from Hobson, Hilferding and Bukharin, and the general structure of his theory, are too well known to merit discussion here. What is important, for our purposes, is the way in which the relationship between the capitalist West and the non-Western world is conceived of in Lenin's *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*. 
"Even the capitalist colonial policy of previous stages of capitalism", Lenin writes, "is essentially different from the colonial policy of finance capital". For, "To the numerous 'old' motives of colonial policy, finance capital has added the struggle for the sources of raw materials, for the export of capital, for spheres of influence... [for] economic territory in general."

According to Lenin, the motives or compulsions of colonial policy have changed. The form of the relationship between West and East is still that of conquest and colonialism, but its nature has become more complex. In the era of monopoly capital, where finance and industrial capital have coalesced, with the former dominant, colonies are important at every stage in the reproduction of capitalism. Not only, or primarily, as markets - but as sources of raw materials, and as fields for the self-expansion of capital, as investment outlets.

Linked to this changed and increased importance of colonies to monopoly capitalism is the 'generalisation' of colonial policy. Whereas colonialism had earlier been the privilege of a few great nations, seeking assured outlets for their manufactured goods, it is now the desire and aim of all the advanced capitalist nations, as well as some of the less advanced ones. In the era of monopoly finance capital, colonies are necessary not for particular capitalist powers (e.g., Britain), but for (monopoly) capitalism in general.

It is not, however, capitalism 'in general' which subjugates colonies, except in the most abstract sense. The conquest of colonies is undertaken by particular national capitals, through their states, in competition with one another. This is another feature of imperialism. The end of 'competitive capitalism' does not mean the end of competition; under monopoly capitalism, competition occurs between larger units or fractions of capital, and is increasingly transferred to the international stage. Because the resources which can be mobilized are so much greater, and the stakes so high, competition is in fact fiercer.
Imperialism is thus characterised by intense competition, by a 'striving for domination'. Colonies are not the only object of competition, but the crucial importance of colonies to monopoly finance capital means that they are a key object. With the dominance of monopoly-finance capital, "Particularly intensified become the yoke of national oppression and the striving for annexations...". The division of the world amongst the great capitalist powers is followed by its redivision, reflecting the changing strength of the protagonists in the course of competition.

Thus in Lenin's theory the East is an integral and necessary part of the 'highest stage of capitalism' - one of the features of this stage, essential to its existence and reproduction. The East is part of the structure of imperialism, and that structure necessarily includes competition and conflict over the East. This is the nub of Lenin's difference with Kautsky. For Lenin it is not a question of colonial policy, despite the continued use of the term - no other policy is possible, for colonies and struggle over colonies are inevitable. Imperialism is not a policy, but a stage of capitalism.

Significantly, the name of this new stage is 'imperialism', and not 'monopoly finance capital'. For although a change in the form of capital is the chief feature and key to the new stage of capitalism, that stage itself is all the phenomena Lenin discusses - concentration of capital, monopoly, competition for colonies, militarism and so on - in their interconnections. Precisely because this is a new stage in capitalism (and not just a new form of capital), it is a totality of phenomena.

The importance of and competition over colonies is only one aspect of this whole, less central than it has been in our presentation. The point, however, is that the East is now part of a 'whole'. It no longer occupies an unexplored, almost accidental relationship with the West - to be commented upon when it is the scene of 'events', such as wars, rebellions and so on. Lenin's theory of imperialism incorporates the East into Marxist theory by arguing its incorporation into a new stage of capitalism.
The form of this incorporation of the East is in some ways similar to that of Marx's. It is not that Marxist concepts are extended and reformulated to include the East, in its specificity. Rather, the East is brought into the orbit of capitalism, and thereby comes within the ambit of Marxism.

However, whereas for Marx the East would become the mirror image of the capitalist West, and hence be incorporated within Marxism, in Lenin the East is brought into the orbit of capitalism, but does not necessarily become capitalist. Indeed, in the imperialist epoch the East is integrated into capitalism precisely as a backward area, a 'hinterland' of capitalism.

The significance of the theory of imperialism is therefore not only that it 'incorporates' the East into capitalism, but that it does so without treating it as a fledgling West. In Lenin's theory it is not just the East which has changed, by being colonized and incorporated into capitalism; capitalism has also changed, has become imperialism. Capitalism is no longer synonymous with European capitalist countries; it is a global structure, and a complex one, which includes non-capitalist regions of the globe.

The other important sense in which Lenin differs from Marx is in his recognition of the East as an active historical subject. Imperialism, as a text, does not investigate the response of the East to its relationship to the West, to imperialism. However, the earlier 'discovery' of the self-activity of the East is not forgotten; in other writings and debates in this period (1914-17), it is indeed raised to a new level. Not only has the East been incorporated into capitalism and thereby Marxism, the form and meaning of its self-activity have, as a result of this, assumed new significance for Marxism and capitalism.
The 'Right of Nations to Self-Determination'

Lenin's advocacy of the slogan of 'the right of nations to self-determination' long predated his study of imperialism. A resolution proclaiming such a right had been adopted by the 1896 London Congress of the International. Although couched in general terms, it was clearly directed primarily to the European arena - Poland, Alsace-Lorraine and so on. Poland was again central to the debate at the 1903 Congress of the R.S.D.L.P., where such a resolution was adopted over the opposition of the Polish delegation, supporters of Rosa Luxemburg. Here, however, the resolution was clearly passed also with an eye towards the oppressed Asian nationalities of the Russian Empire.33

Lenin was to elaborate his views on this question in a debate with opponents of his slogan, most prominent among them Rosa Luxemburg, who presented of an opposing view in a series of articles in *Przeglad Sozialdemokratyczny* in 1908-09. Luxemburg pointed to the centralising nature of capitalist development, and to the fact that, in Marxist terms, this was progressive, and to be welcomed; and pointed to the international unity of the working class, which in her view could only be undermined by a slogan of national self-determination.34

Against this, Lenin pointed to the uneven nature of capitalist development on a global scale, and the centrifugal tendencies unleashed by such development. Thus in a passage in *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination* (1914), written as a polemic against Luxemburg, Lenin echoes the themes of earlier writings, of the 'awakening' of the East:

In most Western countries it [the national question] was settled long ago...In Eastern Europe and Asia the period of bourgeois - democratic revolutions did not begin until 1905. The revolutions in Russia, Persia, Turkey and China, the Balkan wars - such is the chain of world events of our period in our 'Orient'. And only a blind man could fail to see in this chain of events the awakening of a whole series of bourgeois democratic
national movements which strive to create nationally independent and nationally uniform states.35

The uneven nature of capitalist development means that what in most of Europe 'was settled long ago' is only now on the agenda for the Balkans and the Orient. Thus to fail to recognise the continued importance of the right of self-determination for Eastern Europe and Asia - as Luxemburg does - is "the height of absurdity".36

Lenin also constantly returns to the political implications and significance of the national question. To counterpose working class internationalism ('workers have no country') to 'bourgeois' or 'petty-bourgeois' nationalism is only to proclaim the unity of the working class or of progressive forces. To actively build it requires the elimination of all possible sources of distrust between workers of different countries, which means recognising the right of oppressed nations to self-determination. Lenin writes:

If the proletariat of any one nation gives the slightest support to the privileges of its 'own' national bourgeoisie, that will inevitably rouse distrust among the proletariat of another nation; it will weaken the international class solidarity of the workers and divide them, to the delight of the bourgeoisie. Repudiation of the right to self-determination or to secession inevitably means, in practice, support for the privileges of the dominant nation.37

Simply to disassociate oneself from one's bourgeoisie is not enough - socialists of dominant nations must actively struggle for the right to self-determination, as only this "removes mistrust among the proletarians of the oppressor and oppressed nations, makes for a united international struggle for the socialist revolution".38

With the development of the theory of imperialism, and with the outbreak of war and his analysis of it as an imperialist war, the slogan of the 'right of nations to self-determination' becomes all the more important to Lenin. During a war waged for annexations and for the redivisions of the world, to proclaim the right of nations to self-determination becomes a counter or alternative to the war - and becomes a slogan
for seeking to build working class unity, in a period when workers are slaughtering each other on the battlefield.

It also, however, undergoes a change. The demand for 'the right of nations to self-determination' has a specific content and meaning, and even greater importance, in the imperialist era:

the focal point in the Social-Democratic programme must be that division of nations into oppressor and oppressed which forms the essence of imperialism. It is from this division that our definition of the 'right of nations to self-determination' must follow...39

It is not therefore simply a matter of uneven development, of the East setting out to do what the West once did. Lenin retains that presumption, namely that 'the East has entered the Western path', and that one important aspect and consequence of this is 'the awakening of bourgeois-democratic national movements' in the Orient. But he adds to this, or rather assimilates this to, another proposition, stemming from the theory of imperialism. In this case, national struggles in the East are seen as products of and responses to the specifically imperialist nature of capitalism in its present epoch, which has divided the world into oppressor and oppressed nations. Here, the struggle for nationhood in oppressed countries is a response to this - is generated by and against imperialism.

To raise the slogan of the right of nations to self-determination, then, is not only a matter of building working class unity across and against the divisive effects of national oppression under capitalism; nor is it a question of welcoming the arrival of capitalism in hitherto pre-capitalist parts of the world, and supporting their 'bourgeois-democratic' struggles; it is a crucial aspect of the struggle against imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism, itself.

What Lenin's theory of imperialism does is to suggest that national struggles which are, in part, generated by the development of capitalism, and whose content and goals are bourgeois democratic, are nevertheless in an important sense anti-capitalist.
For if imperialism means a structural relationship of oppressor and oppressed, any break in that structure is a blow, not only against a particular imperialist power, but against imperialism.

With the theory of imperialism, both the causes and the political significance of national struggles in the East come to be seen in a new light. Once the 'focal point' from which the question of national self-determination is viewed becomes 'the division of nations into oppressor and oppressed which forms the essence of imperialism', the slogan 'the right of nations to self-determination' undergoes a significant change of meaning. The self-activity of the East, part of capitalism in the imperialist era, but thereby also a subjugated part, is seen as necessarily taking the form of national struggle:

National wars waged by colonies and semi-colonies in the imperialist era are not only probable but inevitable. ...The national liberation movements there are already very strong, or are growing and maturing. Every war is the continuation of politics by other means. The continuation of national liberation politics in the colonies will inevitably take the form of national wars against imperialism.40

Thus in the imperialist era, where the Eastern nations are integrated into the capitalist system in its imperialist stage - as backward and oppressed nations- the specific form of their awakening, of their self-activity, is the struggle for national liberation. As a struggle which is necessarily against imperialism, it is progressive - "National wars against the imperialist powers are not only possible and probable; they are inevitable, progressive and revolutionary ...".41

Conclusion

It is in our century that the universalistic claims of Marxism have found political expression; that Marxism has not just claimed to be relevant to the non-Western world, but has sought to become so. The important role which Lenin played in this
process is widely recognized. As Helene Carrere d'Encausse and Stuart Schram put it, "This encounter between Marxism and the non-European world required a mediation, which was carried out by Lenin...who first opened wide the door to the implantation of Marxism in Asia".42

Before Marxism could be implanted in Asia, however, Asia had to be 'implanted' in Marxism; before a Marxist politics could be developed in and for the East, the place and function of the East in relation to the project of proletarian revolution had to be defined. In the history of Marxism it was not Marx's theory, but Lenin's, which proved to be decisive on this score.

In Marx's writings, as we have seen, the Orient is brought within the ambit of Marxism as an embryonic West, a West-in-formation. In Lenin's thought the East is included within Marxism through the theory of imperialism, which suggests that the East has been incorporated into a new stage of capitalism. The nature of this stage is such, according to Lenin, that the East becomes part of capitalism without necessarily itself becoming fully capitalist.

Lenin includes the East within Marxist theory without insisting that the price of this inclusion be a denial of its specificity. At the same time, this 'specificity' is no longer conceived of in Orientalist terms. It is true that Lenin has little to say on the history of the Orient before the imperialist era, and that his few remarks on the subject do not display any careful consideration of the issue. Indeed, they are full of Orientalist metaphors and images. Lenin describes the East as 'stagnant', 'slumbering', and so on. Elsewhere, as when Lenin characterises Russia as 'Asiatic', the term functions as a metaphor for backwardness and brutality. However in a more basic sense, Lenin's theory shatters the foundations of the Orientalist paradigm. For in describing how imperialism brings backward parts of the globe under the sway of capitalism, Lenin does not confine himself to the East. Eastern Europe, for instance, is seen by Lenin as being subject to the same process.43 Conversely, Lenin is clear on the fact that Japan belongs to the ranks of the imperialist powers. The distinction now
no longer rests upon an essentializing of the 'Orient' and the 'Occident'; the distinction is between imperialist powers and the colonized, the relatively advanced and the relatively backward, the oppressor nations and the oppressed.

In Lenin’s thought it is the very backwardness and subjugation of the East and of other parts of the world which marks, not their exclusion from the modern world, but the manner and form of their incorporation into it. For Lenin it follows that if this is the manner of the East’s entry into world history, its transformation from a passive object into an active subject will take the form of struggles for national liberation; struggles which are anti-imperialist and progressive, and which are therefore to be welcomed and actively supported by Marxists.

With Lenin the importance of the East to the socialist revolution, and the relevance of Marxism to the East, became very direct and immediate. The ‘national question’ and the ‘colonial question’, entirely separate issues for Marx, were not only brought together with Lenin, they were virtually fused into the one question. The political implications of this were obviously far-reaching. Far from being a potential source of anxiety, as it was for Marx, the colonial question, in the form of the national question, was now regarded as an ally of the proletarian revolution.

Lenin’s theory, then, is something of a tour de force. With the theory of imperialism, the position the East occupied in Marxist theory and in relation to the socialist project was radically rethought. This of course raised new questions and difficulties, some of which are considered in the chapter to follow. At this point two features of Lenin’s theory can be noted.

It has often been noticed that Lenin assumes that nationalist movements in the colonies will be ‘bourgeois-democratic’, never considering the possibility that even the nationalism of an oppressed country may be in some sense ‘reactionary’. The reason, we suggest, is that alongside the ‘new’ understanding of Eastern nationalism, where it appears as the antithesis of imperialism (in a relation of structural opposition
to it), is retained the 'evolutionary' view of Eastern nationalism, where the East appears as a historical 'stage' behind the West, and where therefore there is a 'rising bourgeoisie', 'still capable of championing democracy' and so on.

The two perspectives are not contradictory, but it is important to recognise, as Lenin did not, that these are two perspectives, which do not necessarily always go together. The assumption that Eastern nationalism is necessarily bourgeois democratic follows only from the evolutionary perspective - for inasmuch as it is a response to imperialism, there is no reason to make any assumptions as to the political content of the nationalism of an oppressed country. Indeed this is one of the potential strengths of the latter perspective. As subsequent historical experience has amply demonstrated, to the surprise and frequent embarassment of Marxists (but not only Marxists), national movements which are in some sense 'anti-imperialist' are not always liberal and democratic.

A second aspect of Lenin's theory is that in fusing the national and the colonial questions it not only renders the colonial question unproblematic, it also makes the national question seemingly unproblematic. That is, by making the central issue the distinction between oppressor and oppressed nationalism, Lenin does not consider other possible questions - such as whether nationalism, even if of the progressive variety, necessarily compromises or precludes the raising of socialist demands; whether the nation as a unit of social organisation is compatible with socialism; and so on. Lenin would probably have considered such questions 'abstract' and 'pedantic', as compared to the revolutionary virtue of being 'concrete'. Indeed, when such questions were raised this was precisely Lenin's response.

Marx, it is true, also did not address himself to such questions. His and Engels writings on national questions were shaped, in Hobsbawm's words, by "the firm principle that nations and movements of national liberation were not to be regarded as ends in themselves, but only in relation to the process, interests and strategy of world revolution".
In this respect Lenin’s writings constituted an advance. For Lenin provided a theoretical basis, rather than an ad hoc and pragmatic one, on which to judge whether particular national struggles contribute to world revolution. The very systematization implied by ‘theorising’, however, also indicates that questions which were simply absent from Marx’s writings were expressly excluded from Lenin’s. By making the central issue the distinction between oppressor and oppressed nations, and distinguishing between ‘progressive’ and ‘reactionary’ nationalisms on this basis, Lenin’s theory effectively excluded the possibility of considering the nation and nationalism in themselves as problems within Marxism.

Henceforward the ‘national question’ would be treated, within the communist movement, as one the answer to which hinged upon distinguishing between oppressor and oppressed nations. Whatever few earlier efforts there had been to consider the cultural, linguistic and historical dimensions of nationhood - such as those of Otto Bauer and some of the Zionist socialists - were declared to lie outside the Marxist canon. Within that section of the workers’ movement which emerged out of the great schism of 1914 as the ‘communist’ movement these issues were dealt with, to the extent they were treated at all, in Stalin’s 1913 essay, "Marxism and the National Question". This dull exercise in definition-mongering came to be treated as the first and last word on the more ‘abstract’ aspects of the national question.
NOTES

1. This was true, at least, on the question of opposition to the impending war. The International was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1913 - "Indeed, in an age of numerous pacifist organizations, none could compare in either size of audience or scope of activity with the International" - Georges Haupt, *Socialism and the Great War*, Oxford (Clarendon Press), 1972, p. 1.


5. *ibid.*, p. 54.


8. *ibid.*, p. 133

9. The resolution finally adopted did not, however, settle the question - it condemned colonialism under capitalism, avoided discussion of a 'socialist colonial policy', and was passed unanimously - Braunthal, *op. cit.*, p. 319.

10. Donald M. Lowe,*The Function of "China" in Marx, Lenin and Mao*, University of California Press, 1966, pp. 54-57. Although Lowe is correct to point to the way in which Lenin's views on Asia develop as a 'by-product' of other concerns, we disagree with his argument (pp. 64ff) that they change primarily in response to Lenin's changing views on the nature of Russian society. What follows below is a different reading of Lenin's texts to that of Lowe's, though not an examination of Lowe's argument.

12. The war in China becomes the occasion for reaffirming the need to overthrow the autocracy - "There is only one way in which the new burden the war is thrusting upon the working people can be removed, and that is a convening of an assembly of representatives of the people, which would put an end to the autocracy of the government and compel it to have regard for interests other than those solely of a gang of courtiers" - ibid., p. 28. Similarly, "It is the autocratic regime and not the Russian people that has suffered ignoble defeat. The Russian people has gained from the defeat of the aristocracy. The capitulation of Port Arthur is the prologue to the capitulation of tsarism" - "The Fall of Port Arthur", Lenin, Collected Works, v. 8, p. 53. Hereafter cited as CW.


14. Lenin, NLME, p. 32.

15. One of Lenin's examples of the awakening of the East is the strike and demonstrations in Bombay in response to the jailing, by the British, of Tilak, the Indian nationalist. With a certain amount of rhetorical exaggeration Lenin concludes from this incident that "In India, too, the proletariat has already developed to conscious political mass struggle - ibid., p. 34.

16. NLME, p. 80.

17. NLME, p. 70. Similarly in "The Awakening of Asia" - "The awakening of Asia and the beginning of the struggle for power by the advanced proletariat of Europe are a symbol of the new phase in world history that began early this century." - p. 80.

18. Lenin, "Democracy and Narodism in China" (1912), NLME, p. 59. Similarly in "The Historical Destiny of the Doctrine of Karl Marx", Lenin describes the East as having "been drawn into the struggle for European ideals" - ibid., p. 70.


20. In "Regenerated China" Lenin writes that in China there is "no proletariat at all, or one that is completely powerless" - NLME, p. 67. Similarly in "Struggle of the Parties", p. 77.

21. "China's freedom was won by an alliance of peasant democrats and the liberal bourgeoisie" - "Regenerated China", NLME, p. 67. The party of Sun Yat-sen drew the peasants into struggle, but "it has as yet not sufficiently drawn the broad
masses of the Chinese people into the revolution", and unless this is done "the Republic cannot be durable" - "Struggle of the Parties in China", NLME , p. 77.

22. "Struggle of the Parties", NLME , p. 76. In the earlier "Democracy and Narodism", this bourgeoisie is described as a 'liberal bourgeoisie'; here it is not yet seen as part of a reactionary alliance, but is 'capable of treachery' -p. 59.

23. See Lenin, "Once Again on the Trade Unions, the Present Situation and the Mistakes of Comrades Trotsky and Bukharin" (1921), CW , v. 32, p. 95.

24. See Georges Haupt, op. cit., chapter 7, for a study of preparations for the Vienna Congress and for the debate on imperialism. The effects of imperialism overtook its discussion - the outbreak of war prevented the Vienna Congress from being held.


27. ibid., p. 115.

28. "Typical of the old capitalism, when free competition held undivided sway, was the export of goods . Typical of the latest stage of capitalism, when monopolies rule, is the export of capital ." - Imperialism , p. 58

29. ibid., p. 112.


31. In fact, in Imperialism Lenin does suggest that "Capitalism is growing with the greatest rapidity in the colonies..." - p. 91 (similarly, p. 61). However, this is a consequence of their for incorporation into capitalism in the imperialist epoch (a result of capital export etc); not the measure of such incorporation, as with Marx.
Generally, there was considerable confusion during the course of the debate on imperialism re its effects on the colonies.

32. Thus the East is important as a source of raw materials for the developed countries. It is important as an investment outlet because, "In these backward countries profits are usually high, for capital is scarce, the price of land is relatively low, wages are low, raw materials are cheap" (ie, precisely because these areas are not like the developed countries) - *Imperialism*, p. 59.

33. Russia's position as a multi-national empire was obviously a major cause for the importance Lenin attached to the question of national self-determination. As he once put it, "It would be unseemly of us [the R.S.D.L.P.], representatives of a dominant nation in the far East of Europe and a goodly part of Asia, to forget the immense significance of the national question - especially in a country which has been rightly called the 'prison of the peoples'..." - "On the National Pride of the Great Russian" (1914), *CW*, v. 21, p. 103.

34. This is obviously very much an oversimplification of Luxemburg's position, but since we only refer to Luxemburg in order to better bring out Lenin's views, it is sufficient for our purposes. English translations of many of Luxemburg's writings on the national question are available in collections of her writings, notably H.B. Davis (ed), *The National Question : Selected Writings by Rosa Luxemburg*, Monthly Review Press, 1976.


38. Lenin, "The Question of Peace" (written 1915), *CW*, v. 21, p. 293.


41. *ibid.*, p. 312.

43. Indeed, Lenin not only allowed for wars of national liberation in those parts of Europe which were under foreign domination, he regarded them as more likely and more important - "revolutionary movements of all kinds - including national movements - are more possible, more practicable, more stubborn, more conscious and more difficult to defeat in Europe than they are in the colonies" - "The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up" (published Oct. 1916), CW, v. 22, p. 388.

Chapter 3

The Communist International: 'The National and Colonial Question'

In mid-1924, speaking at the Fifth Congress of the Communist International, Nikolai Bukharin distinguished between the Third International and what he saw as its discredited predecessor in the following terms:

One of the most important differences between the Second and Third Internationals is the conception of imperialism... this conception is the most important point which separates us from the Second International... We have in this conception a connecting link between the revolution of the industrial proletariat and colonial rebellions, which in the trend of history are nothing but component parts of the world revolution.1

Almost two years earlier Zinoviev, in delivering the Executive Committee report to the Fourth Congress of the Comintern, observed that national liberation movements in a number of the oppressed colonial and semi-colonial nations were making great progress. He went on to declare:

I think that among the communists no one today will contest the assertion that this struggle, although it is neither Socialist nor Communist, is nevertheless objectively considered a struggle against the capitalist regime. The great movements which we have been watching in India and in the colonial and semi-colonial countries are by no means communistic, but dispassionately considered, they rate as an important factor in the fight against capitalism.2 (emphasis added).

Marxism had indeed travelled a great distance since the time of Marx. In Marx's theory, as we saw, no connection is effected between the national question and what would later come to be termed the 'colonial question'. In the Third International,
however, there was no such ambiguity or reticence. Instead, nationalist struggles in the colonies are confidently proclaimed to be progressive; even though not 'communistic', they are 'component parts' of the 'world revolution'.

The bridge between Marx's position and this position - as the quotation from Bukharin indicates - was Lenin's theory of imperialism. In the Third International this theory, and political conclusions directly drawn from it, had become enshrined as 'fundamental principles' of Marxism. Thus Zinoviev, describing national liberation struggles in the colonies as anti-capitalist, is able to confidently add that "no one today will contest this assertion".

However Lenin's theory of imperialism was developed to explain, above all else, the First World War, and thus to provide a foundation for a correct communist response to that war. As we have seen, although it incorporated the colonies into Marxism far more thoroughly than Marx's theory had done, its focus was not the 'colonial question'.

The decisive 'moment' in the extension of the 'field of application' of the theory of imperialism - an extension which saw it become the theoretical basis of the communist position on the colonial question - was the Second Congress of the Comintern. At the Second Congress, two theses were adopted on the 'national and colonial question' - the main theses, drafted by Lenin, and a set of 'supplementary theses' drafted by M.N. Roy, the Indian revolutionary attending the Congress as a delegate of the newly formed Communist Party of Mexico.3

The unusual step of adopting two sets of theses was the outcome of a vigorous dispute between Lenin and Roy in the Commission which had been appointed by the Congress to prepare theses on the colonial question. Encouraged by Lenin to present his views in the form of theses, Roy found his theses amended quite substantially in the Colonial Commission. They were nevertheless recommended for adoption (in their amended form) to the Congress by Lenin, as 'Supplementary Theses'.4
The importance of the Roy-Lenin debate is generally recognised. However, in the academic literature on the subject, it is usually treated as a dispute over strategic and tactical issues, stemming from differing (empirical) evaluations of the strength of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in the colonial countries. Thus Overstreet and Windmiller, in their standard history of communism in India, write:

...Lenin and Roy disagreed on both strategy and tactics... Lenin wanted Communists to work with bourgeois nationalist organizations because they were anti-imperialist and because he believed there were no proletarian organizations of any consequence at the time. Roy insisted that there were important proletarian parties in the colonies and that Communists should work with them in preference to bourgeois organizations.\(^5\)

In Allen S. Whiting's account, Lenin's theses are seen as advocating a 'united front' strategy for the achievement of national independence in the colonies, a position which 'orthodox radicals' like Roy found unacceptable.\(^6\) Similarly North and Eudin see the dispute as turning upon "to what degree and for how long should the Communist Party, as the vanguard of the proletariat, ally itself - 'from above' - with the anti-imperialist and non-Communist national and petty bourgeoisie, and how much of its energies should be devoted to enhancing the power of the proletariat and the peasantry - 'from below'".\(^7\)

Below we offer a somewhat different account of the Roy-Lenin debate, one in which the differences over strategy are seen as the outcome, rather than the premise, of the dispute. This analysis, we believe, tallies more closely to the textual evidence, and helps to situate this debate and its outcome within the evolution of a Marxist perspective on nationalism in the colonial countries.

**The Roy-Lenin Debate**

Lenin's draft theses are derived directly, as he makes clear, from his theory of imperialism, and the distinction it draws between oppressor and oppressed
nations. "The most important, the fundamental idea of our Theses", he declared in delivering the report of the Colonial Commission to the Congress, "is the difference between the oppressor and oppressed nations". Thus his Theses insist that in determining their attitude to the national question in the colonial countries communists must distinguish "between the oppressed, dependent and subject nations and the oppressing, exploiting and sovereign nations..." (thesis 2). Basing himself on this distinction, Lenin arrives at the following conclusion - "Communist parties must assist the bourgeois-democratic liberation movement in these [i.e., subject, oppressed] countries..." (thesis 11a).

Such liberation movements, as we saw in the last chapter, are for Lenin both 'inevitable and progressive'. They are inevitable because the political struggle in subjugated nations is a struggle against that subjugation, a struggle for national liberation; they are progressive because such struggles undermine imperialism. Although progressive, however, such struggles usually aim at little more than the founding of an independent bourgeois nation-state. Thus communists should support such movements whilst firmly recognising that they are not communist. Indeed, Lenin explicitly stresses the "need for a determined struggle against attempts to give a communist colouring to bourgeois-democratic liberation trends in the backward countries" (thesis 11e).

Couched in the form of a warning against painting bourgeois-democratic liberation movements as more than they are, this thesis only serves to emphasise that in the colonies even non-communist, bourgeois movements, are, for Lenin, in one sense 'revolutionary' - in that they undermine imperialism. Therefore "a policy must be pursued that will achieve the closest alliance, with Soviet Russia, of all the national and colonial liberation movements" (thesis 6).

There is a theoretical imperative and a theoretical logic to this position - that of the theory of imperialism. In that theory, the East is 'de-essentialised', no longer operates as an essentialist Other to the West, as it did for Marx; but the form this takes
is that it is **contextualized**. The East enters history, and Marxist theory, as the colonial question; its defining feature is its subjugation, and therefore the form of its historical subjectivity is a struggle against that subjugation, for national liberation. Even though the content of that struggle may be bourgeois-democratic, in its specific - colonial - context, this struggle is 'revolutionary'.

The consciousness constituting or informing that subjectivity is nationalism. Nationalism is not, in the abstract, progressive. Lenin has harsh words to say on the subject:

> the more backward the country, the stronger is the hold of small-scale agricultural production, patriarchalism and isolation, which inevitably lend particular strength and tenacity to the deepest of petty-bourgeois prejudices, i.e., to national egoism and national narrow-mindedness (thesis 12).

A similar operation is effected on nationalism, however, as is effected on the bourgeois democratic liberation struggle. Nationalism is not to be regarded as progressive in itself - it is egoistic and narrow-minded - but for all that, it has historical roots, and therefore must be taken seriously and treated carefully. Immediately after the passage quoted above is the following passage:

> It is...the duty of the class-conscious communist proletariat of all countries to regard with particular caution and attention the survivals of national sentiments in the countries and among nationalities which have been oppressed the longest; it is equally necessary to make certain concessions with a view to more rapidly overcoming this distrust and these prejudices (thesis 12).

More than that - nationalism not only has historical roots, it has a historical 'justification'. Even if in the abstract it is to be condemned, in the colonial context it is progressive, and communists should not only respect it, they must utilise it. As Lenin had put it in 1919, in his address to the second All-Russia Congress of Communist Organisations of the Peoples of the East,
You will have to base yourselves on the bourgeois nationalism which is awakening, and must awaken, among these peoples [of the East], and which has its historical justification.^{11}(emphasis added).

This is not a case of cynical realpolitik, of painting potential allies in positive colours. As demonstrated, this position has a serious theoretical foundation, in the distinction between oppressor, and oppressed, nations and nationalism. Moreover, such an appraisal of nationalist movements must also be seen in its historical context.

By 1920, Lenin was looking to the East for the 'spark' which might reignite the revolutionary process in the West. Far from being evidence of cynicism, however, this only indicated how closely Lenin's colonial theses were tied up with his hope for world revolution. His 'sympathetic' appraisal of bourgeois nationalism in the East stemmed not only from his hope that such nationalism, in weakening imperialism, would facilitate revolution in the West; but also from the belief that revolution in the West would not leave the East untouched. Revolutions in the West, Lenin believed, would greatly accelerate the revolutionary process in the East, by example and, more so, by active assistance. The 'national' revolution in the East would rapidly proceed to the Soviet stage, and eventually to communism, bypassing the capitalist stage.^{12}

As long as world revolution seemed imminent, such a perspective and approach ran little risk of opportunistic misuse. It was not until this prospect began to recede, and the new Soviet state found itself alone and beleaguered, that the potential dangers of such a position become manifest.^{13}

Had Lenin been alive when these contradictions and dangers became clearly manifest - as they did in the case of Comintern policy in China from the mid-twenties - one can assert with some confidence that Lenin would have revised his views. But by then Lenin was dead, and Stalin in the ascendant.

In any case, even at the Second Congress, neither the project of independence, nor nationalism, are regarded by Lenin as the only projects or forms of consciousness existing in or appropriate to the East. Thus his draft theses insist that support for
bourgeois-democratic liberation movements must be accompanied by attempts to organize proletarian parties which will be informed by class consciousness - "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" (theses 11e). Another struggle, that against 'feudalism', must also be waged, with the active support of communists.14

Lenin, then, explicitly recognises the need for forms of struggle other than that for nationhood. Nevertheless, it is the latter which is at the centre of his draft theses. The national liberation struggle is bourgeois in content, but nevertheless is progressive. For although bourgeois in content, it is not just a struggle in the interests of the bourgeoisie - it is the pressing task for all progressive classes in the colonies, it is the primary political project in the East.

This is the nub of Roy's dispute with Lenin. In Roy's draft theses, the break-up of Europe's colonial empire, described as the 'fountainhead' of European capitalism, is seen as a necessary prerequisite to the overthrow of capitalism (theses 2, 3 and 4).15 Here too, national liberation is 'progressive' - it is important to note that for Roy, as for Lenin, 'the nation' is an unproblematic concept, and one with a 'positive' content (in the colonies). However, the pursuit of this goal, in itself, is not. Comintern support for "the revolutionary movement in the subject colonies", Roy writes, "is not tantamount to the former's upholding the doctrine of nationalism" (thesis 5).

Nationalism - the pursuit of nationhood in itself, which for Roy is the goal of the bourgeois nationalist movement - is characterised by him as an alternative to, a diversion from, the development of a higher form of consciousness. To support the bourgeois movement in the colonies "would amount to helping the growth of the national spirit which would surely obstruct the awakening of class consciousness in the masses" (thesis 10).
Thus national liberation is seen as desirable, but nationalism is not. This distinction, on the face of it untenable, is made possible by relating it to the existence of two movements, seeking and embodying two different projects and forms of consciousness. The goal of a sovereign nation-state is the goal of the bourgeois-democratic nationalist movement, "limited to the small middle class". But this movement is not the only one - "There are to be found in the dependent countries two distinct movements which every day grow farther and farther apart from each other. One is the bourgeois democratic nationalist movement, with a programme of political independence, and the other is the mass action of the ignorant and poor peasants and workers" (thesis 7). And if the nationalist movement strives only for independence, "the masses of workers and poor peasants are revolting even though in many cases unconsciously, against the system which permits such brutal exploitation" (thesis 10).

The latter are not motivated by nationalism - "it would be a mistake to assume that the bourgeois nationalist movement expresses the sentiments and aspirations of the general population", for "the masses are not with the bourgeois nationalist leaders - they are moving towards revolution independently of the bourgeois nationalist movement" (thesis 7). The masses are motivated instead by economic need and class interest, and they struggle, even if unconsciously, against exploitation as such, and not simply national exploitation.

Thus for Roy more than one political project exists in the colonies. Alongside the nationalist project - and increasingly at odds with it - is one which 'incorporates' the desirable and progressive step of independence, not as a goal in itself, but rather as a 'moment' or aspect of its broader goal; a movement inspired, not by nationalism, but by class interests. In the Colonial Commission, where both draft theses were debated, Roy made his differences with Lenin clear, in calling for the deletion of Lenin's thesis advocating communist support for bourgeois-democratic liberation movements:

The popular masses of India are not fired with a national spirit. They are exclusively interested in problems of an economic and social nature... as far as the broad popular masses are concerned, the revolutionary movement
in India has nothing in common with the national-liberation movement... In India the Communist International should assist the creation and development of the communist movement alone, and the Communist Party of India should occupy itself exclusively with organising the broad popular masses to fight for their own class interests.\textsuperscript{16}

This distinction between, on the one hand, a bourgeois movement aiming at national independence, and on the other a movement of workers and peasants with a broad 'social' goal to which independence is only incidental, is not closely argued, or free of ambiguities. The 'bourgeois-democratic nationalist movement' not only does not include the masses, it apparently does not include the bourgeoisie. In Roy's theses the social basis of this movement is variously the 'educated middle class' or, simply, the 'middle class'. Indeed, only once is there a reference to a native bourgeoisie (thesis 6), and given that Roy proclaims that revolution in the colonies will have the effect of "preventing the rise of a native capitalism in place of the vanquished foreign capitalism" (thesis 10), it would appear that neither native capitalism nor a colonial bourgeoisie yet exist.\textsuperscript{17}

Conversely, in the case of the 'revolutionary movement', its class composition is relatively precise - workers and poor peasants - but its goal or content, the meaning of 'revolution', is not clear. Roy makes it evident that he is not suggesting that a communist revolution is immediately possible in the colonies.\textsuperscript{18} The revolutionary movement, therefore, is defined, if at all, in relation to the nationalist movement - as something seeking that in excess of that aimed for by the bourgeois movement. Being motivated by something other than nationalism, the revolutionary movement will achieve more than simply national independence. Its 'form' is also that of an excess, an overstepping - the bourgeois movement "endeavour [s] to control" the mass movement, and sometimes succeeds, but only temporarily, as the latter tends to overstep these limits (thesis 7).

Despite these ambiguities, the differences between Roy and Lenin are apparent. Whereas for Lenin nationalism is the main project in the East, Roy points to two - more
or less antithetical - projects in the colonies. They are not antithetical because one is progressive and the other is not - the goal of the nationalist movement is, after all, in a sense a 'subset' of the goal of the revolutionary movement. They are antithetical because they are motivated by different interests and informed by different forms of consciousness. Since they co-exist in time and place, they are also competitors.

With two projects and two movements in the East, support for the bourgeois-democratic movement, on the basis that it undermines imperialism, is not automatic. A choice is involved. Against Lenin's proposed support for bourgeois-democratic liberation movements, Roy urges support for "revolutionary mass action through the medium of a communist party of the proletarians" (thesis 10).

Thus a 'strategic' dispute over whom to support arises from, and is argued in terms of, a more fundamental difference. That is one over whether the East's incorporation into capitalism and world history as the colonial question (through imperialism) implies that struggle for national independence is the main form of subjectivity of the East; or whether there exist, in the East as in the West, various - and competing - political projects.

**The Colonial Question as a National Question**

The two draft theses were debated in the Colonial Commission, where Roy urged amendment to Lenin's theses. In the event, it was Roy's theses which were dramatically altered by the Commission, in line with the suggestions and objections of Lenin.\(^{19}\)

The alterations to Roy's draft theses took the form, primarily, of excisions. The passages excised were precisely those which rejected nationalism, identifying it exclusively with the movement of the middle class, and counterposing to it an 'economic', non-nationalist consciousness of the revolutionary movement. The
sentence quoted earlier, rejecting any suggestion that Comintern support for the revolutionary movement in the colonies was 'tantamount to the former's upholding the doctrine of nationalism', was cut. So were the first few sentences of thesis 7, which identified the revolutionary movement as 'essentially an economic struggle', at odds with the nationalist struggle of the middle class. Also excised was the claim in the same thesis that the nationalism of the bourgeois movement did not express the 'sentiments and aspirations' of the general population. Thesis 10, which argued the existence of two antithetical movements, embodying different forms of consciousness, was cut altogether, as was thesis 11.

The effect of these cuts was not to efface Roy's assertion of the existence of two movements in the colonies, but to undermine and alter the basis upon which this distinction was made.

Roy, as we have seen, couched his argument in terms of two 'equations'. On the one hand, there was a bourgeois democratic movement, inspired by nationalism, seeking nationhood; on the other hand, a revolutionary movement, inspired by class interests and consciousness, seeking something in excess of mere independence. Elimination of negative references to nationalism, of exclusive identification of nationalism with the bourgeois movement, and of identification of the revolutionary movement with purely 'economic' motives, had the effect of implicitly introducing nationalism into both sides of the equation. It was no longer presented as a 'diversionary' consciousness, and was no longer described as the preserve of the middle class alone.

In their amended form, Roy's theses were recommended for adoption by the Congress, as 'Supplementary Theses' to those drafted by Lenin. Yielding to the changes, Roy presented and defended his theses on the floor of Congress. He continued to argue that there were two movements, and that the mass movement should be supported in preference to that of the middle class. However in doing so, he also revealed how much ground he had conceded:
Naturally a revolution by these masses would not at the first stage be a communist revolution, naturally revolutionary nationalism will play a role in the first stage. But in any event this revolutionary nationalism too will lead to the collapse of European imperialism, which is of enormous significance to the European proletariat.\(^2^1\)

Nationalism is now a motivating factor in the 'mass', 'revolutionary' movement, and not only in the middle class movement. The recognition of this is somewhat reluctant -nationalism will play only a 'role', and though hardly respectable in itself, 'in any event', it 'too' will hasten the downfall of imperialism - but it is made.

Lenin's draft theses were also modified, albeit far less drastically. The major change was to substitute the term 'national revolutionary' for the term 'bourgeois-democratic' in the final theses. Lenin explained why in his speech to the Congress, and we may be excused for a lengthy quotation:

...objections were raised [in the Commission] that, if we say 'bourgeois-democratic', we lose the distinction between the reformist and the revolutionary movement which has become quite clear in the backward countries and the colonies recently... A certain understanding has emerged between the bourgeoisie of the exploiting countries and that of the colonies, so that very often, even perhaps in most cases, the bourgeoisie of the oppressed countries, although they also support national movements, nevertheless fight against all revolutionary movements and revolutionary classes with a certain degree of agreement with the imperialist bourgeoisie, that is to say together with it. This was completely proven in the Commission, and we believed that the only correct thing would be to take this difference into consideration and to replace the words 'bourgeois democratic' almost everywhere with the expression 'national revolutionary'. The point about this is that as communists we will only support the bourgeois freedom movements in the colonial countries if these movements are really revolutionary and if their representatives are not opposed to us training and organising the peasantry in a revolutionary way.\(^2^2\)

This is not a capitulation to Roy, for the distinction is not between a bourgeois movement which is 'only' nationalist and a mass movement which is revolutionary.
Rather, Lenin introduces a distinction between two types of (still) bourgeois-democratic movements. One cooperates with imperialism to an extent, against the revolutionary classes; the other is genuinely 'revolutionary', for it is consistently nationalist, and allows secondary forms of struggle and consciousness to be organised and promoted.

Lenin recognises that there are different types of nationalist movements and parties in the East, some of which are willing to compromise pursuit of the nationalist goal by reaching an 'understanding' with imperialism. Further, just as in his draft theses he recognised the existence of struggles other than the purely nationalist struggle, so Lenin is now willing to judge the 'militancy' and supportability of nationalist movements in the colonial countries by the extent to which they allow such struggles to flourish. The question, however, is still under what conditions to support bourgeois nationalism – the gap, even with Roy's theses as amended, is not significantly bridged. Nevertheless, inasmuch as it allows that some nationalist movements may not be deserving of the support of communists – and provides some criteria by which this may be judged – the amendment is a significant one.

New Questions

Most commentators on the Roy-Lenin debate have observed that although the Comintern adopted Roy's theses as 'Supplementary Theses', these contradicted rather than supplemented Lenin's views. We have suggested further that the amendments to Roy's draft theses changed the nature of the dispute. With Roy conceding that national liberation was the primary project in the colonies, and that it could not be detached from nationalism as the consciousness informing it, the colonial question had become a national question within Marxism. Henceforward all other issues and struggles in the colonies would be examined and assessed in terms of their relation to the national struggle.
The colonial question did not figure prominently at the Third Congress in 1921, but at the Fourth Congress in 1922 there was extensive discussion of the colonial question, and lengthy 'Theses on the Eastern Question' were adopted.

These "Theses" were more detailed than those drafted by Lenin and adopted two years earlier, and they made frequent reference to the experience gained in those two years. There was, however, considerable continuity between the two documents. The 'Theses on the Eastern Question' described the "demand for national and economic independence advanced by national movements in the colonies" as "express[ing] the need of bourgeois development in these countries", but added that "The objective tasks of the colonial revolution go beyond the limits of bourgeois democracy if only because a decisive victory for this revolution is incompatible with the rule of world capitalism". 23 These Theses also answered a question left unanswered by Lenin in his earlier writings, namely whether the impact of imperialism in the colonies was to promote or to retard capitalist development there. That a certain level of capitalist development had occurred in the colonies was acknowledged, but it was declared that there were limits to this process - "The progress of indigenous productive forces in the colonies...comes into irreconcilable conflict with the interests of world imperialism, for the essence of imperialism consists in exploiting the different stages of development of the productive forces in the different areas of world economy to gain monopoly profits". 24

A difficulty not anticipated by Lenin in 1920 was dealt with. Radek formulated this difficulty succinctly:

Our theses stated that the exploited East must and will fight against international capitalism, and that for this reason we ought to assist it. Now, we find at the head of the oriental national movements neither Communists nor even bourgeois revolutionaries, but for the most part representatives of the decayed feudal cliques belonging to the military and bureaucratic classes. This fact brings our aid to the Eastern peoples into contradiction with the question of our attitude towards the ruling elements". 25
Radek could have added that even newly installed nationalist governments in the East which were in some sense 'bourgeois-democratic', or at least committed to 'modernization', such as the Kemalist regime in Turkey, were engaged in persecuting communists. The theses adopted by the Fourth Congress addressed this 'contradiction' as follows:

Taking full cognizance of the fact that those who represent the national will to state independence may, because of the variety of historical circumstances, be themselves of the most varied kind, the Communist International supports every national revolutionary movement against imperialism.26 (emphasis added).

At the same time these Theses declared that nationalist movements which were not forward-looking would fail, as the success of any nationalist movement depended upon "the extent to which such a nationalist movement is able to break with the reactionary feudal elements and to win over the broad working masses to its cause...".27 Communists in the colonies were assigned the task of reinforcing progressive elements in the national movement, a task best achieved by organising and mobilizing the working class and peasantry.

The colonial question also figured prominently at the Fifth Congress of the Comintern, held in mid-1924. Manuilsky delivered the main report on 'the national and colonial question'. He reiterated the themes of previous Congresses, calling upon communists to support bourgeois-led nationalist movements, whilst being wary of losing their independent identity in such movements. The position put forward by Roy-that though national liberation movements should be supported, this should be done recognising that they were no longer being led by the bourgeoisie, since that class was ready to 'make deals' with imperialism - was not accepted. The Congress called upon the Comintern to seek to "win the revolutionary movements of liberation...as allies of the revolutionary proletariat of the capitalist countries", for which purpose "further development of direct links between the [Comintern] Executive and the national liberation movements of the East" was declared to be necessary.28
The Sixth Congress of the Comintern, held in 1928, declared that world capitalism was stricken by a deep crisis, and that the resulting polarization of forces was 'inexorably' leading to a 'revolutionary crisis'. Basing itself upon this analysis, the Congress declared the necessity for adopting more aggressive tactics. Accordingly, communists were instructed to sharpen their struggle against social democracy, and to "shift the emphasis decisively to the united front from below". This trend towards 'leftist' positions was reflected also in the 'Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonial and Semi-Colonial Countries' which were adopted by the Congress. These declared that "the national bourgeoisie are not significant as a force in the struggle against imperialism", and that it was therefore necessary for communist parties in the colonies to direct their efforts to 'unmasking' the nationalist pretensions of parties such as, in India, the Indian National Congress.

The implication of these Theses was that national liberation in the colonies would be achieved under the leadership of communists, others allegedly having abdicated from the struggle. This conclusion, however, was not drawn explicitly, and the 'leftism' of the 'Theses on the Revolutionary Movement' was qualified in a number of important areas. Such qualifications and such caution were soon to be abandoned. The Tenth Plenum of the ECCI, meeting in July 1929, declared social democracy to be the left-wing of fascism, and described the native bourgeoisie of the colonies as outrightly 'counter-revolutionary'. The Comintern now began to promote a strategy predicated upon the belief that national liberation in the colonies would be achieved not by nationalists, or even nationalists in alliance with communists, but rather under the exclusive leadership of communist parties. With that went the belief that such a 'nationalist' revolution would more-or-less coalesce with the establishment of a soviet dictatorship in the colonies.

In 1935 the Seventh Congress of the Comintern endorsed yet another change of analysis and strategy. The positions adopted at the Sixth Congress were abandoned (though not repudiated) and the creation of a 'united front' was declared to be the
immediate and most important task of communists in Europe. In the East the 'united anti-imperialist front' was urged upon communists, a strategy predicated on the view that the national bourgeoisie and nationalist organisations in the East were potential or real opponents of imperialism, and therefore that it was necessary for communist parties to seek close alliance with them.33

Conclusion

The Second Congress of the Comintern was a decisive event for Marxist treatments of the colonial question. Amidst all the subsequent twists and turns in Comintern policy on the colonial question which followed, two 'principles' established at the Second Congress remained constant and mostly unchallenged. The first was that the colonial question came to be regarded, above all else, as a national question. Second, it was accepted at all future Congresses of the Comintern, with the partial exception of the Sixth Congress, that in pursuit of the goal of national independence communist parties would have to support and even ally themselves with non-communist movements and organizations.

To characterise the outcome of the Roy-Lenin debate in this way is not to suggest that theoretical questions had been 'resolved', and that all that was left was to 'apply' these. Rather, certain premises had been established. These premises opened a whole new range of questions, some of which, as we have seen, were to be addressed by future Congresses of the Comintern.

A series of questions arose for communist parties in the colonies. The Second Congress had declared that national liberation was the main project in the colonies. It had instructed communists - those committed to achieving socialism through class struggle - to support this goal. It had not, however, defined the relationship between these two forms of mobilization and these two goals. Communists in the colonial countries had first to determine whether the nationalist movements in their country
were 'national revolutionary'. If so, they had to decide whether this meant that their own role was a purely supportive and, therefore, secondary one. If on the other hand existing nationalist movements were found to be in some way inadequate to their task, what implications did this have for the type of support extended and the form of alliance sought, if it was to be sought at all? In both instances, what implications did the form of the nationalist struggle in class terms have for its content? That is, if national liberation could be achieved by bourgeois-democratic parties, did it follow that the independent nation which emerged would be a bourgeois state? If the working class and communists had a more important role to play, did that imply that national liberation would take the form of a 'democratic dictatorship of workers and peasants'?

In short, what was the relationship between class struggle and nationalist struggle in the colonies? How was the pursuit of national independence connected to the pursuit of socialism?

How these and other questions were taken up for, and in, one particular colonial country - India - forms the subject of the following chapters.
Notes

1. *Fifth Congress of the Communist International: Abridged Report*, London, C.P.G.B. n.d. (but 1924), p. 133. The platform drafted by Bukharin and adopted by the founding Congress of the Third International had also made this one ground for distinguishing between the two Internationals. It declared that "in contrast to the yellow social-patriotic international, international proletarian communism will support the exploited colonial peoples in their struggles against imperialism." (4 March 1919), in Jane Degras (ed.), *The Communist International 1919-1943: Documents*, v. 1, Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 23

2. *Fourth Congress of the Communist International: Abridged Report*, London, C.P.G.B., n.d. (but 1922), p. 30. Similarly in Zinoviev's opening speech to the Congress - "During this year great nationalist movements were also initiated among the oppressed peoples. They are heavy blows to international capitalism...These movements are on our side. The mole of history is burrowing well" - p. 5.

3. Narendra Nath Bhattacharya was born in Bengal around 1886. He was active in nationalist-terrorist groups until 1915, when he left India in search of German arms for the Indian national revolution. The next five years saw him adopt the name M.N. Roy in the course of travels through Java, China, Japan, the United States and ultimately Mexico, where his conversion to Marxism took place and where he became a founding member and General Secretary of the Socialist Party (later Communist Party) of Mexico. In Mexico he met Michael Borodin, who persuaded him to attend the Second Congress of the Comintern. Roy's *Memoirs* (Allied Publishers, 1964) contain an (egotistical and at points unreliable) account of his life until the early nineteen-twenties. There are also a number of biographies of Roy, all of indifferent quality, the best of which is V.B. Karnik, *M.N. Roy: Political Biography*, Nav Jagriti Samaj, 1978.

4. We can only speculate on Lenin's motives for recommending the adoption of Roy's theses. A recognition of his own limited knowledge in this matter and a consequent desire not to exclude different opinions, as well as a desire to encourage a young and able Asian revolutionary, would seem the most plausible explanations.


7. Robert C. North and X.J. Eudin, *M.N. Roy's Mission to China*, University of California Press, 1963, p.15. J.P. Haithcox, in his 'revisionist' interpretation of the Roy-Lenin debate, suggests that the differences between the two were less than is commonly believed. What differences there were, according to him, were tactical, stemming from the fact that Lenin was more optimistic in his assessment of the revolutionary potential of the Indian bourgeoisie than Roy, and more sceptical than the latter as to the strength of the proletariat and peasantry - J.P. Haithcox, *Communism and Nationalism in India*, Princeton University Press, 1971, chapter 1. See also his "The Roy-Lenin Debate on Colonial Policy: A New Interpretation", *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XXIII, No. 1, Nov. 1963.


9. All quotations from Lenin's draft theses are from Lenin, *Collected Works*, v. 31, Moscow, 1966 edition, pp. 145-51

10. The harsh tone of the first passage, however, was obviously felt to sit ill with the broader message, that of the progressive role of nationalism in the colonies. It was excised from Lenin's theses as they were finally adopted by the Congress.


12. Lenin reported to the Congress that this issue had been discussed in the Colonial Commission - "The question was this: can we accept as correct the idea that the capitalist development of the economy is necessary for those backward peoples who are now liberating themselves...?". The answer - "We have come to the conclusion that we have to deny it...with the help of the proletariat of the advanced countries the backward countries can arrive at Soviet organization and, through a series of stages, and even avoiding the capitalist system, can arrive at Communism" - *Second Congress: Minutes*, v. 1, pp. 112-13.

13. E.H. Carr has put it well -"The decisions of the second Congress of Comintern in the national question, like most of its other decisions, were taken in an unquestioning faith in the imminence of a proletarian revolution which would sweep the world. Once this faith was disappointed, the decisions themselves, applied in conditions utterly different from those for which they had been designed, not only falsified the intentions of their authors, but were used to justify a series of compromises and retreats which, in the hour of faith and enthusiasm, would have

14. Communists must "give special support to the peasant movement against the landowners, against landed proprietorship, and against all manifestations or survivals of feudalism". (thesis 11d).


17. At the same time, Roy does claim that a native proletariat has recently come into existence (thesis 6). If this is not simply inconsistency and sloppy thinking, it could only mean that British-owned industry in India had produced a small proletariat, despite the virtual non-existence of an Indian bourgeoisie.

18. Thesis 9. Roy does say, however, that if a revolution in the colonies is led by communists, the stage of bourgeois democracy could be skipped.

19. Lenin read Roy's draft theses before the sitting of the Colonial Commission, and made a number of cuts and amendments by hand (reproduced in *Documents*, v. 1, pp.173-77) ; a comparison of these with Roy's amended theses shows all Lenin's suggestions were accepted by the Commission.

20. "Until recently", says Roy, "there were in the colonies only national-revolutionary movements of the middle-class, whose only wish was to supplant the ruling foreigners in order themselves to exploit their own proletariat". But in recent times industry and capitalism have developed apace in the colonies, particularly in India, and this has produced a new, revolutionary, movement - "In recent years there has been a new movement among the exploited masses in India that has spread very quickly and expressed itself in mighty strike waves". It is here that the Comintern should concentrate its attention - "It is only a question of taking the correct measures to harvest the fruits of work among these masses very quickly" - *Second Congress : Minutes*, v. 1, pp. 119-20.
21. *ibid.*, p. 120. Ironically, it was one of the Italian delegates, Serrati, who on the floor of Congress argued a position in some ways similar to that of Roy's draft theses. Serrati argued against an alliance with bourgeois nationalism, as "such alliances can only lead to the weakening of proletarian class consciousness". National uprisings in themselves were, in any case, not revolutionary - the working class could only 'use' them "in order in the end to transform them into the social revolution" - *ibid.*, pp. 170-71 and 173-4. Serrati abstained when the vote was taken on the two theses.


24. *ibid.*, p. 384. This now became the accepted understanding of the effects of imperialism in the ranks of the communist movement and, in time, amongst a great many nationalists in colonial countries.


29. 'Programme' of the Communist International (adopted at the Sixth Congress) and "Theses on the International Situation and the Tasks of the Communist International", in Degras, *op. cit.*, v. 2, pp. 471-526 and 455-64 respectively.


31. A section of the bourgeoisie was still described as nationalist, even if only 'national-reformist'. Tactical agreements between bourgeois nationalist parties and communists were not ruled out. 'Radical petty-bourgeois parties', such as Nehru's Republican Party in India, were seen as 'national revolutionary'- *ibid.* , various pages.


33. The positions the Communist International adopted on the colonial question at its Fourth, Sixth and Seventh Congresses are examined in somewhat greater detail in
Chapter 4

M.N. Roy and Indian Nationalism: Marxism as Science, Pedagogy and Organisation

Following his prominent role at the Second Congress, Roy was, by his account, made a co-opted member of the powerful 'Small Bureau' of the ECCI, as well as a member of the newly formed Central Asiatic Bureau of the Comintern. In 1922 he was made a candidate member of the ECCI, and in 1924 a full member, as well as a candidate member of the ECCI Presidium. For the first half of 1927 Roy was in China, in the important role of Comintern emissary, at a crucial period in the history of the Chinese revolution.

At the same time, from abroad, with the authority of his prominent role in the Comintern behind him (as well as its resources), Roy was to play a pivotal role in the arrival and development of Marxism in India. In October 1920, with six others, Roy founded a 'Communist Party of India' - in Tashkent. Although this party never had any existence in India, and was little more than a name even abroad, its very name was significant, symbolizing the arrival of Marxism in India. In its name and in his own, Roy was soon corresponding with, advising and occasionally financing his socialist contacts in India, as well as addressing and advising the nationalist movement. Through his activities and writings - particularly the Marxist fortnightly which he established and edited, The Vanguard of Indian Independence Roy presented a Marxist analysis of Indian politics, and prescriptions based upon this. These drew from the decisions of the Second Comintern Congress, and also sought to answer some of the questions that Congress had left unanswered, or had newly posed.
In 1921, soon after the Second Congress of the Comintern, Roy began to prepare "a detailed report about the structure of the national economy and the class relations of contemporary India". The report was intended, by Roy's later account, to continue his debate with Lenin, and "to convince Lenin of the correctness of my view". In fact, as we shall see, Roy was not so much continuing a debate which he had all but conceded, but rather seeking to reinterpret the conclusions which could be drawn from it. With encouragement from Lenin, Roy elaborated this report into a book, *India in Transition*, published in Berlin in 1922.

The 'transition' which the title refers to is the transition to capitalism, which forms the major theme of the book. Whereas in his draft theses Roy made little reference to a native capitalism in the colonies, the rapid development of capitalism in India is a central thesis of *India in Transition*, supported by a wealth of - by Roy's own later admission - often exaggerated and dubious statistics.

The British, Roy argues, in an argument familiar to many Indian nationalists of the late nineteenth and twentieth century, held back the development of capitalism in India, a development which would have otherwise 'naturally' occurred. The influx of British manufactures, and the economic policies of the British government, retarded this natural evolution. Indian society changed, as India was brought under the sway of capitalist exploitation, but capitalist production did not develop. Although this state of affairs lasted for a full century and a half, it was but a 'temporary' aberration. For "the hand of history cannot be held back forever..." (p.63), and in the last decades of the nineteenth century the symptoms of capitalist development became unmistakeable. Roy points to the interrelated development of industry, large urban centres, and an Indian bourgeoisie. The latter, a product of capitalist development, facilitated that development:

British capital accomplished the destructive part of the industrial revolution in India, but prevented the constructive phase of it till, under its own
regime, the native bourgeoisie rose to build the modern India on the ruins of the old ...(p.112).

Developing gradually in the last decades of the nineteenth century, the native bourgeoisie expanded rapidly in size and importance during World War One:

The war opened up a new era for the Indian bourgeoisie... The overwhelming competition of the imperial capital was suddenly removed and Indian capital was presented with a free field of development (p.31).

Gaining in strength and influence, this bourgeoisie chafed at the restrictions and limits posed to its growth by British rule. Nationalist sentiment and a nationalist movement began to develop - "The political nationalism of modern India expresses the political ideology and aspiration of a youthful bourgeoisie which has risen in spite of innumerable obstacles"(p.156). This desire for an independent nation represents the bourgeoisie's desire for conditions propitious to a free and untrammelled growth of capitalism in India, and thus for conditions conducive to its own development - "The opportunity to develop as an economically powerful class was what the Indian bourgeoisie was striving after : their political movement was a struggle to conquer this right" (p.40).

Motivated by nationalism, this youthful and weak bourgeoisie, engaged in a struggle against an immensely superior adversary, must enlist the support of the masses. But if the Indian bourgeoisie and the masses share a common interest in the overthrow of the British, they are also divided - "these two factors [bourgeoisie and masses] are divided by class interest and this class differentiation is growing and is bound to grow wider in proportion to the further development of the bourgeoisie" (p.43).

How will this situation of commonality / contradiction come to be resolved, historically? Hitherto, Roy, in constantly invoking the spectre of history and its iron laws, has had in mind European history. The laws of history have already manifested
themselves in Europe, where capitalist development and the birth of a bourgeoisie at once marked and promoted historical progress; so too in India.

At this point, however, difference is invoked. The Indian bourgeoisie is not, in fact, the same as the seventeenth and eighteenth century European bourgeoisie, because of the very different context in which it has developed and acts:

The Indian national movement is not a struggle of the commercial-industrial middle-class against decrepit feudalism. The Indian bourgeoisie is not engaged in a class-struggle. The basis of the national movement is the rivalry of a weak and suppressed bourgeoisie against its immensely stronger imperialist prototype controlling the state power. To its great misfortune, the Indian middle-class was long ago deprived of its historic role of freeing the productive classes from the fetters of feudal bondage" (p. 204).11

This specificity or peculiarity of the Indian bourgeoisie means, according to Roy, that the antagonism between the Indian bourgeoisie and British rule is not of the same order as that which existed between the European bourgeoisie and the feudal ruling classes - "The present fight of the Indian bourgeoisie cannot be, therefore, unrelenting. Its growth and prosperity are not necessarily conditional upon the total destruction of its present enemy" (p. 204).12

There is, then, a possibility of compromise. Driven to fight imperialism in order to create the conditions for its own 'growth and prosperity', the bourgeoisie is compelled to seek to involve the proletariat and peasantry in the nationalist struggle. As they develop in confidence and organisation, however, the masses tend to overstep the bounds of a bourgeois national struggle. They begin to pursue national independence through class organisations and with class demands. At this point the bourgeoisie has an option - for if its relations with the masses are characterised by commonality as well as contradiction, its relation with imperialism is also not one of pure contradiction. Compromise with the British is possible.
Which path will it choose? The answer lies, according to Roy, in the change in British policy during and since World War One. With the outbreak of that war, the British government made a number of concessions to the Indian bourgeoisie, seeking to enlist its support in the war effort. The most important of these was the appointment of the Indian Industrial Commission in 1916, with a brief to find the best ways (including forms of government assistance) to facilitate the industrial development of India; and the imposition of a 3.5% duty on cotton imports to India, a long-standing demand of middle-class nationalists.

At the end of the war, with the Indian bourgeoisie at the head of a growing revolutionary movement, this policy was further extended, as a "means for divorcing the political ambition of the bourgeoisie from the spontaneous revolutionary upheaval among the masses", by "making clear to the bourgeoisie that it was no longer impossible for it to realize its ambitions under British rule" (p. 37 and p. 40). The Industrial Commission Report in 1918 met some of the bourgeoisie's demands for protection and assistance, while the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, enacted in the Government of India Act 1919, took a small step in the direction of representative government.

This strategy of wooing the Indian bourgeoisie, whilst successful during the war, was largely unsuccessful after it. The gains it made during the war whetted the appetite of the Indian bourgeoisie; a new access of strength led to a flexing of muscles. Nevertheless, this change in British policy means that in moments of crisis for the Indian bourgeoisie - as class differentiation within the nationalist movement develops and the mass movement oversteps the limits imposed by the bourgeoisie - reconciliation with the British will seem the lesser evil.

*India in Transition* ends by predicting such a compromise:

It has been demonstrated on various occasions during the last three years, that the mass movement cannot always be kept within the limit set according to the convenience of the bourgeoisie... The inevitable
consequence of ...[this] is the eventual divorce of the mass movement from bourgeois leadership. In that case, bourgeois nationalism will end in a compromise with Imperial supremacy, and the liberation of India will be left to the political movement of the workers and peasants, consciously organized and fighting on the grounds of class-struggle. (p. 240).

The ideas developed in *India in Transition* were to form the basis of Roy's 'Report on the Eastern Question' to the Fourth Congress of the Comintern, at the end of 1922. In that report Roy distinguished between three kinds of colonial countries - those "where primitive conditions still prevail", and where there is neither a bourgeoisie nor a proletariat; those where some capitalist development had taken place, but "where feudalism is still the backbone of society"; and those where "a native capitalism has grown, leading to the rise of a bourgeoisie with a developed class consciousness, and its counterpart, the proletariat...".

In those colonial countries in which bourgeois nationalist movements had arisen or were developing, they were to be regarded - in line with the 'Theses' of Second Congress - as 'objectively revolutionary', and therefore deserving of support. It had to be kept in mind, however, that the colonial bourgeoisie was engaged in a struggle against another bourgeoisie. Roy writes (echoing *India in Transition*), "Instead of being a class war, it is an internecine war, so to say, and as such contains the elements of compromise".

According to Roy's report this fact, not so apparent two years earlier, at the time of the Second Congress, has since emerged more clearly. Roy cites the examples of India and Egypt, where the revolutionary nationalist movement "has been brought to a standstill by the timidity, the hesitation of the bourgeoisie...".

One must therefore recognise that the national liberation struggle in the latter types of colonies "is not going to be successful under the leadership of the bourgeoisie"; "there comes a time when these people are bound to betray the movement and become a counter-revolutionary force". Hence the communist parties which have been established in the East, though admittedly at present no more than
'nuclei', are vitally important after all. For "they are based on the objectively most revolutionary factor, viz the peasants and workers", and "they will assume the leadership of the national revolutionary struggle when it is deserted and betrayed by the bourgeoisie". 18

The views expressed in Roy's 'Report' found some reflection in the 'Theses on the Eastern Question' adopted by the Fourth Comintern Congress, which declared that leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle "is no longer solely in the hands of feudal elements and the national bourgeoisie who is preparing to compromise with imperialism". 19 However, as we saw in the previous chapter, the Congress's Theses also departed from the spirit of Roy's 'Report', by extending communist support to all nationalist movements in the colonies, and by assigning communist parties in the colonies a more modest role than that urged by Roy. 20 The first Congress of the Comintern to recognise an ebb in the revolutionary tide in Europe could not adopt such a relatively 'leftist' posture on the colonial question, preferring to urge the formation of a 'United Anti-Imperialist Front' in the colonies, as the counterpart to the United Front slogan which it raised for Europe.

In some respects the analysis developed in India in Transition, and contained in Roy's 'Report' to the Fourth Congress, was similar to that which Roy put forward in his 'Draft Theses' to the Second Congress. In both cases, the conclusion to be drawn was that the workers and peasants, and the communist party, would emerge as the prime historical actors in the East. The international communist movement was therefore urged to pay maximum attention to their development. The differences between the earlier and the later position were, however, considerable. By 1922, Roy was developing and defending his amended theses (i.e., his theses as substantially amended by Lenin and then adopted by the Second Congress). He now accepted national independence as the main political project in the East, and accepted that it was vital - rather than incidental - to workers and peasants in the colonies. The bourgeois-democratic nationalist movement also was not condemned out of hand - even if
ultimately it would prove counter-revolutionary, it had to be supported and brought into alliance with revolutionary forces until its 'objectively revolutionary' potential had been exhausted.

Thus between 1920 and 1922 Roy advanced similar conclusions on the basis of a radically changed process of argument. In his draft theses the bourgeois nationalist movement was found to be unsupportable because it was nationalist; now it was condemned because it was declared to be inconsistently and irresolutely nationalist. The central role to be played by workers and peasants was now argued not on the grounds that they were only incidentally pursuing national independence, but rather because it was claimed that only they were capable of consistently and successfully struggling for national liberation.

What had happened, in *India in Transition* and in his 'Report' to the Fourth Congress, was that Roy had accepted the importance of the nationalist struggle in the colonies (as he was forced to do at the Second Congress). He had even accepted its essentially 'bourgeois-democratic' nature. But he detached this project from the bourgeoisie and bourgeois forms of struggle. As he put it at the Comintern's Fifth Congress, in 1924, "The Communist International must support national-liberation movements, but for practical purposes it must find out what class is leading them".21 This class, Roy declared at the Fifth Congress as at the Fourth, was in most cases the working class, in alliance with the peasantry. 'Bourgeois nationalism', Roy found, was a project which would be fulfilled by the 'objectively revolutionary' classes of India, which would combine the pursuit of national independence with class struggle around economic and social demands.

Corresponding to this change in the content of analysis was a change in the method of enquiry. In *India in Transiton* Roy wrote:

Whether nationalist pre-occupations - the historic necessity for political independence of the Indian people - will be sufficient for keeping the class struggle in the background indefinitely, is to be judged by the actual class
differentiation in the present social organism and by the possibility of this differentiation growing wider. (p.129)

The relation between 'nationalist pre-occupations' and 'class struggles' - and therefore the questions of which classes are capable of leading the nationalist struggle to a successful conclusion, and what form that independence might take - were now something to be studied. It was not on a priori grounds that the bourgeoisie and bourgeois nationalism were denounced, by postulating two forms of subjectivity and deducing results from that (as in the draft thesis) - but rather on the basis of an empirical demonstration that they were inadequate to their historical task.

M.N Roy and Indian Nationalism

*After India in Transition* Roy began to comment more regularly on Indian politics, in the course of which he developed further and applied this analysis and this method of enquiry. In these writings Roy sought to trace the actual process of 'differentiation' along class lines within the Indian nationalist movement, the consequent 'clarification' of class interests, and the tendency of the Indian bourgeoisie towards compromise with imperialism.

Thus, for example, in June 1922, after the Ahmedabad Congress of the Indian National Congress failed to respond to urgings to adopt a radical programme, Roy adjudged that "disintegration and readjustment are the outstanding features of the [nationalist] movement today". The period during which various classes could collaborate in anti-British struggles with the illusion that there were no divisions within the nationalist camp was fast coming to an end.

Some months after Gandhi suspended the Non-Cooperation movement due to the Chauri-Chaura incident, and this decision had been ratified by the Congress Working Committee's Bardoli Resolution of February 1922, Roy wrote that "A reshuffling of forces" and a "steady process of clarification" are "the most outstanding feature of our
movement at the present moment". This process of class differentiation and clarification consisted of competition for the leadership of Congress between the lower middle-class, which initiated Non-Cooperation but, frightened by the release of mass energy and militancy it provoked, retreated into a do-nothing orthodoxy and militant rhetoric; and the upper middle class, which sought to carry on the struggle by predominantly constitutional means, offering the British cooperation in return for concessions.

Roy interpreted the rise of the Swaraj Party as a 'faction' within the Congress a demonstration of, and further step in, this process of class differentiation within the nationalist movement. The upper middle class, organising itself into the Swaraj Party, sought to stand candidates for the councils established by the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, thereby steering the nationalist movement into a return to more peaceful and conciliatory means of 'struggle'. The lower middle class, however, having abandoned Non-Cooperation in fact, could not rest content with such a visible retreat - it sought to present at least a show of non-cooperation and militancy. "The whole controversy of Pro-change vs. No-change", editorialized the Vanguard, "was based upon this class conflict".

The Vanguard followed the rise in fortunes of the Swaraj Party, characterising this as the victory of the upper middle class within the nationalist movement. The Swaraj Party itself, however, was seen to 'differentiate', between a 'middle class' membership and a bourgeois leadership. This process, the Masses of India predicted in early 1926, would inevitably result in a split, thus marking "the completion in the process of class differentiation which has been the background of Indian politics ever since the hectic days of 1920" (emphasis added).

The above is but a limited selection of the way in which a bewildering array of often ill-defined classes flit on and off Roy's stage, in analyses which seek to trace and establish his contention that class differences within the nationalist movement are asserting themselves, and that the bourgeoisie is tending towards a compromise with
the British. Such an analysis is superficially persuasive, for the symmetrical relationship it establishes between classes and class fractions and different policies and organisational forms conveys an impression of precision and exactitude. In passing we may note, however, that in this case such 'exactitude' is an indication of shallowness.

In tracing these developments and trends, Roy becomes increasingly sceptical in his assessment of the nationalist potential of the Indian bourgeoisie. This reaches its peak in his *The Future of Indian Politics*, published in 1926, where Roy outlined what would later come to be described and denounced as the 'decolonisation theory', and would form an important part of the retrospective indictment of him following his expulsion from the Comintern.

The tendency towards compromise traced in earlier writings is here seen as having reached completion. *Indian Politics* begins with the statement, "Bourgeois Nationalism in India has ended in a complete compromise with imperialism, as was predicted years ago by those who judged the situation with Marxian realism".30

To the factors which tended towards compromise earlier -the Indian bourgeoisie's fear of mass action, and the willingness of the imperialists to grant concessions in order to split the nationalist movement - another has been added. This is an increasing convergence between the economic interests of imperialism and those of the Indian bourgeoisie - the creation of a structural link between the two, stronger even than class sympathy and a shared fear of the masses.

The old method of imperialist exploitation ceased to be viable, according to Roy, with the decline in India's massive export surplus, and (relatedly) the penetration of the Indian market by countries other than Britain. British manufactures could no longer be dumped on India and paid for out of the export surplus. The nature of the colonial relationship therefore began to change. The initial steps in this change were those discussed in *India in Transition*. A turning point came in late 1922, with the Report of the Fiscal Commission, which recommended the abolition of the Excise duty on the
Indian cotton industry, and recommended a policy of discriminating protection to promote the growth of Indian industry. The former recommendation was adopted, and the Tariff Board was established in mid-1923 to recommend protective duties.

These measures marked an attempt to promote, rather than hinder, the industrialization of India. As such they signified a reconstitution of the colonial relationship, one which would offer more efficacious means of imperialist exploitation. For industrialization would expand the Indian market, and would also open the possibility of super-profits from British investment in India:

Industrialization of a country with such enormous resources of raw material, cheap labour and potentially unlimited markets... will open up for British capital new fields guaranteeing the possibility of almost fabulous accumulation. British capital invested in India will at the same time extend the market for the production of home industries.31

This new policy also had the effect of meeting the 'cardinal demands' of the Indian bourgeoisie. British rule no longer constituted a fetter to the growth of the Indian bourgeoisie, and this lesson was quickly assimilated - "the bourgeoisie have been convinced that their economic development is possible within the framework of imperialism".32 With this convergence of interests, a compromise was effected, with the bourgeoisie joining the colonial masters in the exploitation of India's masses; old foes became partners.

The positions which Roy held and advanced in the nineteen-twenties have commonly been seen as somewhat 'ultra-leftist', and, in comparison to Lenin at least, that judgement holds true. However the nature of Roy's leftism changed in the course of the decade. After the Second Congress his leftism lay, not in his rejection of nationalism, but in his contention that the Indian bourgeoisie could not lead a successful nationalist movement, and that such a movement could only be led to victory by workers and peasants. For a brief period it lay in the related contention - one abandoned by Roy around 1923, in response to developments in India as well as his
failure to persuade the Comintern of this view - that such a national revolution, because led by workers and peasants, would 'telescope' into a near-socialist revolution.33

Through such arguments, Roy 'solved' what was for him a serious problem arising out of the decisions of the Second Congress - the implication conceivably arising out of these decisions, that communist parties and the class struggle would have to play a supportive and secondary role in the colonies until the bourgeois national-democratic revolution had been completed. However Roy's analysis was not developed simply to answer an abstract problem; he also sought to intervene in the politics he was interpreting. Roy's analysis of Indian nationalism, sketched above, was itself intended as an intervention in Indian politics. This analysis also formed the basis for other interventions. Inasmuch as Roy now accepted that national liberation was the primary goal in the colonies, it followed that Marxism could not simply bypass or ignore the existing nationalist movement, whatever its inadequacies, nor treat it as a foe. It was necessary to engage with this movement, whose goal had been accepted as a historically necessary stage in the ultimate goal of Marxism.

Marxism as Science and Pedagogy

Marxism's 'engagement' with the Indian nationalist movement initially occurs through Roy, and it takes the form of Marxism addressing the nationalist movement. This address consisted of manifestoes and programmes sent to the Indian National Congress (INC); private and open letters to figures in the nationalist movement; and a newspaper, *The Vanguard*, which offered nationalists and leftists an analysis of the nationalist movement.34 In all cases the aim is to advise, exhort and guide - to urge the adoption of a programme, or of a particular method of struggle, or organisational form, and so on. Roy says of his *Political Letters*, "The object of these letters was in some cases to point out the mistakes of the persons to whom they were addressed, in others to criticize some school of socio-political thought, in others again to indicate the broad
outlines of our programme and tactics". The comment applies to most of his writings.

Roy seeks, then, to "open the eyes" of the nationalist movement, or at least those elements of it which are likely to be receptive. Or, as he puts it in his 'Preface' to *The Future of Indian Politics*:

The object of this book is to show a way to the revolutionary Nationalist forces; to point out the causes of the decline of bourgeois Nationalism; to expose the tendency of compromise underneath the verbal radicalism of the upper middle class; to indicate the historic necessity for the fight for freedom, and to enunciate in general the programme and organisational form the fight is bound to assume in its coming phases.

To 'open the eyes', 'show a way', 'point out', 'indicate' and 'enunciate' - this is the language of pedagogy. Roy analyses and criticizes the nationalist movement in order to teach it - to teach it strategy, programme and method. Thus one aspect of Marxism's engagement with the Indian nationalist movement is that it assumes the role of pedagogue to the nationalist movement.

Roy does not only offer the nationalist movement conclusions; he offers them the method by which they were reached, namely, Marxism.

Thus in the "Introduction" to *One Year of Non-Cooperation: From Ahmedabad to Gaya*, Roy declares that Non-Cooperation is dead, as the reprinted articles in the collection had predicted. This is pointed out not in order to demonstrate 'individual wisdom', Roy adds, but rather, "only with the object of demonstrating the potentiality of a certain method of socio-political reasoning which we have always sought to introduce into the Indian movement". In introducing *Political Letters*, Roy writes that, "These letters will once more prove the potency of a certain method of reading history...". Similarly the *Vanguard*, in proclaiming that the decisions of the Delhi Conference of the INC effectively spell the end of Non-Cooperation, emphasises its purpose - "What we want to impress upon the revolutionary elements of contemporary
Indian society is the soundness of the social philosophy, economic theories and political principles we profess."40

This task is all the more necessary, Roy writes, because "the most outstanding feature of the the Indian national movement has been its lack of theoretical foundation".41 This is a major weakness, as "There must be a socio-political philosophy behind this great movement".42

Marxism is to be that philosophy. The nationalist movement is therefore to be taught, not only certain courses of action, strategies, programmes and so on - but what underlies all these, Marxism itself. This pedagogical task has a certain urgency, because the Non-Cooperation movement, and the INC, have hitherto been led by 'subjectivism' or 'Gandhism'. The proponents of this theory or philosophy are guided by "metaphysical abstraction"43 and practise an increasingly ineffective "sentimental agitation"44, consisting of little more than "beautiful idealism and high rhetorics"45, based upon a programme full of "sentimental trimmings" and "abstract idealism".46

The greatest - and most damaging - shortcoming of subjectivism is that it does not understand history as an inescapable process, and therefore imagines itself free from the constraints of history. We have already encountered Roy's evolutionist - and triumphalist- conception of history as a relentless progress in a single direction, "a continual process of evolution determined by a uniform law".47 Propelling that evolution are economic development and the class forces it generates. The 'imperious law of economic determinism', a term frequently employed by Roy, consists in the fact "that human development all over the globe follows a uniform line, modified but secondarily by local conditions ; that social evolution and political awakening are determined by the stage of economic development of a particular people". Consequently, "Every political movement is fundamentally a socio-economic struggle", and "class antagonism [lies] behind all political movements".48
The weakness of subjectivism lies in its failure to recognise this, a failure which had catastrophic results for the Non-Cooperation movement. For instead of recognising that this movement "should be directed in consonance with the dictates of imperious economic laws", its leaders "pretended to have created the situation and imagined personalities to be greater than objective forces". Failing to recognize this 'imperious law', the leaders of Non-Cooperation "acted contrary to it", and "hence their defeat".

Effective political action lies precisely in subordinating oneself to the economic laws which govern history:

The economic forces which are awakening themselves out of their age-long stagnation and apathy will assert themselves, and the leadership of the political movement must confirm (sic) to their imperious dictates... The greatness of the leader comes in where he can understand the forces behind him and can guide the movement in accordance with the natural trend of these forces.

Thus effective political action must be based upon a recognition of history as an inexorable progress determined by economic forces generating class interests and conflicts; and upon a correct 'reading' of these economic forces, class interests and class conflicts. That is, effective political action, if it consists in subordinating oneself to economic forces and historical 'laws', presupposes knowledge of those laws and forces.

Marxism provides that knowledge. It provides it because, unlike subjectivism and the like, it is a science - it is "the result of a scientific examination of the entire process of social evolution. The foundation of communism is positive social science".

Distilled from an examination of 'the entire process of social evolution', Marxism is, in effect - in very Hegelian fashion (unbeknownst, one suspects, to Roy) - the apprehension in consciousness of this evolution, of this movement of history.
However, just as that historical movement is now seen in 'hard', materialist (and in Roy's case, reductionist) terms -not as the unfolding of Spirit, but of modes of production, technology and classes - so too the apprehension of that movement is a 'hard' science, and not mere philosophy.

One aspect of Marxism's engagement with the Indian nationalist movement, then, is that it assumes the role of pedagogue to that movement. Another is that the assumption of this role rests upon a claim to being scientific. This claim, in turn, is linked with an evolutionist and economic determinist view of history. For it is only because history is governed by ironclad laws and regularities that scientific and predictive knowledge (i.e. knowledge of these laws) is possible.

If the nationalist movement accepts Marxism, or at least some of its analysis and prescriptions, the single most important practical lesson it will learn, according to Roy, is the importance of addressing itself to the material needs of the masses. For if political struggle consists of so many classes pursuing their material / economic interests, and if the involvement of the masses is a necessary element in any successful nationalist project, especially given the treacherous nature of the bourgeoisie, then the nationalist movement must seek to involve the masses by explicitly linking national liberation to their economic interests.

That the workers and peasants of India can only be drawn into nationalist struggle in a sustained fashion if national liberation promises to meet their economic needs is a claim we have encountered before. It is a theme which is hammered time and time again by Roy. As he states in his 'Manifesto' to the Ahmedabad Congress of the INC, for the masses, "It is the petty but imperative necessities of everyday life that egg them on to the fight".53 Or, as Evelyn Roy, his wife, was to put it, more crudely, 'the nationalism of the masses lies in their stomach".54

Thus Roy addresses the nationalist movement, urging it to address the economic needs of the masses. The specific form that this must take is the adoption of an
economic programme behind which the masses can be rallied. In his very first address to the INC, his 'Manifesto' to the Ahmedabad Congress, Roy declared that "the formulation of a definite programme of economic and social reconstruction is the principal task of the 36th Congress".55

In his 'Manifesto' to the following Congress, at Gaya in December 1922, Roy offered the INC such a programme. His 'Programme of National Liberation and Reconstruction' sought to commit the INC to the pursuit of full independence, abolition of landlordism, reduction of peasant rents, nationalization of public utilities, a minimum wage and an eight hour day.56 This was neither meant to be a socialist programme nor was it presented as one. National liberation was at the heart of it, and it was addressed to a nationalist party - it was what the Vanguard would later call a programme of "modified social democracy".57 The 'Action Programme' for realising this committed the INC to backing peasant and worker struggles around rents, land reforms, wages and working conditions.

Roy's Marxist pedagogy sought, then, to teach the nationalist movement that it was composed of so many classes, and that differences within the nationalist camp stemmed from this; that workers and peasants had to constitute the backbone of the nationalist movement if it were to be successful; that they could only be enlisted in its ranks if their class-economic needs were addressed; and that a programme incorporating these needs was therefore necessary. This advice was offered with the claim that it was not mere political opinion, but true knowledge, generated by a science, and that both the knowledge and the science were indispensable to the nationalist movement.

Neither of these features - Marxism as science and Marxism as pedagogy - were in any way unique to Roy's Marxism, and thus to Marxism as it first arrived in India. The claim that Marxism is a science has a distinguished lineage, going back to Engels, becoming systematically formulated in the Second International, and then, after a partial and temporary break under Lenin, becoming a fundamental tenet of the Third or
Communist International's Marxism. For Marxism to adopt a pedagogic role is more unusual, but even here the difference between this and communists seeking to 'win over' Social-Democratic workers, partly on the basis of Marxism's superiority as a theory, might be seen as one only of degree. More generally, wherever Marxism has been the 'newcomer', encountering pre-existing ideologies and movements whose generating impulses or aims are not antithetical to it (and whose supporters might be wooed), it has - to varying degrees - adopted something of a pedagogical stance.

An obvious analogy which comes to mind is that of Plekhanov (also a 'founding father' of Marxism in his country) in his debate with the Populists. In Plekhanov one finds the same passionate denunciations of moralism and subjectivism, the same insistence that history is governed by "objective laws of development", and that Marxism provides scientific knowledge of these laws, a knowledge of "mathematical exactness".58

The comparison immediately serves, however, to highlight a crucial difference. Even where he hopes to convert Populists to Marxism, Plekhanov does not entertain the prospect of subsuming the Populist project within the socialist one. The claims he makes regarding Marxism's 'scientific' appreciation of inexorable laws are made not only to demolish the theories, but also to refute the goals of the Populists; to show their project to be a miasma. Realising only too well the tragic consequences of capitalist development in Russia, Plekhanov "tried to persuade both himself and his opponents that his choice was the only 'scientific' one, that, strictly speaking, he merely accepted the choice which had already been made by history itself".59

Roy also counterposes Marxism to another theory or ideology. However he addresses a multi-class nationalist movement not with the expectation of converting it to revolutionary socialism, but in order to teach it, through Marxism, how to more effectively pursue its own goal. In the one case, Marxism, because science, 'proves' the hopelessness of the Populist project; in the other, Marxism, because science, is indispensable to the nationalist project.60
Thus when Roy writes that he undertakes the "indispensably necessary" task of "demolish[ing] these ridiculous theories [Gandhism, subjectivism, moralism]", in order to prove to lower middle-class nationalists "that the ideals they cherish cannot be realised by the methods they follow" 61, it is in order (by implication) to offer them a theory which will achieve 'the ideals they cherish'.

The Question of Organisation

Playing pedagogue to the nationalist movement was not, of course, the full extent of Roy's intervention in Indian politics. Indeed, if Marxism were to limit itself to this, it would mean that it had accepted a secondary role in the colonies - educating and organising the working class for the future struggle, but playing a supportive role (as theoretical adviser) to the nationalist movement in the present struggle. Alternatively, it could imply that Roy harboured the belief that a bourgeois nationalist movement could be transformed into a near-socialist one by pedagogic means alone, and that Marxism would come to play a leading role in India simply in this way.

In fact, neither was the case. Roy's theoretical efforts can be read, in part, as an effort directed precisely at denying the first possibility, which could conceivably follow from Lenin's theses on the colonial question at the Second Comintern Congress. The second possibility would have to rest upon a most un-Marxist disregard for the existence of different, and sometimes competing, class interests within the nationalist movement. It would, moreover, have been in direct contradiction with the content of Roy's pedagogy, which insisted upon the existence and significance of such interests and conflicts.

Roy was guilty of no such inconsistency. His addresses to the nationalist movement usually made it explicit that their message was in fact directed to a section of that movement, a section which by virtue of class position and interest was capable of accepting and acting upon it - that section which Roy characterized (this time with less
consistency) either in political / subjective terms ('left Congressmen', 'revolutionary nationalists', 'sincere nationalists' etc.) or in economic / objective terms (the 'semi-proletarianized lower middle class' of the INC, or the 'lower middle class intellectuals', and so on). Even where he ostensibly sought to influence the INC as a whole, as when he submitted programmes before it, Roy had little expectation of their being adopted, valuing them instead for the effect that their popularization might have in rallying potentially receptive elements in the INC to a new, left-wing, party and politics.62

Thus Roy's pedagogy was only one aspect of his application of Marxism to Indian politics. Another was his attempt to persuade and guide his socialist and left-nationalist contacts in India into establishing political parties. Nor were these unrelated endeavours, the one pedagogic / theoretical, the other practical / political. Roy's pedagogy was at once the bearer of a message and the instrument for its realisation - in the form of a party.

For if Roy's addresses taught that all-round unity of the nationalist movement was impossible, since class interests would assert themselves, resulting in 'differentiation' within its ranks, his appeals and programmes were also meant to promote that differentiation. They were meant to polarize the ranks of the existing nationalist movement, as some would find his message unacceptable, and others rally around it.

Simply to contribute to polarization within the ranks of the nationalist movement would, of course, be purely negative. Roy's aim was to contribute to differentiation within the nationalist movement and then reconstitute that part of it which was capable of national-revolutionary action. It would be reconstituted on a new basis - around a new programme and new methods of struggle. These would recognise the leading role which the working class and peasantry must play in the nationalist struggle; inasmuch as this insight was derived from a new theory, such parties would be based upon that theory - Marxism.
In 1923, Roy wrote:

the working class cannot be led in the anti-imperialist struggle with the programme of bourgeois nationalism, but on the other hand the anti-imperialist struggle cannot be successful without the active participation of the working class. Therefore not only for its own economic emancipation, but even for the immediate object of national freedom, the organisation of an independent working-class party has become essential. 63

The central elements in Roy's analysis and pedagogy - the inevitability of 'differentiation' within the nationalist movement, the bourgeoisie's inability to lead a successful nationalist struggle, and thus the need to mobilize the masses for it - lead directly to the question of organisation. A new programme and method of struggle are required, underpinned by a new theory - and these needs can only be satisfied in and through a political party.

All of this would be unremarkable if Roy were simply proposing the founding of a communist party; for no Marxist could do otherwise. However Roy sought to give his emphasis on the necessary connection between the nationalist struggle and the class struggle organisational embodiment or expression; and for this purpose, not a communist party, but a 'revolutionary nationalist' party was required.

In 1922, the Vanguard proposed the founding of a new party in India, a "political party of the masses based upon the principle of class interest and with a programme advocating mass action for carrying forward the struggle for national liberation". 64 In late 1922 Roy proposed a name for this party. 'The People's Party' he suggested, should be a party primarily of workers and peasants, whose "political direction" should be controlled by communists, for whom it would provide a "legal apparatus", and through which they could prepare "to capture the leadership of the Congress". 65

A few weeks later, urging his socialist contacts to attend a special conference in Europe "of those who understand the necessity of a new mass party" 66 Roy made a similar proposal, for "A revolutionary mass party as a part of the Congress, but under
the control and direction of our own party (communist party) which cannot but be illegal". 67

These proposals for a new party were ambiguous on the question as to whether this was simply a proposal for a communist party under a different name (to avoid British repression), or for a party at once different from and broader than a communist party. Clarification came when, his own proposals not having been acted upon, Roy responded to the founding of a Labour-Swaraj Party in India. Welcoming the development, Roy also advised:

we must organise on a countrywide basis with our own party and programme though functioning inside the Congress like the rest... We must insist upon our minimum programme, as drafted for the Gaya Congress, be adopted by the new party with the least possible modifications. The idea is to have political control of the legal party in the hands of the Communist Party. As far as possible the office-bearers and leaders of the legal party should be members of the Communist Party. 68

Here ambiguity was dispelled, and at the same time the connection between Roy's pedagogic efforts and his organisational efforts became clear. The programme Roy submitted to the Gaya Congress was in fact directed to a section of the INC, and was intended to serve as the catalyst for an outcome in organisational terms. It was to serve as the programmatic basis for an unnamed, legal, mass party. This was, however, a 'minimum programme', a programme which, as we have seen, the Vanguard described as one of 'modified social democracy'; a programme for national liberation and satisfaction of the 'immediate' demands of workers and peasants. Thus clearly the party being proposed by Roy differed from the communist party not only in being legal, but in being politically more 'moderate'.

At the same time, this was not a proposal for socialists to put their beliefs 'on hold' and become revolutionary nationalists, until national independence was achieved. Both ideologies and projects - the communist and the nationalist - were to be given an organisational expression or form; but the former was to exercise control over the
latter. The 'mass legal party' must be controlled by the communist party. Very shortly afterwards, in response to fresh developments in India (the circulation of a plan to hold a conference in India to launch a working class party - though the conference never eventuated), Roy made a very similar suggestion, also suggesting a name for the proposed party - this time, the 'Workers' and Peasants' Party of India'.

A year later, in October 1924, Roy had reverted to calling for a "people's party or... republic party". In this proposal, Roy set out in greater detail the reasons why such a party was needed. They followed directly from his general analysis and characterization of the Indian situation. "The peculiarity of India", Roy wrote, "does not lie in the imaginary spiritual character of its people but in the reactionary tendencies of its bourgeoisie". The 'material interests' of the bourgeoisie rendered it "historically incapable of... lead[ing] the nationalist movement", and thus its leadership "must evolve out of the ranks of the workers and peasants". At the same time, it had to be remembered "that the immediate object of the movement still remains the same, namely, national freedom". For, "Bourgeois revolution has its place in history. We cannot jump over a long period of history. All that we can do is shorten it."

It was this combination of factors - the incapacity of bourgeois nationalism to realise independence, and the fact that bourgeois revolution was a historical stage and task which could not be 'skipped' - that necessitated a People's Party. The former was the reason why a party other than the INC was necessary; the latter the reason why a communist party could not be this 'other' party. The necessity for a party other than and in addition to a communist party, and the nature of the differences (and the relationship between) the two, were further clarified by Roy in 1927, by which time both a Communist Party and Workers' and Peasants' Parties (WPP's) had been established in India. He wrote:

the WPP is distinct from the CP in that its program is not a communist program, its program is the program of democratic revolution...

Related to this, the WPP was to be "a much broader organisation":

The social elements ready to fight for this program are not all necessarily communists; but organised in the WPP they will be under the influence of the proletariat and be led by the CP without subscribing to its programme of socialism.74

All of Roy's proposals, discussed above, were attempts to forge an instrument which could 'realise' Roy's analysis and pedagogy. The various solutions Roy provided, despite some differences in content (and occasional ambiguity or inconsistency within some suggestions), and differences in nomenclature, were very similar.

Marxism and the socialist project were to find their embodiment and the vehicle for their realisation in the Communist Party of India (CPI). What Roy variously and inconsistently called 'upper middle-class', 'petty-bourgeois' and 'bourgeois' nationalism was already organised in the form of the INC. Since socialist revolution was not yet on the agenda, and bourgeois nationalism was inadequate to the task of achieving national independence, an 'intermediary form' was required. This would not be prone to the weaknesses of bourgeois nationalism, because it would be based upon Marxism and 'genuinely' nationalist classes, but it would also not be committed to and striving towards the Marxist goal. Such a party, in comparison with the CPI, would be politically diluted and sociologically broader.

This 'intermediate form' would at the same time be a bridgehead for the capture of the INC, to which it would be affiliated. By strengthening the weight of workers and peasants in the nationalist movement, and by attracting the more revolutionary middle-class elements in the INC, such a party would gradually transform and ultimately capture the INC.

Because such a party was sociologically broader than a Marxist party, and based upon a diluted Marxism (Marxism at the service of nationalism), it was necessary that it be under the control of a properly Marxist party. The CPI thus had to control the revolutionary party, guaranteeing that it remained 'revolutionary' and did not organise
the masses in order to deliver them into the hands of bourgeois nationalism, and seeking to ensure that pursuit of independence remained connected to the ultimate goal of socialism.

This position, neat and logically consistent - although once again at the price of an all too neat fit between classes, class interests and their political expressions - contained one element which did not necessarily follow from the others. If the WPP or People's Party was better equipped to pursue the goal of national independence than bourgeois nationalism, because it recognised the importance of organising the masses and so on, then what need was there to capture the INC? Could not this party simply replace the INC?

The answer to this would depend, in large part, on how realistic the prospect of 'bypassing' the INC was conceived to be, and relatedly, how worthwhile or necessary capturing it was seen to be. In 1926, at the height of his disillusionment and disgust with the Congress, Roy did in fact draw the conclusion that a revolutionary nationalist party was required to replace the INC.

In that year, in his correspondence with the Communist Party of India (which had been established in 1925), and in his *The Future of Indian Politics*, Roy made it clear - though not in so many words - that he saw the party he proposed as an alternative to an ineffectual and crumbling Congress. For the petty bourgeoisie, Roy concluded, was increasingly disaffected with the Congress, and was "gravitating towards the formation of a revolutionary political organisation to carry the fight for freedom further".75

Left to themselves, these revolutionary petty bourgeois elements were incapable of 'finding their way to the masses'. Roy concluded:

The task of the proletariat in this situation is to meet the petty bourgeois Nationalist revolutionaries half-way... the proletariat must enter, even take the initiative of organising a broader Party.76
Neither the INC nor the CPI could be this party. It would be composed of the disaffected revolutionary elements in the former, plus those it had excluded, and would be broader than the latter - would be a People's Party. As Roy explained,

Although the proletariat is destined to act as the lever of the struggle for national liberation, there are other social classes immensely more numerous than the proletariat whose importance in the fight for democratic national freedom cannot be minimised. The future of Indian politics will still be dominated by the interests of these classes - intellectuals, artisans, small traders and peasantry. How to organise these forces of national revolution in a democratic party is the immediate problem before the Indian revolutionaries... This will be done through the People's Party... 77

The nature of the relationship between the CPI and the People's Party was not affected, however, by the fact that Roy was now proposing the latter as an alternative to the INC. The CPI would belong to the People's Party, and "The proletariat", Roy wrote, "led by its own party - the Communist Party - will exercise hegemony in this revolutionary struggle for democratic national freedom". 78

Conclusion

M.N. Roy's theoretical and practical efforts can legitimately be read as being directed at denying the proposition that, because the bourgeois-democratic nationalist revolution was the main political project in the colonies, it followed that Marxism and communist parties were destined to play a supportive and secondary role in the colonies until that historical project was fulfilled. Roy advanced two counter-propositions of his own. First, that in most colonies (and, in particular, in India), the bourgeoisie was incapable of leading the bourgeois-national revolution. Second, that the working class and peasantry, by virtue of their objective class circumstances, were both the most resolutely nationalist of classes in India, and those which had the strength and striking power to realise national independence.
The combination of these two propositions led to the conclusion that it was the objectively revolutionary classes which would lead what was, still, an essentially bourgeois-democratic national revolution.

This should not, however, be read psychologically, as the story of an Asian Marxist unwilling to accept a subordinate role for the colonies in the world revolution, and for communists in the colonies. Roy was too orthodox a Marxist for such an explanation to be needed. The problem he addressed was one posed within, and by, Marxist theory, and his solution was consistent with that theory. Indeed, Roy was a painfully, self-consciously orthodox Marxist. He was a thinker concerned with relating concepts and propositions to each other in a coherent and consistent manner; relating these concepts to the reality they purported to describe was almost secondary, and here consistency was frequently foregone.

More important, it was not only Roy who was reluctant to accept the conclusion which could follow from accepting the historical and temporal priority of the bourgeois-national revolution in the colonies. Throughout the colonial countries communists sought to establish that they and the working class had a crucial role to play in the task at hand, even if this task was bourgeois revolution. In many cases, they did so in a manner similar to Roy - stressing that a successful nationalist revolution was impossible without the involvement of workers and peasants, and often also suggesting that the dominant classes were incapable of leading such a revolution. Variations on this theme became the position(s) of the Comintern. The party of world revolution was also unwilling to countenance a subordinate role for its constituents in the colonies. Thus, independently of Roy, Marxists everywhere arrived at roughly similar conclusions.

In doing so, they had much to draw upon within Marxism. The counterpart of the view that communists had, in practice, to bide their time until the bourgeois democratic revolution was completed, was the view that Marxism as a theory was a sociology of capitalism rather than a world historical theory with universal application.
This evolutionary and determinist mould, however, had already been broken by the October Revolution. Lenin and the Bolsheviks had demonstrated the immediate relevance of communist politics even in a backward country. And the example and inspiration of the Russian Revolution loomed large for Roy, as it did for all other communists of this period.

For the colonies, this was not the only grounds upon which the primacy of the bourgeoisie in the bourgeois-national revolution could be disputed; another lay in the theory of imperialism. It was through Lenin's theory of imperialism, as we have seen, that the problem of 'colonial nationalism' was constituted. Marxism accepted and endorsed the nationalist project in the colonies not only (or even primarily) on the grounds that this was a necessary historical stage the colonies had to pass through, but also on the basis that this was an anti-capitalist struggle, that successful nationalist revolution in the colonies would constitute a break in the imperialist chain. What was a bourgeois-democratic revolution within the colonies would prove something more than that 'outside' of them, in the context of capitalism as a world system. Once this was accepted, as it was at the Second Congress of the Comintern, the question of agency became highly problematic. Could the colonial bourgeoisie be expected to lead what was, at one level, an anti-capitalist struggle? If in 1920 the answer Lenin gave was a qualified and tentative 'yes', his own theory nevertheless also provided a basis on which to argue the opposite position.

It was this alternative position which Roy sought to develop, and which (usually in a 'weaker' form) was also to be developed in colonial countries other than India. Inasmuch as this position involved accepting that the nationalist struggle was an essentially bourgeois-democratic struggle, it led to pedagogy. As a movement directed at a bourgeois democratic goal, the nationalist movement included classes other than the working class; therefore they and their organisations had to be wooed and won.
On the other hand, inasmuch as it was also claimed that bourgeois nationalism could not fulfil its historic role, its organisational expressions were also inadequate to the task. Alternatives needed to be founded.

The first was the more 'conjunctural' of the two. Although Marxism was compelled to adopt a pedagogic stance towards nationalist movements in all colonial countries, in those where Marxism established a significant social / political base of its own - as in China - this stance was not as necessary and therefore less marked. The second, however, proved to be a central - and problematic - question in all colonial countries. In most colonial countries 'solutions' were sought through alliances (the CCP-Kuomintang alliance, among many others) and / or by seeking to establish hybrid organisations (the Sarekat Rajat in Indonesia, the Workers' and Peasants' Party in India, and so on) as communists sought to forge an instrument capable of mobilizing the working class and peasantry (but other classes also) in pursuit of the anti-imperialist (but also essentially bourgeois-democratic) goal of national independence.

Having argued that national liberation could not be achieved without class struggle, and that national independence was in the short as well as the long term interests of the working class, Roy also wrestled with the issue of how this 'necessary' relationship could be given an organisational form in India. One answer Roy provided was that an organisation had to be founded which would pursue the nationalist goal, but recognising the fact that the bourgeoisie was unreliable, and the working class the leading force, in this pursuit. This party would then make a bid to capture bourgeois nationalism, which was organized in the Congress. A second option outlined and explored by Roy was one where the Congress was dispensed with altogether. A 'revolutionary nationalist' party was to be founded by communists, and was to weld together and lead all the genuinely nationalist classes into national revolution. In both cases the CPI was to control the revolutionary nationalist party.

A third possible option followed from a somewhat different conception of the relationship between the democratic-nationalist and the socialist projects; a conception
which was also once held, briefly, by Roy. In this view the nationalist struggle, once betrayed by the bourgeoisie and taken over by the working class, would 'telescope' with the socialist revolution. In a scenario drawing directly upon the example of the October Revolution, a nationalist struggle led by the working class and peasantry would not limit itself to democratic aims, and would soon pass over into a Soviet Republic. In this analysis, intermediate organisational forms were unnecessary. The CPI, as the natural leader of the Indian working class, would organise the nationalist struggle and assume leadership of it, supervising its rapid progress into socialism. At the time that this option came to be embraced and pursued, Roy had long since rejected it, and found himself in opposition to it.

Variants of all three of these options, which had been advocated or anticipated by Roy, came to be pursued by communists in India, as we shall see in the following chapter. They were to be tried during, but also after the period of Roy's influence over communists in India; and they were tried out sometimes with his encouragement, but at other times in opposition to his urgings.

For the point is not Roy's importance in the history of Marxism, either as an organiser or as a thinker. Roy's influence in the development of Marxism in India (less so his influence in the Comintern) was real, and for that reason alone he would merit separate consideration in a study such as this one. However the period of his influence was confined to a few years - between 1920 and 1929 in the case of the Comintern, the latter being the year of his expulsion; and between 1922 to about 1926 in India, around which time the Communist Party of Great Britain began to supplant him as chief adviser to Indian communists.

Nor, by any stretch of the imagination, can Roy be considered a major Marxist thinker. Any such judgement is precluded, amongst other things, by his reductionism, his schematicism and his characteristic juggling of concepts in pursuit of neat and superficially persuasive analyses and solutions; and by his corresponding willingness to 'flatten' and 'fit' complex social phenomena into ready-made categories.
It is this very feature of Roy's thought which, paradoxically, constitutes its enduring historical interest. The very schematism and transparency of his thought allows one to trace, more clearly than would be possible with a thinker of greater subtlety, some of the issues confronting Marxism as it sought to engage with colonial nationalism after the Second Comintern Congress, basing itself on the premises 'established' by that congress. By examining Roy's thought we have seen the attempt (by no means confined to Roy) to avoid certain conclusions which could follow from the Second Congress, and one form (by no means atypical) which this avoidance took. We have seen how the logic of this position led to the need to postulate, and to seek to effect, a necessary rather than contingent relationship between class struggle and the goal of national liberation; we have further traced some of the implications and consequences of this, both pedagogic and organisational.

In short, whilst Roy influenced the development of Marxism in India, his greater interest lies in the fact that his thought illustrates and reveals the problems and questions which confronted Marxism as it addressed the question of nationalism in a colonial country; and reveals some of the answers and solutions which could be provided, within the framework of Marxism.
Notes


4. *The Vanguard of Indian Independence* began publication, from Berlin, in 1922. It continued to be published as a fortnightly, with some changes of name, until June 1924. During this period it appeared briefly under the title, *The Advance Guard*, and also simply as *The Vanguard*. In 1923 it adopted, under its masthead, the subtitle, 'Central Organ of the Communist Party of India', before this was again omitted from 1924. From July 1924 it was published as a monthly, and from January 1925 this monthly appeared under the new title, *The Masses of India*. In citations, all issues to end-1924 shall be cited as *Vanguard*; subsequent issues under the title, *Masses of India*.


6. *ibid.*, p. 552. The report was intended, Roy wrote, to "back up my view of the nature and perspective of the Indian revolution"-p. 551.

7. "Having studied the report carefully and warning me against wishful interpretations of facts, Lenin advised me to elaborate it in the form of a book, which would give a realistic picture of the contemporary Indian society and open up the perspective of the Indian revolution"-*ibid.*, p. 552. The English edition of *India in Transition* was published in Berlin, from where it could be sent to India with least difficulty, but it was issued in the name of a fictitious publisher in Geneva.

8. The book was published under Roy's name, but 'with the collaboration of Abani Mukherji. According to Roy Mukherji collected all the statistical material for the first chapter, and was responsible for its inaccuracies-"He was so eager to prove that India was in the throes of a proletarian revolution and therefore must have the same status in the Communist International as Germany or Britain, that he juggled the
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statistical material to present a magnified picture of the development of capitalism in India"—Memoirs, pp. 553-54.

9. "Since the capitalist exploitation was carried on by a foreign imperialist bourgeoisie, the outward effects of the capitalist mode of production were not clearly felt on the Indian society"—M.N. Roy, India in Transition, Nachiketa Publications Ltd. (Bombay), 1971, p. 97.

10. Roy writes that in the late nineteenth century "the social forces of history broke the bonds of artificial restriction and asserted themselves"—ibid., p. 93.

11. See also pp. 238-240, where this implied comparison with the bourgeoisie in Europe is made explicit.

12. Similarly,"its revolutionary energy is not pitted against an enemy which would be unrelentingly hostile to it on the ground of class-struggle. Had the Indian bourgeoisie been fighting against a feudal absolutism, no such compromise would be possible..."—p. 212.

13. The colonial question was not on the agenda of the Third Comintern Congress (22 June-12 July 1921), an omission which led to a sharp protest by Roy on the last day of the Congress—see G. Adhikari(ed.), Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India, v. 1, People's Publishing House, 1971, pp. 266-67; v. 2 published in 1974, v. 3A in 1978, v. 3B in 1979, v. 3C in 1982. Hereafter, this work is cited in the abbreviated form, Documents ; except where the reference is not to a document in the collection, but to the editor's introductory or explanatory remarks, in which case it is cited in the form, Adhikari, op. cit.


15. ibid., p.539.

16. ibid., p. 541.

17. ibid., p. 542

18. ibid., p. 543.

20. Communist parties were "urged to take part in every movement that gives them access to the masses"—ibid., p. 389.


22. Roy's articles in Inprecor, his The Future of Indian Politics (1926) and, most especially, Vanguard. Also M.N. Roy and E. Roy, One Year of Non-Cooperation: From Ahmedabad to Gaya (1923) and M.N. Roy, Political Letters (1924), though these publications consisted largely of letters and articles Roy had previously published in Vanguard.

23. Roy, "Danger Ahead", Vanguard, 1:3, 15 June, 1922 (Documents, v. 1, p. 461). Where Vanguard or Inprecor articles cited have been reprinted in Documents, they have been consulted in that source, and this reference is given in brackets, as in this case.


26. ibid.


28. See especially "The Special Session", Vanguard, 3:4, 1 Oct., 1923, p. 3; Santi Devi (E. Roy), "The Turning Point at Ahmedabad", Vanguard, 4:2, 15 August, 1924, p. 3; and also the CPI's "Appeal to the Nationalists", directed at the Belgaum Congress, which in briefly reviewing the events of 1924 asserted that the Swaraj Party had become the main force in the INC, leading to a 'decomposition' of the nationalist movement—Documents, v. 2, pp. 439-40.


30. Roy, Future of Indian Politics, p. 3.

32. *ibid.*, p. 29.

33. This argument for the 'telescoping' of the national and social revolutions, a remnant of Roy's earlier 'ultra-leftism', continued to be occasionally sounded down to about 1923. It was, however, inconsistent with other positions and arguments being developed by Roy. When in Roy's perception an alarmingly 'economistic' note came to be struck by his contacts in India, he sought to correct this - and in the process fully abandoned his 'telescoping' argument-by insisting both on the on the importance of national liberation, and on its essentially bourgeois-democratic character. On the first of these he wrote, for example, "while talking of the immediate interests of the workers and peasants we should not exclude the big issues from our programme. This tendency nevertheless is noticeable in many comrades...[But] the first and foremost problem that every political party in India must face and solve is the problem of national liberation" - "A Memorandum to the Conference for Organising a Working-Class Party in India"(5 June, 1923), *Documents*, v.2, p. 144 (Hereafter cited as 'Memorandum'). In relation to the second issue he began to urge Indian communists to recognise that "our slogan should not be a vague labour swaraj which cannot be realised for a long time yet but a democratic government based upon universal suffrage with as much protection as possible for the workers and peasants" (*ibid.*, p. 146), and to accept that "The immediate task of the communists in India is not to preach communism but to organise the national revolution..." (Roy to Bagerhatta, 22 Oct., 1924, *Documents*, v. 2, p. 386).

34. Manifestoes were sent to the Ahmedabad(1921), Gaya(1922), Belgaum(1924) and Gauhati Congresses of the INC, either under Roy's name or in the name of the CPI. A Manifesto in the name of Roy and Surendra Nath Ker was also sent to the All-India Congress Committee (AICC) meeting in mid-1922. Some of Roy's letters were collected and printed as *Political Letters*, Vanguard Bookshop, Zurich, March 1924. The *Vanguard*, although it claimed to articulate and represent the interests of the 'masses', did so primarily to the nationalist movement. Thus when the first issue of the *Vanguard* editorialised, "The Indian masses...call for a realist orientation in our political struggle. To help the formation of this much-needed realist orientation is the object of the *Vanguard*" ("Our Object", *Vanguard*, 1: 1, 15 May, 1922, in *Documents*, v. 1, p. 435), it was declaring that it would seek to introduce a 'realist orientation' into the nationalist movement.


38. M.N. and E. Roy, "Introduction", *One Year of Non-Cooperation: From Ahmedabad to Gaya*, Calcutta (place of publication probably false), 1923, p. 6. This "Introduction" is reprinted in *Documents*, v. 2, and hereafter citations will be to this rather than the (relatively inaccessible, for the reader) original.


42. *ibid.*, p. 19.


55. *Documents*, v. 1, p. 345. Emphasized in original.

56. Reprinted in *Documents*, v. 1, pp. 577-88. Similarly a 'message' of the Communist International, sent to the Gaya Congress, advised that, "Tireless and courageous agitation has to be carried on to win the masses for the cause of national liberation...The necessity of developing the revolutionary consciousness of the masses demands the adoption of an economic programme..." *Documents*, v. 1, p. 577.

57. "Our Programme: Bolshevist or Nationalist", *Vanguard*, 3: 3, 15 Sept., 1923, p. 1. This article reproduces the programme first presented at Gaya, and once again offers it to the nationalist movement. See also Santi Devi (E. Roy), "Bolshevism for India: A Melodrama", where this is described as "a mild social-democratic programme" - *Vanguard*, 2: 1, 15 Feb., 1923, p.3.


59. *ibid.*, p. 159. Further, "Being convinced that capitalist progress necessarily brought great suffering to the masses he had to put the strongest emphasis on necessity; absolute necessity...was, after all, the only justification for the acceptance of human sufferings".

60. Hence too the contrast between the almost tragic quality of Plekhanov's scientism and necessitarianism, and the triumphalist character of Roy's. For Plekhanov, Marxism discovers capitalist development to a (tragic and unavoidable) destiny, sweetened only by the fact that it will lead with equal inevitability to socialism. For Roy, Marxism's discovery of 'inexorable laws' can be put to the service of the nationalist project, which is inevitable but also progressive.

61. Roy, "Introduction", *Political Letters*, pp. 7-8. Similarly in a *Vanguard* editorial, "We believe in the law of Economic Determinism. Our movement for national liberation is also subject to this law. The more the movement grows conscious of the economic motive underlying it, the more powerful does it become" - "The Bolshevik Bogey", 1: 9, 15 Sept., 1922 (emphasis added). Here the link between
knowledge and power is explicit, as is the fact that Marxism is the knowledge referred to, and independence the 'power'.

62. In a letter to S.A. Dange, one of his socialist contacts in India (d. Nov. 2, 1922), Roy wrote that he would soon send a programme for Dange to submit to the Gaya Congress of the INC. He added that he did not expect it to be adopted, but that its popularisation would contribute "towards the organisation of a communist or socialist party..." - quoted in Adhikari, op. cit., v. 2, p. 99.


64. Quoted in Adhikari, op. cit., v. 2, p. 97.


69. Roy, 'Memorandum', Documents, v. 2, pp. 140-52. As with the proposal a month earlier, the WPP was to be based on a minimum programme, and controlled by the communist party. However here Roy comes close to collapsing the distinction between the two, for the WPP is to "maintain relation[s] with the Communist International as a fraternal party", to which it will be "eventually affiliated" (pp. 147, 148).


72. ibid. Thus, "The immediate task of the communists in India is not to preach communism", but "to be the heart and soul of the revolutionary nationalist party".

73. Roy to Central Committee's of the CPI and the WPP ('Assembly Letter'), 30 Dec. 1927, Documents, v. 3C, pp. 231-32.

75. Roy, *Future of Indian Politics*, p. 86. Similarly, the *Masses of India* declared, "The deceived and betrayed rank and file of the Swaraj Party will provide the cadre for the party of the people..."-"End of Swarajism", 3:1, Jan. 1927 (*Documents*, v. 3A, p. 251).

76. Roy, *Future of Indian Politics*, pp. 87-88.


78. *ibid.*, p. 89.
Chapter 5

The Early Years of the Indian Communist Movement: Class Struggle and Nationalist Struggle

Thus far we have traced the process by which Marxist's came to pose the question of nationalism in a colonial context. We have examined how Marxism, as a theory, moved 'towards' nationalism, conceptualizing it in particular ways which raised further (particular) questions.

The development of the first Indian communists was in the opposite direction - from nationalism to Marxism. Roy himself, of course, was an example of this. But his was an entirely atypical case. His conversion to Marxism occurred abroad, under the influence of leading figures in the international communist movement; and it occurred without any direct engagement in nationalist (or any other) politics in India.

By contrast, the first communists in India - men such as S.A. Dange, Singaravelu Chettiar, Ghulam Hussain, and Muzaffar Ahmad - all began as Congressmen. They came to Marxism as politically conscious men, as nationalists, most of them with some political activity and experience in the Non-Cooperation movement behind them. These early Indian communists did not initially seek to 'adapt' or 'redefine' Marxism in order to 'include' the nationalist goal within it. Rather, this was an evolution which saw them 'interrogate' or rethink nationalism with the aid of Marxism. Here the importance of national liberation for India did not have to be established or justified. It was the point of departure rather than a point of arrival.

The early stages of this movement from nationalism to Marxism are the story, not of a theory, but of the progress and questionings of a number of individuals. Its
carriers were less self-consciously theoretical than those who moved in the opposite direction, and they have left behind many fewer 'texts'.

One such text is S.A. Dange's *Gandhi vs. Lenin*. Born of a well-to-do Maharashtrian Brahman family in 1899, Dange began his political activities when he went to study in Bombay's Wilson College in 1917. There he and a group of like-minded students, strongly influenced by Tilak, organised meetings and published a student journal to promote nationalist ideas. Their activities led to their expulsion from the College. In 1919 Dange joined the Congress, and played an active part in the Non-Cooperation movement. However, by Dange's account, disagreements with the INC leadership's ideology and policy, and a growing interest in the Russian revolution, led him to study Marxism. *Gandhi vs. Lenin*, published in 1921 at Dange's own expense, was the product of that study.

This is a particularly interesting book, for our purposes, not only because it is an explicit attempt to explore the relationship between Marxism and nationalism, but also because it is a 'transitional' text. Its author was a Congressman at the time of writing, but one increasingly interested in and sympathetic to Marxism. *Gandhi vs. Lenin* is not, therefore, another example of a Marxist seeking to 'theorise' nationalism, of the sort we have studied so far in this work. It is, rather, an effort directed at 'thinking' both Marxism and Gandhian nationalism, each with the aid of the other. It is also a 'moment' in the movement from nationalism to Marxism. As such it illustrates some of the issues and problems posed by such a transition.

*Gandhi vs. Lenin*

Dange begins with the question, why and how were the British driven to conquer India, and why could the Indians not resist? His answer is based upon the elevation of two opposing essences - upon a distinction between 'dynamic' Europe and 'fatalistic' India. A dynamic 'spirit', Dange argues, characterises and drives Europe. The essence
of this spirit is 'individualism'. Individualism began to be propagated with the Enlightenment, which taught that the individual was "the sovereign of his destiny and his life". With the French revolution, this idea came to be established as the basis of European society.

However, rights were asserted and won without any corresponding duties being postulated. The result was a corrupted individualism, an individualism "possessing no ideal but the negation of a lie, negation of subjection to the chosen few", and not also "the ideal of subjection to the Higher Law of God, to life of common good and association..." (p. 48). Correspondingly, a corrupt or incomplete democracy was achieved. The individual not only did not gain full liberty for himself, he became an instrument for denying it to others - "Liberty for the individual was recognized a little but liberty for other nations was denied. Whole nationalities began to subject others to slavery" (p. 49).

Driven by the acquisitiveness of a corrupt individualism, the British sought to conquer. The dynamism which accompanies even a corrupt individualism - deriving from a belief in the individual as sovereign, and in his capacity to master nature - assured their success. For although the British were no more 'civilized' than the Indians, "If civilization meant refined virtues and character and mental qualities of high order" (p. 55), the "aggressive spirit of Europe" nevertheless "found easy matter for subjugation in India". (p. 53).

For India was characterized neither by individualism nor by the dynamism which accompanied it. At the core of 'Indian philosophy', which underpinned a distinctively 'Indian mind', was the religious notion of predestination, which "made the individual a firm believer in the doctrine of fatalism" (p. 51). The concomitants of this fatalism were pessimism and passivity, so that Indians "were never interested in the pursuits of gaining mastery over the forces of Nature" (p. 52).
With the British conquest, the challenge to Indians was "to awaken to the new spirit, that was coming from the whites of Europe, and either to assimilate it or reject it and give it a death-blow". (p. 54).

Left to themselves, Indians could do neither. It required the 'Genius of Tilak' to prepare Indians for the challenge:

He taught the masses their individual rights to freedom, to free speech, to be left alone in their own land and not to be exploited for the sake of foreigners. His efforts made India conscious of the outside world and brought her in level with the ideas, that were governing the forces in the new world (p. 57).

He did so, moreover, through religion -"The people of India are always in a mood to accept anything that comes from a religious source. Geeta was the only source, through which anybody could speak to the people" (p. 59). Thus it was through his reinterpretation of the *Gita* that Tilak propogated the ideals of individualism and liberty ; it was by reinterpreting a religion which had produced passivity that he fought passivity - "The people, who had been fed over [sic] doctrines of inaction or Sadhuism, gradually changed their vision and believed him. Most important of all was this conquest, of destroying peoples pessimism and making them hopeful about the future, in struggle, while serving humanity". (p. 59).

The last phrase is significant, for the nature of Tilak's individualism - and the religious manner of its propagation - made it non-egoistic, unlike the corrupt individualism of Europe. "India's faith in the higher Law and Religion was not corrupted by the new ideas of individual rights, as was the case with the nations of Europe". (p. 57).

Through Tilak, then, India assimilated the 'spirit of the age', whilst at the same time 'Indianizing' it. India was 'modernized', and the struggle for liberty began - but it was modernized in a way which allowed for the struggle to be conducted in peculiarly
'Indian' ways. "Upon modern India of Tilak, a Mahatma is making his experiments of new methods of winning liberty" (p. 60).

If we have dwelt on this at some length, it is because this is a characteristically nationalist solution to a characteristically nationalist dilemma. This dilemma is at the heart of almost all nationalist thought in India (and not only in India, but also at the heart of other colonial nationalisms). It arises out of a conflict between two impulses or desires. On the one hand, there exists a desire is to imitate those characteristics of the Western conqueror which are seen as the source of his power and his conquest (and the lack of which on the part of the colonized made conquest possible), in order to acquire that power and overthrow the conqueror. On the other hand, characteristics which are seen as uniquely 'Western' cannot simply be 'appropriated' without negating the specificity of the very unit for which they are being sought. The nation for which a distinct cultural / historical identity is being claimed, against opposition, must be defined as a unique 'people', needing and being entitled to form an independent political community.

_Gandhi vs. Lenin_ begins with this problem, central to nationalist thought; it offers a resolution which is characteristic of one strand of nationalist thought (another manner of resolving this problem, that embraced by Nehru, is discussed in the following chapter). The resolution, simply put, is that the source of the West's power is its 'spirit', the value of which must be recognized, and which must be assimilated; but that in the process it can and must be 'Indianized'. In this way the nation will gain the strength necessary to overthrow the foreign ruler, but will not thereby cease to be uniquely Indian.

At this point, however, Dange introduces a new element. If the rise of individualism occurred in Europe 'side by side' with the industrial revolution, in India industrialization has also begun. And if 'ideologies' and 'spirit', in finding root in India, can be 'Indianized' the same is not true, for Dange, of social and industrial processes:
Naturally her industrialisation will be accomplished and is being accomplished on the lines of European systems. When this is done, surely, all the evils of European industrialism, all the methods of class-war between capitalism [sic] and labour, will rear their breeding here in our Society too (p.67).

Why this should be so - whether it is because 'material' factors cannot be adapted to different cultural circumstances in the way that 'spirit' can, or whether it is because such changes have been forced upon India by its rulers, Dange does not specify. He asserts that in India, too, a capitalist class has arisen, which "exhibit[s] all the greediness, idleness, cruelty, luxurious and demoralised life consequent upon capitalism in every form and in every country" (p. 72), a class which "support[s] the foreign despotism over us", and "demoralize[s] and ruin[s] the peasantry and the wage-earning classes of our Society". (p. 73).

This too is a challenge to the emergent nation, and to nationalism, and it is one not capable of resolution in purely nationalist terms. These are divisions within the nation, and they are ones to which there is no peculiarly 'Indian' solution.

The question of national independence and the problem of capitalism are, however, structurally unconnected, even if they are contemporaneous. Just as in Europe the industrial revolution occurred 'side by side' with the rise of individualism, but not as part of the same process, so in India the question of independence and the question of capitalism are not two aspects of the same question. Thus their solutions are also temporally distinct:

How to throw off the foreign yoke? With what methods? And then how to destroy the evil of capitalism amongst us, which is making fast progress and will double its speed when we are politically free? (p. 73, emphasis added).

Gandhism and Bolshevism provide different answers to each of these questions. Both aim "To destroy the social evils of the day, especially the misery of the poor, and to subvert despotism" (p.92), but they prescribe different means to this end. The essence of the Gandhian prescription is individual purification, which alone (through
non-violence) can end despotism, and which necessarily requires the rejection of industrialism. The essence of the Bolshevik prescription is violent class struggle, which will overthrow despotism and reconstruct society, building on the basis laid by capitalist industrialisation. Dange's understanding of the 'Bolshevik prescription' is drawn less from the classic texts of Marxism, with which he displays little acquaintance, than from the example of the Russian revolution, of which he gives a highly appreciative account.

The correct answer includes elements of both these doctrines. Dange sets out his own scenario for what he terms 'the Indian revolution'.

According to Dange the Gandhian tactic of boycotting schools, courts etc., even though only partially implemented, has proved successful, for it has "created the necessary feeling of considering the institutions as worthless and has destroyed the feeling of awe towards Government authority" (p. 115). The moral authority and legitimacy of the British has collapsed, and they rule by force alone.

However this is only a negative tactic. The collapsed moral authority of the British must be replaced by the moral authority of the Indian National Congress (INC), by the building of an 'inner state' which commands the loyalty of the Indian people - "The Congress must evolve its own ministries of Education, Law and Order. The Congress must become the sovereign power of the nation" (p. 117). Having established such authority, it must exercise it to strike at the heart of British Indian finances - it must command the people to cease payment of taxes.

The British will reply with brute force, and the only answer to this lies in the hands of Indian labour:

If at the extreme moment the Indian labour refuses to work in a solid mass, if the railwaymen, telegraph men, coolies and all sorts of labourers refuse to cooperate with the government, i.e. arrange, what is called a sabotage, our success will be assured... if the Indian labour will not flinch and do its duty, we will succeed (p. 119).
After Swaraj is won in this way, the problem of capitalism must be tackled, and tackling it must be given priority. For, "we shall win only with the help of the peasantry and labour, who will naturally expect an end of their miseries, after emancipation" (p. 121). Neither Gandhism nor Bolshevism offer complete solutions - "The spinning wheel alone will not solve the labour problem of modern civilization. We cannot accept the communist plan, in all details, because it is too much fraught with coercion and violence" (p. 121).

A solution is required which, unlike Gandhism, is realistic, but which also, unlike Bolshevism, minimizes coercion and allows men to "work out their ambition". Dange sketches such a solution, which includes nationalization of major industries and utilities, a limit to the wealth any individual can accumulate, and the breaking up of large landholdings in order to distribute land to the peasantry.

If, as we have suggested, Dange's thought very much shares in a nationalist tradition, there are also more than mere 'traces' of Marxism in his thought. First of all, Dange introduces, alongside the concept of nation, the concepts of capitalism and of class. Nationalism is confronted with the question - what sort of nation currently exists, and what sort of independent India is being sought? Second, although independence and capitalism are seen as connected only inasmuch as they are contemporaneous and important issues, at a practical level a more substantial relationship is effected. For class plays a prominent role in Dange's sketch of how independence is to be gained. Further, Dange suggests that how nationhood is achieved (by workers and peasants) bears a relation to what sort of independence is achieved - and thus the concept of class 'enters into' the concept of nation.

Dange's engagement with Marxism, then, is something more than simply sympathy for the downtrodden, or admiration for the Russian revolution - attitudes which were, in any case, widespread at this time. In Gandhi vs. Lenin, concepts borrowed from Marxism, such as those of 'class' and 'capitalism', are used to broaden
the concerns of nationalism - to compel it to reflect upon itself, upon its goal and the manner of its achievement.

This, however, is an additive process - the concerns and concepts of Marxism are added to those of nationalism. By contrast with, say, Roy, Dange does not establish that there is any necessary connection between the need to transform society and the struggle for national liberation. The connection which is claimed to exist between how independence is achieved, and what sort of nation created, is at the level of a moral imperative. Because independence will be achieved by the workers and peasants, it should address their problems and needs. The nation must give justice to those who have brought it into being.

As we shall see below, the first attempts in India to establish Marxist or Labour parties which also addressed the national issue came to face the same question. If Marxists in Europe came to the conclusion that political independence for the colonies would assist the struggle for socialism, the first communists in India sought to convince themselves and others that Marxism was in some way connected with and necessary to the achievement of national independence.

**Radical Programmes and Radical Parties**

By 1922 there were small communist groups in a number of Indian cities. The Director of the Intelligence Bureau in the British Indian government concluded that, "By the autumn of 1922...Roy could justly claim an extended organisation in India: Bengal (Muzaffar Ahmad), Bombay (Dange), Madras (Singaravelu), the United Provinces (Usmani) and the Punjab (Ghulam Hussain)."^8

By this time Roy was in contact with the abovementioned figures, and he played an important role in putting these groups in touch with each other, as well as in providing them with ideological guidance and advice, through his correspondence, his
'emissaries'\(^9\) and through the Vanguard. These others were not not, however, as the report quoted suggests, all part of Roy's organisation. There was no single organisation, but rather a number of groups, and those active in them were by no means Roy's 'lieutenants'. They corresponded with Roy, and were influenced by him, but they acted independently, often ignoring Roy's advice.\(^{10}\)

These small groups of nationalists who had become Marxists 'experimented' with publications, programmes and organisational forms which would express their new-found Marxism, whilst continuing to address the question of national independence.

In August 1922, Dange began to publish a weekly Marxist paper, the Socialist. Its pages attest to his having embraced Marxism, and to the influence on him of Roy's analysis of the relation between class and national independence.\(^{11}\) It was in the Sept. 16 issue of this, India's first avowedly Marxist paper, that Dange made the first proposal for a Marxist party in India - the Indian Socialist Labour Party of the Indian National Congress.

By contrast with Gandhi vs. Lenin, this article hardly raised the issue of national independence. The object of the ISLP was to be "the establishment of the people's state in which land and capital are owned communally and the process of production, distribution and exchange is a social function democratically controlled"\(^{12}\), to be achieved by "the organization of the workers politically to capture the power of the state and industrially to take over the control and management of the industrial machine".\(^{13}\)

With the zeal of a new convert, Dange was now less concerned with nationalism than with establishing a connection between the class struggle in India and 'the great international [socialist] movement', \(^{14}\) and with putting socialism on the agenda. However, even if ideologically Dange had embraced Marxism to the extent of ignoring nationalist concerns, his political world was still one where nationalists and nationalist
organisations remained crucial elements of the landscape, and could not be ignored. Thus the proposal for an ISLP was addressed to the 'radical minded men of Congress' and the party was to exist and function within the INC. The ISLP was stillborn, and future attempts to found a Marxist party in India addressed the national question more directly.

At the Gaya Congress of the INC (in December 1922) Singaravelu and others distributed Roy's proposed programme for the INC, and the formation of a left-wing party was discussed by some of those present. These discussions resulted in the production of, and publication of (in March 1923) a 'Manifesto' for a new party. This was subsequently rewritten and issued in late April under the names of Singaravelu and M.P.S. Velayudham (who signed themselves, 'Indian communists'), as the manifesto of The Labour and Kisan Party of Hindustan, launched in Madras on May Day.

The manifesto of the Labour Kisan Party began by pointing to the shortcomings of the INC. It had not addressed the needs and grievances of the masses, and it had not done so because of its class composition - "The backbone of the Congress being capitalists and zamindars, it cannot give any economic relief to the labourers". This class bias was reflected not only in the day to day activities of the INC, but in how it defined its goal - "The Indian National Congress, our chief political organ, appears to define 'nation' by reference to the propertied class...Their idea appears to [be to] substitute an Indian bureaucracy recruited from the bourgeoisie to stand in the shoes of their present European masters".

Marxist concepts were now being used, not only to reflect upon what sort of independent India was being sought, but also to criticise the organisations pursuing national independence. The concept of class served to highlight one of the limitations of the INC. The Labour Kisan Party was to be a response to this limitation. It would seek to include the interests of the excluded in the nationalist agenda, thereby making it a 'truer' more genuinely representative, nationalism - "This party as an organised body
will affiliate itself to the Indian National Congress, making it the labour and kisan section of the Congress...in order to make the Congress a real national body".\textsuperscript{18}

It would represent both the immediate and the ultimate interests of the workers and peasants. The former were summarised in an 'Action Programme' included in the manifesto - a potpourri of demands such as the eight hour day, the right to strike, profit sharing, rent reductions and so on.\textsuperscript{19} The ultimate goal of the Party was outlined in a detailed and wordy 'Provisional Scheme of Swaraj' a vision of a semi-socialist India where industries are nationalised and the state is a vertical chain of democratic panchayats (village councils), from village to all-India level.\textsuperscript{20}

However no connection was effected between these 'immediate demands' which it was felt necessary to place on the nationalist agenda, and the ultimate goal of an independent and socialist India. In \textit{Gandhi vs. Lenin}, as we have seen, a connection between 'means' and 'ends', between how the nationalist struggle was waged and what sort of nation was founded, was effected in the form of a moral imperative. Because independence would be won by workers and peasants, the new nation, Dange concluded, was duty-bound to address their class interests. In the manifesto of the Labor Kisan Party no such connection was established between methods of struggle and their implications for the end achieved.

The Marxism of the authors of this document consisted of a recognition of the existence of class interests and divisions, an identification with the working class and peasantry, and a desire to see a (highly unorthodox) form of socialism instituted in India. This was then 'combined' with nationalism by being added to it. Marxism served to broaden the concerns of nationalism - it included those interests which nationalism had excluded. It did not so much reformulate nationalism (in terms of its activities and goals) as complete it. Thus in organisational terms, the Labour Kisan Party was proposed as a representational device, a means of voicing the concerns and interests of those hitherto unrepresented in the nationalist movement. This was not, however, accompanied by any alternative strategic conception-although the
proposed party was to seek a 'labour swaraj', it would seek it through the INC, and by 'nonviolent means'.

The effect of all this was not only that Marxism was simply added to nationalism, rather than substantially reformulating it, but also that the 'Marxism' of the manifesto was a bifurcated Marxism. Its immediate demands and its ultimate goal each came to assume an exaggerated form, appearing as economism on the one hand (narrowly defined economic demands) and utopianism on the other (blueprints for socialism). This was to be noticed, and criticised, by Roy.

In the event, the Labour Kisan Party had a short lived and uneventful existence, though this owed more to the prevailing social and political conditions than to its theoretical confusions. The initial attempts to found a socialist party in India all ended in failure. They did not proceed beyond the stage of announcing their existence and issuing a manifesto or two. The communist movement in India continued to exist in the form of a few small groups in different cities, centred around one or two key personalities and sometimes a newspaper.

Even this humble and precarious existence was shattered when, in mid 1923, Shaukat Usmani, Muzaffar Ahmad and Ghulam Hussain were arrested. In early 1924 charges were filed against the above three as well as five others (including, in absentia, M.N. Roy) for 'conspiring to deprive the King-Emperor of his sovereignty'. The 'Kanpur Conspiracy Case' was tried in April-May 1924, with Dange, Nalini Gupta, Usmani and Ahmad being convicted and sentenced to four years rigorous imprisonment. Hussain and Singaravelu were not proceeded against, the former having turned informer and the latter being ill.

By now socialist 'ideas and sympathies had spread beyond their first proponents. On November 1, 1925 the 'Labour Swaraj Party of the Indian National
Congress' was founded in Bengal, composed of communists, a group of radical literati and a number of Muslim radicals.\(^{24}\)

In programmatic terms there was little to distinguish the Labour Swaraj Party (LSP) from its predecessors. While it identified its special concerns by declaring its goal to be an independence "based on social and economic emancipation", this was to be achieved by the INC strategy of "nonviolent mass action", and INC membership was a condition of membership to the LSP.\(^{25}\) The party sought to represent the workers and peasants in the INC, by putting forward both their 'immediate' and 'ultimate' demands, again without any discussion of how the former might lead to the latter.\(^{26}\)

Exactly a year later, a similar party - the 'Congress Labour Party', composed of communists and radicals in the Bombay Congress - was founded. In February 1927 both parties had conferences where they adopted the common name, 'Workers' and Peasants' Party', and where they adopted similar programmes. By now the communists, including the Kanpur prisoners, who had been released, were organised in their own party and were taking an active role in promoting the development of the Bombay and Calcutta parties (see next section).

Reflecting, in part, this fact, the programme of the Bombay Workers' and Peasants' Party (WPP) was relatively more sophisticated - certainly more precise and less wordy - than those which had preceded it. However the basic political position it outlined was very similar. The nationalist parties were accused of having paid only lip service to the needs of workers and peasants, while "have[ing] shown in practice a complete lack of interest in the political, economic and social needs of the peasantry and working class, and by their actions have[ing] proved themselves to be parties promoting the interests of imperial and Indian capitalism".\(^{27}\) Thus it was necessary that "A political party of workers and peasants be established to voice the demands of these classes within the National Congress, to promote the organisation of trade unions...to advance the organisation of peasants on the basis of their economic and
social requirements...and thus to secure the social, economic and political emancipation of these classes”.28

The Bombay and Calcutta WPP’s differed from previous such organisations in one important respect. In seeking to represent the masses within the INC, they also actively sought to build themselves a constituency which they could then ‘represent’, at a time when conditions were in some ways favourable to such an enterprise. How they did so, and with what success, we shall see later.

The Communist Party of India

The various experiments with founding a party that would at once reflect Marxist and nationalist aspirations meant that there was little impetus for the formation of a communist party. The idea seems to have been floated for the first time just before the arrests of the Kanpur prisoners, by Dange. By his account, he raised the issue again in jail, where it met with a lukewarm response from his fellow prisoners.29

In the event, the initiative which resulted in the founding of the Communist Party of India was taken not by one of the leading Indian communists, but by the lesser known Satyabhakta, leader of a Kanpur based 'Indian Communist Party' which he had established in late 1924.30 In 1925 Satyabhakta issued an invitation to all the existing communist groups in India to attend a conference in December of that year (to be held simultaneously with the Kanpur Congress of the INC), to found a Communist Party of India. The conference was well attended, but Satyabhakta himself was politically isolated at the conference, and left the newly formed party soon thereafter.31

In this way the Communist Party of India was founded, with a Central Executive Committee (CEC-including Ahmad, Singaravelu, K.N. Joglekar, and S.V. Ghate and J.P. Bagerhatta as General Secretaries) and an office to be established in Bombay.32 These rather casual beginnings were reflected in the absence of any reference to the
Comintern in the Party's first constitution, and in its failure to adopt any programmatic
document. Indeed, in its first year, the Party could hardly be said to have existed at
all, with its activities confined to little more than issuing a leaflet on communalism,
and a brief propaganda tour planned as a lead up to greeting visiting Communist Party
of Great Britain (CPGB) MP Shapurji Saklatvala.

In 1927 the lack of international contacts and guidance began to be remedied. At
its meeting in June the CEC adopted a new constitution which made adherence to the
Comintern Programme a condition of membership. Acceding to Roy's requests, the
new constitution also provided for a 'Foreign Bureau' of comrades outside the
country, to act as an "ideological centre" and as "the organ through which the
international relations of the party will be maintained". Roy, Clemens Palme Dutt
and Muhammed Ali were the members of the Foreign Bureau.

Both the Foreign Bureau and the Colonial Commission of the CPGB (which had
been created in the aftermath of the Fifth Comintern Congress) were to maintain regular
contact with the CPI. According to the Director of the Intelligence Bureau of the British
Indian Government, from the latter half of the nineteen-twenties the Foreign Bureau
was to send fifty or more letters to India, offering advice and instruction on a wide
range of matters. Indian communists in fact now had more than one mentor, with
the CPGB, and the Dutt brothers in particular (Clemens Dutt was a member of both the
Colonial Commission and the Foreign Bureau) supplementing Roy. Indeed, with the
despatch of its agents to India, the CPGB became the greater of the two influences.
Two of these agents - Philip Spratt and Ben Bradley - were to prove active and able
organisers from the time of their arrival in India (December 1926 and September 1927
respectively) until their arrest, along with other communist leaders, in March 1929.
Their active involvement in the Indian communist movement enhanced the prestige and
influence of the CPGB.

Although there was now an avowedly communist party in India, attempts to
develop and promote an organisational form reflecting a Marxist-nationalist 'synthesis'
did not cease. The natural inclination of Indian communists was to continue their activities in the WPP's, which they had played such an important role in founding.

This inclination was encouraged by their international contacts. By the mid-1920's both Roy and R.Palme Dutt had arrived at two related conclusions. First, since independence and bourgeois revolution, and not socialism, were the main tasks in India, Marxist theory and programmes had to reflect and incorporate these concerns. Second, such a synthesis required an organisational form embodying it and seeking to 'implement' it in practice. Roy, as we saw in the last chapter, continued to offer (changing) advice on how this might be achieved. Thus as the WPP's began to register successes, they met with an encouraging and sympathetic response from Roy and the CPGB.

The effect of this was that, despite the existence of a CPI, the WPP's became the main area and vehicle for communist activity in India. Energies were directed at building the WPP's; successive meetings of the CPI CEC urged members to so. At communist initiative, WPP's were founded for Punjab (April 1928) and United Provinces - Delhi (October 1928). And, while the WPP's grew in importance, the CPI in this period failed even to develop a press or launch a programme in its own name.

The Workers' and Peasants' Parties

The two Workers' and Peasants' parties which had emerged out of the Labour Swaraj Party and the Congress Labour Party found themselves, by 1927, operating in a more favourable environment than that which their predecessors had faced. After a long period of disorganisation and relative absence of mass activity, which followed Gandhi's abrupt withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation movement, the INC and the nationalist movement began to pick up momentum. This coincided with the adoption of more militant policies and tactics by the INC, indicated by its declaration, at its 1927 and 1929 Congresses, that complete independence was its goal, by its efforts at
mobilizing mass opposition to the Simon Commission, and by the increasing importance within it of an increasingly radical Jawaharlal Nehru. 1927 also marked the beginning of a resurgence of labour militancy, a wave of labour-capital conflict which would surpass the tumultuous conflicts of 1919 - early 1922.\textsuperscript{39} Whereas previous parties of this kind had been founded at a period of ebb in both nationalist and labour militancy, the WPP's were formed at the beginning of a resurgence in nationalist struggle, and at a period when the working class constituency they sought to represent was to assert itself as never before.

The WPP's were also better prepared than their predecessors to take advantage of such a situation. There were more socialists in India, and more experienced ones, than before. There was a CPI, composed of some of the most advanced and dedicated left elements in India, to guide them. And, despite the theoretical shortcomings of their 1927 programmes, the WPP's were independent parties; the scope of their activities was not limited by what could be achieved through the INC, but depended, in part, on what could be achieved outside of the INC, amongst workers and peasants.

Within the INC, the WPP's proposed and sought to mobilize support around programmes similar to those which had been proposed by M.N. Roy. Thus in 1927 the Bombay WPP proposed a programme to the All-India Congress Committee (AICC), and at the end of the year the Bengal WPP submitted a manifesto to the Madras Congress of the INC. Both sought to commit the INC to leading a mass struggle for full independence, and to fighting for an independent nation where universal suffrage and peasant and worker rights were guaranteed.\textsuperscript{40}

In contrast to the situation when Roy had presented his proposals to the INC in the early nineteen-twenties, a party now existed to follow up these proposals. Given that such programmes were clearly not going to be adopted by the INC immediately, the task was to use them to mobilize and unite the left-wing elements within the INC. Thus WPP members worked as a fraction at the Madras Congress, seeking support for their manifesto and resolutions. The historic resolution which committed the INC, for
the first time, to pursuit of full independence, was moved by Nehru and seconded by Joglekar, the latter a member of the Bombay WPP and the CPI CEC. Enough support crystallised around militant nationalist and leftist positions for a 'Republican Congress' to be held at the Congress pandal upon the conclusion of the Madras Congress, bringing together left wing delegates and presided over by Nehru.

Similar successes were registered at provincial and district level Congress organisations. The WPP's became a significant force in the Bombay and (less so) in the Bengal Provincial Congress Committees, both in terms of gaining representation and of influencing the policy and activities of these bodies. Representation was also secured on the AICC.

In the context of a general leftward drift within a section of the INC, then, the WPP's succeeded in some measure in putting militant nationalist demands and worker-peasant demands on the nationalist agenda, if not in actually getting the INC to adopt these. They played an important role in bringing together left forces in the INC. Finally, WPP members active in the INC enhanced their own prestige and influence and that of their organisation.

The greatest successes of the WPP's, however, and particularly of the Bombay WPP, occurred outside of, and sometimes despite, the INC - amongst the working class itself. By late 1928 the Bombay WPP had established unions on the docks, in the printing industry, on the trams and among municipal workers, and had considerable influence amongst GIP railway workers and oil depot employees. Most important, they had established a strong base amongst the largest, oldest, most concentrated and most class-conscious section of the Indian proletariat - the Bombay textile workers.

The mid-1920's were a period of serious depression and of labour-capital conflict in the Bombay textile industry. Management attempts to surmount the crisis by a series of measures designed to standardise wage rates and intensify the labour process (which necessitated redundancies) were met by resistance - largely sectoral
and uncoordinated - from the workforce. Strikes in this period heralded the major showdown which was to come, and they saw WPP members and sympathisers active in the mill areas - K.N. Joglekar, Dange, S.S. Mirajkar, and two worker leaders close to the WPP, A.A. Alve and G.R. Kasle - became well known and popular figures among the mill workers.

The expected showdown came in 1928. The general strike in Bombay's textile mills from late April to early October was total, an astonishing example of the militancy and class solidarity of the Bombay mill proletariat. It also saw the creation of the communist and WPP led Gimi Kamgar Union. Established part-way through the strike (in May), the GKU soon outstripped the moderate textile unions in influence and popularity. More than that, the GKU pioneered forms of strike organisation designed to allow workers control over the conduct of the strike. The system of 'mill committees' instituted by the GKU placed initiative and power in the hands of the workers themselves, building their confidence and militancy, and creating a cadre of worker-militants for the future.

After the strike was concluded, with employers forced to agree to return to previous wage rates and to suspend 'rationalizations' pending a report by an Enquiry Committee, the GKU drew the full fruits of its activities. Workers flocked to join the new union. In October, at the conclusion of the strike, membership was about 27,000; by December, about 50,000; by January 1929, possibly as much as 100,000.

The 1928 mill strike saw the WPP extend its influence by organising workers around economic, class demands. However the work of linking these to national demands, and of seeking to involve the working class in the nationalist movement, was not entirely neglected. The WPP press organ, Kranti, propagated on the connection between the workers economic grievances and the British rule in India, and the Party sought to effect a practical link between these.
In this regard, the Bombay WPP registered an important success during the visit of the Simon Commission to Bombay in February 1928. The Simon Commission, appointed to draft recommendations for political change in India, but without any consultation with Indian opinion, was opposed by almost all shades of nationalist opinion. February 3 was declared by the INC to be an all-India protest day against the exercise, and the hartal and huge demonstrations which greeted the Simon Commission in Bombay owed much, in the judgement of the Bombay Commissioner of Police, to the communist's success in mobilizing workers for it. WPP slogans and banners such as "Nothing Short of Independence" and "Living Wage" were prominent at the demonstrations.

Thus by late 1928 the Bombay WPP had succeeded in organising, and establishing its influence over, a significant section of the Bombay proletariat, and in becoming an organised and not insignificant presence in the provincial Congress. It had not succeeded in translating its increased influence into organisational strength, nor is there evidence indicating that much of an attempt was made to do so. This, along with the worry that the Party was not sufficiently distinguished in the public eye from the INC, was a cause of concern, and was to contribute to a more assertive stance from the end of the year.

Despite this, the Party's achievements were considerable. Its influence within the Bombay working class was significant. Amongst mill workers the Party had a strong base, with the GKU being an organization of the WPP, and its executive committee composed almost entirely of WPP members. The party organ, Kranti, had become regular reading among mill workers during the 1928 strike. Party leaders, in consequence of the strike, commanded recognition and support; in one somewhat ungenerous description, they were "transformed in a few short weeks from a faction of self-important Congressmen to something close to a band of popular heroes". One indication of the growing importance of the WPP and of the Bombay workers was the reaction of the British Government. Upon assuming office in late 1928, Frederick
Sykes, new Governor of Bombay, identified "the labour situation, and especially the Communist agitation" as one of the two main problems confronting him (the other being the crisis in Government finance).50

The record of the Bengal WPP was more mixed. In 1926 (as the Peasants' and Workers' Party) it had only forty members, and as its Executive Committee Report of 1928 admitted, "the Party was able to make little progress".51 In the following two years, however, progress was made. In 1927 the Bengal Jute Workers' Association affiliated to the WPP, and a number of officials of the union joined the Party. The party also established unions, in 1927 and 1928, amongst Calcutta Corporation scavengers, the carters of Burrabazaar, the workers at the Kesoram Cotton Mills in Calcutta, ordnance factory workers at Ichapore, and the employees of the Angus Engineering works at Shamnagore.52

Party members were also active in the great strike wave of those years, in such major strikes as that of the Bengal-Nagpur Railway workers at Kharagpur in 1927, the long and bitter strike at the Lilloah rail workshops (January-July 1928), which saw police fire on workers and workers respond with massive marches through the industrial suburbs of Calcutta, and the jute mill strikes at Chengail and Bauria in 1928, which saw WPP activists and union leaders addressing the almost daily meetings of striking workers in the mill areas.

If, like its Bombay counterpart, the Bengal WPP was active in the working class upsurge of these years, it was also, however, less successful. WPP capacity to influence the Kharagpur railway workers strike was limited by moderates' control of the union, and the strike ended in failure. The strike at the Lilloah workshops ended in complete defeat, and with militant workers being victimised in the aftermath of the strike. Spratt was later to describe the Lilloah strike as a mistake which ended 'tragically'.53 The jute mill strike at Chengail, primarily over the issue of union organisation, ended inconclusively, with the management forced to negotiate with the union, but refusing to accord it official recognition. The jute workers strike at Bauria,
which began with a management lockout over worker resistance to an intensification of
the labour process and retrenchments, was long (July 1928-January 1929), bitter and
protracted. Despite attracting considerable public sympathy, the aggressive and
sometimes violent prosecution of the dispute by management saw it end in defeat for
the strikers.

Perhaps more than this, the Bengal WPP failed to establish any strong base - and
any enduring union structure - among the working class. Its control of a few unions
did not amount to the same thing, for unions in India were frequently little more than a
few self-appointed middle class union 'leaders', with a real or paper membership,
but no functioning union structure. The Bengal WPP failed to establish any equivalent
of the GKU.

The Party was also bedevilled by internal differences. The entry of some former
Anushilan Samiti members into the Party in 1927 enhanced its prestige and influence,
establishing a link between it and the main non-Congress nationalist current in Bengal,
that of 'revolutionary terrorism'. But it also factionalized the Party. Two competing
and hostile groups formed, one around Muzaffar Ahmad, CPI member and autocratic
and doctrinaire guardian of communist orthodoxy, and the other around ex-terrorists
Gopen Chakravarty and Dharani Goswami. This factionalism seriously impeded party
work, and in 1929 led to a debilitating split.

Despite all this, the Bengal WPP succeeded in establishing its presence - it
appears relatively unsuccessful only in comparison with its Bombay counterpart. Party
members gained election to the All-India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) Executive,
the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee, and the AICC. It sought, like the
Bombay WPP, to use its influence to involve workers in the nationalist struggle, and
thereby influence the conduct of that struggle.

Thus in December 1928, together with radical Congressmen and trade union and
peasant leaders, the WPP led over 20,000 workers in a dramatic storming of the
Calcutta Congress of the INC. After a scuffle the Congress session was temporarily suspended, and the workers and their leaders occupied the Congress auditorium, passing a resolution declaring that, "The mass meeting of the workers and peasants from all industries declare that we, the workers and peasants of the land shall not rest content till complete independence is established and all exploitation from capitalism and imperialism cease. We call upon the National Congress to keep that goal before them and organize the national forces for that purpose". The Party was similarly active in mobilizing attendance for the big demonstration which greeted the Simon Commission upon its arrival in Calcutta in January 1929.

The growing strength of the Bengal and especially of Bombay WPP in the trade union movement was reflected in the All-India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), which they made an important sphere of work. Working class militancy and, relatedly, the growing representation won by the WPP's in the AITUC, saw it abandon its stance of keeping a distance from political issues, a stance it had maintained since the mid-twenties. From 1927 the AITUC began to adopt a position, and an increasingly militant one, on the important issues of the day, declaring itself against imperialism, for independence, and in favour of a "socialistic republican government of the working classes". At the ninth Congress of AITUC, in December 1928, WPP members felt sufficiently confident to contest the position of President, which they lost only narrowly, despite the fact that the opposing candidate was the highly popular Jawaharlal Nehru. When the first split in the AITUC occurred, at the end of 1929 it was the 'moderate' elements who left, finding themselves in a minority.

The formation of the WPP's marked the first successful attempt at establishing viable Marxist parties, parties which succeeded in establishing real links with the class they sought to represent. The form they took and the policies they pursued endeavoured to combine Marxism and nationalism by effecting a relation...
between working class and nationalist struggle, between class demands and the national demand.

The WPP's came to do much more, however, than simply 'voice the demands' of workers and peasants in the INC, as their 1927 programme declared. They also organised trade unions and led strikes; they sought to politicize workers and to involve them in the nationalist struggle; and in doing so, they emerged as an independent force articulating an independent politics, both within and outside the INC.

Even in the early stages of this process, it seemed clear to the communists that the WPP's were the most appropriate organisational form through which to advance communist politics in India, and that this form should be developed and extended. In mid-1927 a CPI CEC meeting had called for the creation of WPP's wherever possible. A CEC meeting in December of that year announced that "the formation of an All-India Workers' and Peasants' Party was desirable in the near future". It decided that a conference for this purpose should be convened in February or March 1928, and appointed Dange, Joglekar, Usmani and C.G. Shah to prepare resolutions and theses for the conference.

This was followed up by an extended Executive Committee meeting of the Bombay WPP held in early in 1928, and attended by representatives from the Bengal WPP as well as trade union and other sympathisers of the party. This meeting decided to launch an All-India Workers' and Peasants' Party (AIWPP) at a conference in April. The resolutions which had been commissioned at the December CPI CEC meeting were tabled and discussed.

As the conference to launch an AIWPP had to be deferred until December, the resolutions which had been prepared for it were, in the interim, adopted by the Bombay WPP (with some amendments) at its annual conference in March 1928, and (with further small changes) at the Bhatpara conference of the Bengal WPP on 31 March -1 April 1928. They were then reproduced for public distribution in A Call to
Action, a pamphlet reporting the proceedings and resolutions of the Bhatpara conference.61

These five resolutions or theses - a general political analysis cum programmatic statement, and resolutions on organisation, trade union, peasant and youth work - were impressive for their scope, and for their concrete and realistic analysis. The general resolution was also substantially different from the WPP programmes of 1927, indicating yet another attempt to combine Marxism and nationalism, this time in the light of the experiences gained since 1927.

At the heart of this 'Marxist-nationalism' were two linked propositions. First, that national independence and a bourgeois-democratic regime were in the immediate and long-term interests of the working class and of other exploited classes in India. It was both a good in itself and a necessary step to be achieved in pursuit of the socialist goal. The WPP, its resolution declared, "must demand on behalf of the masses complete independence, and the establishment of democracy - universal adult suffrage, freedom of speech etc., the abolition of the native states and the landlord system, and the guarantee of the economic, political and social rights which the workers and peasants as classes require". These would be achieved by a Constituent Assembly, which would declare independence and promulgate such rights.62

Such a goal, the resolution went on to declare, was not sought by the Indian bourgeoisie, which to an increasing degree was in a position of "subordination but alliance" vis-a-vis the imperialist bourgeoisie, and which therefore sought "compromise with imperialism". Having abandoned leadership of the nationalist struggle, the bourgeoisie had become, in fact, an obstacle - "the bourgeoisie by the policy of acquiescence are obstructing the progress of India".63

This led on to the second fundamental proposition of the document - that "the industrial working class alone is fitted to lead this struggle through to the end", at the
head of a mass movement composed of "the exploited sections of the population, the workers, the peasants, and the middle classes".64

Neither of these propositions was new in the history of Marxism. The view that national independence was the immediate goal in the colonies, even from the viewpoint of the working class, had been held by most communists since the Second Congress of the Comintern in 1920. The assertion that the working class was also necessary, even central to nationalism, was a step which could logically follow, and one which had the considerable advantage of suggesting a necessary link between Marxism and nationalism. This was a step which, as we saw, Roy took. Now communists in India, because they were influenced by Roy and others, but also very much because of their own experiments and practical experience, were arguing similarly that the relation between national struggle and class struggle was a necessary one.

The WPP resolution deduced two main 'tasks' arising out of this claim. First, that since it was necessary for the working class to secure national independence before it could achieve socialism, it was also necessary to 'share' this goal and this struggle with others. That is, it could not be appropriated by the working class and by Marxism alone. Therefore it was necessary to work with and within the most important nationalist organization, the INC, precisely in order to develop a movement broader than the working class alone:

We must endeavour to make the Congress adopt a programme of mass demands and to support them in its current propaganda. We and our sympathisers must become members of the provincial and all-India congress committees, and take active part in such work as leads towards the development of [a] mass movement. We must support the Congress while it fights imperialism, but must not hesitate to criticize the compromising tendencies of Congress leaders, however prominent.65

However, and second, the fact that the working class was also seen as essential to the achievement of independence meant neither merely 'voicing the interests' of the working class in the INC, nor simply seeking to capture the INC, would do. Precisely
because the mass movement was broader than could be encompassed by any one organisation, the crucial task was to organize the working class as a class, in order that it participate in and leave its decisive imprint on the nationalist struggle:

The fundamental work before the party is to organize the working class and give it sufficient political education to enable it to come forward as the leading section of the mass movement which is now rising in India.66

These two tasks, ways of realising in practise the necessary interdependence of the working class and the nationalist goal which was postulated in theory, required in turn an independent political party for their achievement. A party was required to work within and outside the INC to build a mass movement of the exploited; to organize and politicize the working class, and make it an active element in the mass movement; and to do so in such a way that it eventually assumed leadership of that movement.

The task of building such a party could not be subordinated to pedagogic aims or to alliance building. Its fundamental relation was not with other parties which were premised on different but overlapping goals, but the mass nationalist movement which was rising and had to be built. Such a party would work with and through other parties in order to effect a relationship between Marxism and the nationalist movement, not between Marxism and nationalist parties. Thus it was necessary for it to have an independent and distinct identity:

The party must be prepared to cooperate, without losing its identity, with all parties and organisations which will fight for the liberation of India from imperialism. But the establishment of our own organisation is our first task...67

Based upon - and seeking to effect in practice -a relation between Marxism and nationalism, the party would reflect that in its own 'form'. It was a party which fell short of being communist, on the one hand. On the other, it was not simply a 'voice' within a nationalist party - the party was not the same as the nationalist movement (which included many classes and parties), but was the working class element of it, seeking to become the leading element.
The resolutions of the Bhatpara conference indicated that by this point, in 1928, communists in India had arrived at a position in which the relationship between Marxism and nationalism was seen as a necessary one; a position which neither simply 'added' Marxism to nationalism, nor 'swallowed' the latter into the former. This was a position very similar to that of Roy's, though the practical conclusions drawn were somewhat different. The WPP did not aim at capturing the INC, but rather at building a working class movement to the point where it could take over leadership of the nationalist struggle.

The End of the Workers' and Peasants' Parties: the CPI's 'Left Turn'

The resolutions adopted at Bhatpara had been prepared for the All-India Workers' and Peasants' Party which was to have been launched early in 1928. However when the first conference of that party was held on December 23-28, substantially different resolutions were adopted. These contrasted sharply with the Bhatpara resolutions in being more critical of nationalist organisations, and in assigning the WPP an almost exclusive role as leader of the nationalist struggle.

In part this change in position arose out of the frustrations inherent in seeking to work through the INC as Congressmen, whilst at the same time seeking to build the WPP's. Many felt that the WPP was failing to establish its own identity or even gain credit for work it had done. The Bengal WPP Executive Committee Report, presented at Bhatpara, contained the following assessment - "we have not been sufficiently aggressive...Party policy has not been brought sufficiently before the public which has been allowed to suppose that on such important questions as the boycott of the Simon Commission, or the boycott of British goods, we have no policies at all, or none different from those of the Swaraj Party".68

Conversely, the very successes of the Bombay WPP in organising labour made the implementation of the other part of its brief - working through the INC -
increasingly difficult. The 1928 Executive Committee Report of the Bombay WPP noted that although significant representation had been won in the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee, "there has been growing a systematic opposition to our group from the nationalist section which is more and more finding expression in the BPCC".69

Thus a desire to more strongly assert an independent WPP identity, along with tension over work in the INC, was already apparent in 1928. However the decisive factor in the 'left turn' of the WPP's between early and end 1928 was a change in Comintern line. The Sixth Congress of Comintern (July 17 -September I, 1928) declared that post-war capitalism had entered its 'third period', one characterised by "the most severe intensification of the general capitalist crisis",70 as a result of which "the revolutionary crisis is coming inexorably to a head".71 As is well known, this analysis and the conclusions drawn from it had as much if not more to do with factional struggles in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and with Stalin's consolidation of his power as with any developments in capitalism. Whatever the reasons, the Sixth Congress, as we saw in Chapter 3, directed communists to shift to the 'united front from below', i.e., to 'expose' social-democratic parties and leaders to their followers, and similarly to expose bourgeois nationalist organisations in the colonies. In the case of policy regarding India, Roy and the CPGB were attacked for allegedly holding the view that India was being rapidly industrialized and decolonised,72 the 'national reformism' of bourgeois parties such as the INC was identified as a major obstacle to bourgeois revolution and national independence, and the WPP's were criticised.

On the latter point, the "Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semi-Colonies" adopted by the Congress abruptly declared,

Special Workers' and Peasants' Parties, whatever revolutionary character they may possess, can too easily, at particular periods, be converted into ordinary petty bourgeois parties, and, accordingly, Communists are not recommended to organize such parties.73
The left turn of the Comintern did not have an immediate impact in India. The change in line took quite some time to reach Indian communists. The main contact of the Indian communists with the Comintern was through Roy and the CPGB, who do not seem to have hastened to advise abandonment of positions they had championed. But by late 1928, a vague knowledge of the trend of the Sixth Congress was filtering through. It found an echo in the resolutions adopted by the AIWPP Conference.74

Thus in the 'Political Resolution' adopted at the AIWPP Conference, the twin tasks of the WPP's, as defined earlier in the year - to organise and politicise the working class, and to radicalise the INC and use it to build a mass nationalist movement - were effectively reduced to one. The report cited as the important development of the year the retreat, on the one hand, of "almost all parties of the bourgeoisie, including the Congress, in support of a timid liberal programme of constitutional demands", and on the other, "Considerable increase in the strength and militancy of the mass movement".75 From this it concluded that the old policy of seeking to work within and influence the INC had to be abandoned - "The Workers' and Peasants' Party is the representative of the advancing mass movement...The two movements separate, and their leading organizations must do so also". WPP members were instructed to remain in the INC for the moment, but only for the purpose of "exposing its reactionary leadership".76

Presented as a reaction to political developments, this change of position in fact reflected a more fundamental theoretical shift. Previously the WPP's were careful to distinguish between the mass nationalist movement, composed of many parties and classes, and the WPP, the representative of the working class. The task was precisely to develop both and place the latter at the head of the former. However now the development of a mass movement was seen to depend upon the working class, under the WPP, taking a leading role. Such leadership was not something to be achieved, but was the necessary premise of political action:
it is necessary to insist more strongly than has been done previously upon the independent role of the WPP, as the only organization which has a correct policy and can unite and lead all the mass revolutionary forces of the Country...It is the only genuine representative of the rising mass movement.\(^7\) (emphasis added).

This dramatic change of position from the Bhatpara resolutions, intended for an AIWPP, to the resolutions ultimately adopted, was nevertheless not sufficient to satisfy the Comintern. Kuusinen's report at the Sixth Congress, and the Theses adopted there, did not simply criticize WPP policy; they criticized the WPP's as an organisational form. This was repeated in the ECCI message of greeting to the AIWPP Conference, which in calling upon the conference to "discuss the question of separating the workers' organization from the peasants' organizations"\(^8\) effectively called - as the Sixth Congress had not - for the dissolution of existing WPP's.

This step the Indian communists were unwilling to take.\(^7\) They opted instead, at their December 1928 and March 1929 CEC meetings, to placate the Comintern by reorganizing the CEC, adopting a new constitution, and resolving to do more political work and issue more propaganda in the name of the CPI.\(^8\)

It was in this situation of uncertainty, as the CPI leadership endeavoured to adapt to the Comintern's new line without completely abandoning the theory and practice it had so laboriously developed, that the British settled the issue. On March 20 1929, thirty-one CPI and WPP leaders were arrested.

Although the Meerut Conspiracy Case trial was to prove something of a propaganda triumph for the communists, it also deprived the fledgling CPI of most of its most able and experienced leaders. This had the effect, not only of disorganising the CPI and the WPP, but also of facilitating adoption of the Comintern line. The inexperienced figures who rose to assume leadership of the CPI proved less able - and less willing - to resist the Comintern line.\(^8\)
The Tenth Plenum of the ECCI in July 1929, in any case, eliminated any room for manoeuvre. The left turn taken at the Sixth Congress was reaffirmed and taken further, and 'right deviationists' - Bukharin, Lovestone and others - were removed from the ECCI. The colonial bourgeoisie was now found to be outrightly 'counter-revolutionary', and with reference to India the Tenth Plenum declared, "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...".82

By late 1929 the CPI had come to be under the direct tutelage of the Comintern. Intermediaries such as Roy and the CPGB were dispensed with - the latter being expelled from Comintern in late 1929 - as a succession of ECCI representatives came to India bearing instructions and supervising their implementation.

Developments in India also facilitated adoption of an ultra-leftist line. A second general strike of textile workers occurred from April-August 1929, this time led from the outset by the communist controlled GKU. However this time the mill-owners were better prepared, and moreover had full government support. This, combined with tactical mistakes and an excessive prolongation of the strike by the communists, led to its defeat and to the near-collapse of the GKU. In one stroke, the Bombay communists lost much of the organisation and support they had built up. In Bengal, the simmering factional differences within the WPP erupted into a split. The Chakravarty-Ghoswami faction who had earlier walked out of the AIWPP Conference quit the party altogether in early 1929, and formed a 'People's Party'.83 Public recriminations and abuse followed, leaving the party organisationally weakened and with greatly diminished political credibility.84

This general weakening facilitated the slide into sectarianism. As the communists proved less able to influence events, they took more readily, with encouragement from the Comintern, to denouncing those who could. Attacks on the INC, and especially its left wing, grew more frequent and acquired an increasingly hysterical tone. And, as the
exclusive role of the CPI as leader of the masses came to be increasingly asserted, the WPP's themselves came under attack.

In early 1930, the newly established organ of the CPI, *Workers Weekly*, ran a series of articles on the WPP's. Although not entirely unappreciative, the articles voiced strong criticism. "The WPP movement" pronounced the *Workers Weekly*, "in its basic, fundamental theoretical premises, was a Congress movement. It did not advocate the hegemony and leadership of the working class in the Indian national struggle...Its programme was not a communist programme. It reflected [the] petty bourgeois socialism of [the] Indian petty bourgeoisie".85

This somewhat malicious accusation was correct on two counts - that the WPP's did not put forward a communist programme, and that the 'fundamental theoretical premises' underlying them were what were now under challenge. For it was now held that a mass nationalist movement could, by definition, only develop under communist leadership and with the working class at the forefront. What was required, therefore, were not workers' and peasants' parties, but workers and peasants organisations, led by the CPI. The *Workers Weekly* concluded, "We believe that it will be much better...to reorganise the WPP into some sort of a federation of workers and peasants organizations".86

Indeed, the second conference of the AIWPP in end-1929 was also its last. By the time the "Draft Platform of Action" of the CPI was published in *Inprecor* in December 1930 - the first full programme of the party - the WPP's were dead and buried. The "Draft Platform" did not even deign to mention the WPP's, but its contents made it apparent that the 'fundamental theoretical premises' underlying the formation of the WPP's had disappeared altogether. Not only did it declare that national revolution could only occur under the aegis of the CPI and that the INC and especially its left wing were the main obstacle to revolution, and so on. It also announced that the main objectof the Indian revolution was not a Constituent Assembly and a bourgeois-
The CPI's lurch to the left did not involve any repudiation of the struggle for national liberation. On the contrary, nationalism, it was declared, could have no existence independent of the CPI. The nationalist goal could only be realised by a communist party, and could only take the form of a (non-bourgeois) Workers' and Peasants' Republic, itself a stage in the march towards full socialism. But the corollary of this was that Marxists did cease to engage with nationalist organisations. These, because they were now regarded as not 'truly' nationalist, were treated as obstacles needing to be exposed, denounced and overcome.

The sectarianism underlying the exclusive role assigned to the CPI, far from building the party, split it. Regional communist groupings developed separately and in opposition to each other. The new leadership was at loggerheads with the old, publicly criticizing the jailed leaders and even withdrawing their party membership for the duration of their jail terms. The new leadership itself was factionalized and repeatedly split. In the Party's own, later verdict on this period, "The CPI was actually reduced to a number of small local circles functioning without a centre, continuously fighting one another and even denouncing the old leadership confined at Meerut".

This failure to build the CPI was part of a broader political failure. In early 1930 the second great wave of nationalist struggle began, as Gandhi launched the Civil Disobedience movement. At the very moment when the nationalist struggle once again became a mass struggle, led by an INC with a growing left wing, the communists directed the bulk of their energies to attacking the INC and its left wing. The communist's declarations that the national struggle could only be led by the working class and the CPI remained that - declarations, and moreover ones which ensured their marginality to the great struggles of the time. Far from leading the nationalist struggle, the CPI was confined to a carping role at its margins. The working class, far from
spearheading the struggle, played less of a role in it than it had played during the Non-Cooperation movement, before there were any communist groups in India.

Conclusion

In contrast to the course which the communist movement in Europe followed in determining its attitude to the colonial question, the first converts to Marxism in India began as nationalists, seeking to in some way redefine nationalism with the aid of Marxist concepts.

The first fruits of this labour were programmatic documents and political parties which sought to broaden the concerns of nationalism; attempts to point out and correct what were perceived as shortcomings and omissions in the methods and goal of the Indian nationalist movement. Very soon communists in India were addressing the same question which Roy and communists in other colonial countries were grappling with: namely - what role could Marxism play in the colonies, and in what ways could that be shown to be, and / or made to be, an important one. The way in which Indian communists sought to answer this was, we might say, by translating what appeared as a moral imperative in *Gandhi vs. Lenin* - that national liberation should be linked to and address the question of social inequality - into a structural necessity, a must.

This, of course, was precisely what Roy sought to do. That Indian communists did likewise, despite their different point of departure, undoubtedly owed something to Roy's influence on them. It also, however, indicated something more than just the 'influence' of mentors. With Marxism Indian radicals asked new questions of nationalism, and posed it new tasks. To act upon these insights to make them 'real', to transform nationalism on the basis of insights gained through Marxism, required making Marxism relevant to politics in India. The relevance and importance of Marxism could best be established in theory, and best demonstrated in practice, if it
could be shown that the connection between Marxism and nationalism was necessary, not merely 'possible', or 'desirable'.

The alleged importance of the working class and the peasantry to national liberation, and the importance of 'class demands' to these two groups, became central to this new theoretical construction. The class which in Marxist theory was seen as the bearer and instrument of achieving socialism, it came to be argued, was essential to national liberation as well. The realisation of national liberation thus depended upon success in mobilizing the working class, which in turn required class issues becoming part of nationalist demands and struggle. In this way the existence of a 'necessary' relation between Marxism and nationalism was argued - indirectly, by suggesting a necessary relation between nationalist struggle and class struggle.

None of this is to suggest that there was a theoretical imperative, a logical necessity, governing this theoretical evolution. It did not inevitably follow, by some immanent logic of Marxism, that once having taken an important first step - that of acknowledging the existence of classes in the nationalist movement - it was necessary to proceed to believing that class and nationalist struggle were inextricably interlinked. Many accepted that the nationalist goal was too narrow, and its methods adapted to the interests of an elite, without arriving at the conclusion that the working class and peasantry had to lead the nationalist struggle, or that the latter classes could only be mobilised on the basis of economic-class demands. There were many who shared Dange's concerns in Gandhi vs. Lenin, but who did not go on to embrace the positions that Dange and others came to embrace. Such people did not, by and large, identify themselves as communists, and they were certainly not regarded as such by those who did see themselves as communists. Only those were communists who went on to argue and to seek to effect a necessary relation between the class struggle and the national struggle; or, to put it another way, it was only those who took this further step who became communists.
Why should this come to be so? The cause, once again, arises out of the way in which the colonial question came to be posed within Marxism. Once it was conceded that national liberation was the first project in the colonies, it was at least theoretically possible to be passionately committed to socialism and yet to believe that Marxism was, for the moment at least, of secondary importance in the colonies, and that there was no specifically 'Marxist' task at hand. Such a position went against the spirit of Marxism, and those who embraced communism in India sought a much more active, and important role. In defining their role, they came to stress - but also to seek to actively create - a mutually reinforcing relationship between the nationalist movement and the movement of workers and peasants which they were trying to build.

Thus the defining feature of Marxism in India in this period, and the meaning of the word 'communist', came to be precisely this - those who sought to link class struggle with national struggle, in the belief that nationalism was necessary for the oppressed classes of India, and that these classes were necessary to national liberation. Initially the efforts to translate this theoretical claim into practice were undertaken not through a communist party, but through the Workers' and Peasants' Parties. These sought their constituency amongst the working class and (secondarily) the peasantry, concentrating on their needs and demands as a class, but also seeking to link these with nationalist agitation. They did so in a relatively undogmatic way, not confusing the claim that only the working class could lead a successful nationalist struggle with the belief that this class actually was leading the struggle. At a time when this strategy had yielded some results, but was also showing signs of strain, it was abandoned at the behest of the Comintern.

For reasons that had little to do with India, the Comintern imposed a new line on Indian communists. Communists in India and elsewhere were instructed to cease 'engaging' with nationalist organisations, and instead to devote their energies to 'exposing' the nationalist pretensions of these organisations.
At this very time the effort to find and establish connections between Marxism and nationalism was being continued from another quarter. Jawaharlal Nehru, fresh from a visit to the Soviet Union and from having attended the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities of the East, having recently 'discovered' the poor and exploited of India, was making his own attempts to combine nationalism with Marxism.
Notes

1. They were also mostly young, university educated, middle or lower middle class and, if Hindu, of Brahman caste. For a detailed account of the social background of India's first communists, and the influences that led them to Marxism, see Roger Stuart, "The Formation of the Communist Party of India, 1927-1937: The Dilemma of the Indian Left", unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Australian National University, 1978, pp. 132-60.

2. Dange on *Gandhi vs. Lenin*, in G.A. Adhikari (ed.), *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India*, v. 1, People's Publishing House, 1971, pp. 305-308. Hereafter, as in the 'Notes' to the previous chapter, all volumes in this collection are cited as *Documents*, except where the reference is to Adhikari's introductory comments rather than a document, in which case the citation is in the form, Adhikari, *op.cit.*

3. S.A. Dange, "Gandhi vs. Lenin", in his *Selected Writings*, v. 1, Lok Vangmaya Griha, 1974, p. 48. Hereafter page references to this pamphlet are given in the text of this chapter.

4. In rendering Dange's thought briefly and simply here, we have missed some of its 'flavour' - the flowery prose, and the sweeping Carlylean generalisations (Carlyle is cited in the footnotes on a number of occasions), for example. From the readers point of view this is possibly a blessing.

5. In an interesting article, John Plamenatz makes a similar point. He identifies two 'types' of nationalism, a Western European type and an Eastern (essentially, Eastern European) type. The latter nationalism, according to Plamenatz, is drawn into a culture and civilization not its own, and not at its choosing, and is characterised by the simultaneous acceptance and rejection of the Western model with which it is confronted - "It has involved, in fact, two rejections, both of them ambivalent: rejection of the alien intruder and dominator who is nevertheless to be imitated and surpassed by his own standards, and rejection of ancestral ways which are seen as obstacles to progress and yet also cherished as marks of identity" - "Two Types of Nationalism", in E. Kamenka (ed.), *Nationalism: The Nature and Evolution of an Idea*, Edward Arnold, 1976, p. 34. This tension or dilemma, we would suggest, is also present in the nationalisms of Asia. The manner of its 'solution, of course, varies - see note below.
6. Other ways of solving this same problem include that adopted by Gandhi (rejecting the West's culture and civilisation), and the very different course followed by Nehru (historicizing culture, and thereby rendering it universal - on which see Chapter 6 of this work).

7. Dange discusses, at some length, the essential features of Gandhism and Bolshevism - the discussion of the latter revealing the limitations of his understanding of Marxism - and concludes by setting out the differences between them in tabular form (pp. 92-95). The eclecticism underlying his own scenario of the 'Indian revolution' is provided with a 'theoretical' justification - "Anybody can see that the complete realization of the theories of both the systems in practical life is an impossibility. Gandhism suffers from too much and unwarranted faith in the natural goodness of human nature, while Bolshevism suffers from the too much neglect of human interests and sentiments" -p. 96.


9. In April 1922, Shaukat Usmani, one of the muhajirs who had received training in Moscow, returned to India, with a brief to establish contact with other communists and to distribute Roy's propaganda. Later that year, in response to a request from Roy, the CPGB despatched Charles Ashleigh to India. Deported soon after arrival, Ashleigh nevertheless succeeded in making contact with and delivering messages to some of the Bombay socialists - *ibid*, pp. 13-17.

10. For example, in late 1922, when Roy proposed to his Indian contacts that they attend a conference in Europe to discuss communist activity in India, he was snubbed by Singaravelu and Dange. In a letter to Singaravelu (d. 6-1-1923), Roy complained, "you have dismissed my proposal for the conference here too lightly". Dange was to refer to Roy's idea for a conference as 'crazy' [Dange to Singaravelu, 29-1-1923 - Home Pol. 261 & KW 1, National Archives of India (NAI)]. More generally, there were tensions between Roy and his Indian contacts, over Roy's promises of money, what the Indian communists saw as his lack of contact with Indian realities, and over the Indian communists' initial unwillingness to identify themselves unreservedly with 'Bolshevism' and the Comintern.

11. See, for example, the editorial in the first issue of the *Socialist* (Aug. 5, 1922 - in Dange, *Selected Works*, v. 1, pp.138-40), which echoes Roy's writings in declaring that workers and peasants cannot be persuaded to participate in the nationalist movement unless that movement addresses their economic needs. Dange was later to write that the *Socialist* "depended on literature sent by the
representative of the ECCI [Roy] or the Inprecor for its 'line' and the material for it" - quoted in Adhikari, op.cit., v. 1, p. 506. It must be stressed, however, that if Comintern material was found to be convenient and persuasive to fledgling Marxists like Dange, this nevertheless did not imply, at this stage, subservience to the Comintern, ideologically or in practical-political terms - see previous footnote.


13. ibid., p. 166.

14. ibid., p. 164.

15. A more detailed account of the history of this manifesto / programme, and the individuals involved in drafting it, is given in Adhikari, op.cit., v. 2, pp. 101-106, from which this paragraph is drawn.


17. ibid.

18. ibid., p. 118.

19. ibid., pp. 120-23.


21. ibid., p. 118.


24. For the political tendencies which went into the LSP's making, and more generally the nature and composition of radical politics in Bengal in this period, see R. Stuart, op.cit., pp. 136-144.


26. "LSP Policy and Programme", ibid., pp. 685-86. Ultimate demands included nationalisations and the vesting of ownership of land in the hand of village communities; immediate demands included a call for the eight hour working day, a minimum wage, etc.


29. According to Dange, Ahmad was against the idea, Nalini Gupta had no opinion, and Shaukat Usmani thought it worth a try - Dange, quoted in Adhikari, *op.cit.*, v. 2, p. 594.

30. This party, although it issued some leaflets which were banned, was not taken seriously by anyone, and did not alarm even the easily alarmed British Indian Government. In 1924 Cecil Kaye, the then Director of the Intelligence Bureau wrote, "Satyabhakta and his associates are men of no weight whatever and it is as certain as anything can be that the 'Communist Party of India' [in fact, 'Indian Communist Party'] will be nothing but a name" - quoted in *ibid.*, v. 2, p. 599.


32. Minutes of 26 Dec. 1925 CEC meeting, *Documents*, v. 2, pp. 667-68. The party offices were eventually established in Delhi, after difficulties were encountered in Bombay.

33. In a letter to Saklatvala (d. 1-1-1927) S.V. Ghate, one of the Party's General Secretaries, admitted that the CPI "has not been able to make headway with its programme" - *Meerut Conspiracy Case Exhibits* (7 vol's), P 1287(14). Hereafter cited as *MCCE*.


36. Almost inevitably, this generated some tensions. At the 'Colonial Conference' in Amsterdam in July 1925, which brought together Roy, CPGB members and others connected with work in the colonies, Roy accused the CPGB of 'imperialism', and of seeking to bypass him in dealing with India (see Minutes of Conference, *Documents*, v. 2, pp. 579-89). However by late 1926 such differences seem to have been resolved, for Roy and the CPGB were working closely together. In 1927 Roy was sent by the Comintern to China, and although on his return he continued to be active in Indian affairs, the debacle in China had undermined his position and influence. With his expulsion from the Comintern in 1929, he became *persona non grata* in the eyes of the CPI.
37. The extended CEC meeting in mid-1927 adopted resolutions urging members to join and attempt to form a left wing inside the INC, to work within existing WPP's and to attempt to establish new ones - resolutions of CEC meeting, Documents, v. 3B, pp. 211-14 (relevant resolutions are numbers 6 and 8). This process went so far that even a champion of the WPP's such as Clemens Dutt complained that the CPI and the WPP were becoming two names for the same thing - quoted in Williamson, op.cit., p. 127.

38. In the absence of any press of its own, the 1927 extended CEC meeting listed Ganavani, Kranti, and Mehnatkash - the former two WPP publications, the latter an independent leftist publication - as its 'unofficial' press organs. Documents, v. 3B, p. 215. Aditya Mukherjee writes, "The Communist Party of India in fact hardly had any meaningful existence of its own. The chief activity of its handful of members was precisely to help organise and work through the WPP's, which were their only link with the masses" - "The Workers' and Peasants' Parties, 1926-30: An Aspect of Communism in India", in Biplab Chandra (ed.), The Indian Left: Critical Appraisals, Vikas Publishing House, 1983, p. 15.

39. The years 1928-29 have generally been seen, by the Left, as watershed years for the political and industrial maturation of the Indian working class. R.P. Dutt's summary of this period in Indian labour history is typical: "For the first time a working-class leadership had emerged, close to the workers in the factories, guided by the principles of the class struggle, and operating as a single force in the economic and political field" - India To-Day, London, 1940, pp. 373-74.

40. Bombay WPP 'Programme' to AICC, and Bengal WPP 'Manifesto' to Madras Congress, Documents, v. 3B, pp. 169-72 and pp 301-06 respectively. The latter also raised the demand for a Constituent Assembly to determine the constitution of an independent India, a slogan which was to become a central plank of WPP propaganda.

41. The resolution was moved by Joglekar and seconded by Nehru in the Subjects Committee of the INC. In a slightly amended form, it was then put to the Congress session by Nehru - Adhikari, op.cit., v. 3B, pp. 118-19.


43. This brief account of the 1928 textile strike is drawn largely from Richard Newman, Workers and Unions in Bombay, 1918-1929, Canberra, 1981; S. Bhattacharya, "Capital and Labour in Bombay City, 1928-29", in D.N. Panigrahi
44. The Governor of Bombay was to pay reluctant tribute to the strikers in a letter to the Secretary of State for India (d.16-8-1928) - "It is really amazing how the men are holding out...I have been considerably disturbed by the fact that the millowners opened a section of their mills on several occasions, and although adequate police protection was given, not a single man returned to work" - quoted in Sarkar, *op.cit.*, p. 271.


46. *ibid.*, p. 216.


50. Sykes to Irwin (d. 15-12-1928), *Sykes Collection*, India Office Library and Records (IOLR), Eur. F 150/1

51. *MCCE*, P 52.

52. R. Stuart, *op.cit.*, p. 290, fn. The following brief account of the major strikes in Bengal in 1927-28, and of WPP involvement in them, are based on Stuart, pp. 277-310 ; Adhikari, *op.cit.*, v. 3C, pp. 135-48 ; *MCCE* ; and the relevant documents in *Documents*, v. 3C

53. Spratt on Lilloah strike, *Documents*, v. 3C, pp. 335-40. In a letter to England (d.23-10-1928), Spratt was to be even more critical, writing that the WPP had made a 'fool' of itself over the Lilloah strike - *MCCE*, P 2419(P).

54. Spratt, with the bewilderment but also detachment of an outside observer, attempted to provide an explanation for the byzantine peculiarities of Bengali nationalist and trade union politics in some of his letters to England in 1928. They make for interesting reading because of their identification of 'culture' as the origin of these peculiarities. Thus in one letter Spratt writes, "there is no tradition of popular organisation in India...[things are left to] some big 'leader' who does everything while the others ... look on and do his bidding", which, Spratt
speculates, is probably a result of the "extraordinary separation... between the educated classes - even the poorest of them, and the masses. Even such people as WPP members find it extremely hard to overcome this", for even they "tend to look upon themselves as groups of 'leaders' who need not get any membership around them" -MCCE , P 546(10). Similar themes are sounded in P 526(29) and P 2419(P).

55. Stuart writes, "the communists, despite their theoretical-ideological differences with the 'petty-bourgeois' unionists, were unable either to implement a qualitatively different working class strategy or to distinguish themselves from their rivals by building a strong working class base" - *op. cit.*, p. 340.

56. According to its 1928 Executive Committee Report, in 1927 2 WPP members were elected to the AITUC Executive, 2 to the AICC, and 3 to the BPCC - *MCCE*, P 52.


58. See Adhikari, *op.cit.*, v. 3C, pp. 15-16.

59. 'Resolution on Labour and Future Constitution for India' (adopted at Jharia session of AITUC, 1928), *Documents*, v. 3C, p.224. This resolution, a statement of labour's response to the Nehru Committee's draft constitution for India, was based upon a draft document composed by Philip Spratt (in his role as a member of an AITUC sub-committee entrusted with this task), entitled 'Labour and Swaraj'

60. Quoted in Adhikari, *op.cit.*, v. 3B, p.137.

61. Both conferences affirmed the need for an All-India WPP, and the Bengal conference appointed a committee to make arrangements for a gathering in December, to launch the new party . Adhikari writes, "both the Bombay and Bengal conferences were in fact a preparation for the organisation of the party on an all-Indian basis" - *op.cit.*, v. 3C, p.76.

62. Resolution on "General Political Situation", *Documents*, v. 3C, pp. 265-66. That independence and bourgeois democracy were necessary to the working class was, of course, common to all communist propaganda in this period. Thus Spratt, for example, in his 'Labour and Swaraj' (see note 59) wrote:- "no appreciable improvement in the lot of the Indian working class is possible under this system, and its first duty is the struggle against imperialism. Both its immediate and its ultimate aim depend for their realisation upon its success in the struggle against the economic and political domination of India by imperialism" -*ibid.*, p.201.
63. "General Political Situation", *Documents*, v. 3C, p.258.

64. ibid., p. 259.

65. ibid., p. 266.

66. ibid., pp. 264-65.

67. ibid., pp. 268-69.

68. *MCCE*, P. 52. (The report went on to warn, however, that in asserting itself the WPP "must be careful not to oppose the National Congress without sufficient definition of our opinions, or we shall enable our opponents to claim that we are anti-Congress, or even anti-national, and that we stand merely for the sectional claims of labour". The last phrase is significant in demarcating the WPP from its predecessors, whose Marxism consisted precisely in seeking to add the 'sectional claims of labour' to the nationalist agenda). The Bombay WPP was to express similar concern over the insufficient credit it had received for organizing the Simon Commission demonstration, because its members had acted largely in their capacity as Congressmen - *MCCE*, P 526(32).


70. "Theses on the International Situation and the Tasks of the Communist International" (Extracts), in J. Degras (ed.), *The Communist International 1919-1943: Documents*, v. 2, Oxford University Press, 1960. This political shift was first signalled at the Ninth Plenum of the ECCI in February 1928.


72. This criticism followed from the analysis underpinning the left turn, namely that imperialism, and British imperialism in particular, were in the throes of a deep contractionary crisis. Such an analysis did not accord well with the suggestion that significant export of British capital was leading to the industrialisation of India. However the vigour of the attack, and the misrepresentations of Roy's position, indicate another motive - Roy was being made the scapegoat for Stalin's China debacle, and the relatively academic issue of decolonization was a convenient peg on which to hang the charge of heresy against him. For the attacks on 'decolonization theory' see Kuusinen's report on the colonial question to the Sixth Congress, and the report on India by Sikander Sur (Shaukat Usmani), both in
Inprecor, 8 : 68 (Oct. 4, 1928). Roy, being ill, did not attend the Congress and was not present to defend himself. The British delegation, with one or two exceptions, defended its position - see L.J. MacFarlane, The British Communist Party, MacGibbon and Kee, 1966, pp. 204-210.

73. "Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonial and Semi-Colonial Countries", Inprecor, 8 : 88 (12. Dec., 1928), p. 1671. The WPP's were defended by one of the Indians participating in the debate which followed Kuusinen's report. 'Narayan' (S.N. Tagore) expressed amazement at the fact that the vehicle through which unions had been organised or won, through which the nationalist movement had been given a leftward direction, and thus through which communists had gained contact with and influence over the masses, were to be liquidated - Inprecor, 8 : 76 (Oct. 30, 1928), p. 1391. Dutt, without explicitly defending the WPP's, did say of Kuusinen's comments on the matter, "the question of the workers' and peasants' Party cannot be dismissed with a phrase..." - ibid., p. 1425.

74. As Spratt tells it, in his (highly unreliable) memoirs, "We had no direct instructions [from Comintern] till G.M. Adhikari arrived from Europe in December, 1928, but we sensed from the brief press reports that a change had taken place". The resolutions for the AIWPP were then, according to Spratt, drafted in accordance with the perception of "which way the Comintern wind was blowing" - Blowing Up India, Calcutta, 1955, pp. 42-43. See also note 79 below.

75. 'Political Resolutions' of the AIWPP Conference, Documents, v. 3C, p.712.

76. ibid., p. 720. The policy of working in the INC was to be continued, but only temporarily, as a tactic born of weakness - "while the Workers' and Peasants' Party remains relatively weak and unorganized in the country, it will be necessary to follow the traditional policy of forming fractions within Congress organizations, for the purpose of agitation and exposing its reactionary leadership and of drawing the revolutionary section towards the Workers' and Peasants' Party. This policy however is only temporary. The WPP can have no intention of dominating or capturing the Congress; the function of its members within the Congress is a purely critical one. Party members cannot therefore be allowed to take office in Congress organizations. The object of the WPP can only be to build up its own organization, so that it can as soon as possible dispense with the necessity of agitation within the Congress " - ibid. p. 721.

77. ibid., p.720. If this was a statement of principle - that only the WPP could ever 'genuinely' represent the mass movement - reality was found to be approximating
to this principle. Thus the document entitled 'Principles and Policy' adopted at the conference declared that,"The working class is already the best organized and most militant section [of the nationalist movement] and is rapidly acquiring the political consciousness necessary to enable it to exercise the function of leadership in the mass struggle" - *Documents*, v. 3C, p. 737.

78. 'ECCI Greeting to AIWPP Conference', *ibid.*, p. 764.

79. At the time of the AIWPP Conference it is possible that they were not aware of the full extent of the turn at the Sixth Congress. A CPI account of the period states that the criticisms made of the WPP's at the Sixth Congress were not known in India until the CEC meeting held on Dec. 27 - 29 - *The Guidelines of the History of the Communist Party of India*, by Central Party Education Dept., CPI, August 1974, p. 26. Muzaffar Ahmad writes that the ECCI message of greeting was not received until after the conclusion of the AIWPP Conference -"Our First Days", *New Age*, 7 : 4 (April 1958), p .25. For Spratt's account, see note 74 above.

80. The new constitution was drawn up in early 1929. The CEC was reorganised, and the decision to increase the profile of the CPI taken, at the December CEC meeting - see Minutes of meeting, *Documents*, v. 3C, p. 782.

81. They proved less able in other respects too. The Director of the Intelligence Bureau was later to reflect, with satisfaction, that the Meerut arrests had "created a vacuum in the leadership of the movement which was filled by very inferior materials" - Williamson, *op.cit.*, p. 154.


83. The resignations occurred after the autocratic Muzaffar Ahmad expelled Chakravarty for non-payment of party dues, and his authoritarianism was cited, by those who split, as one reason for their departure - *MCCE*, P 423.

84. Spratt was to lament, "The work of a year has practically been destroyed. The bulk of the party members remain, but of the active men half have gone...and what is worse, the other half all seem to be paralyzed...And of course, this affair has resulted in a general withdrawal of support, so that we are absolutely crippled" - quoted in Stuart, *op.cit.*, p. 311.


Chapter 6

'Nehruvian Socialism', 1927-37: Marxism in the Service of Nationalism

In 1927, whilst in Europe, Jawaharlal Nehru proclaimed himself to be a socialist. A year after his return to India, in his Presidential Address to the Lahore Congress (December 29, 1929), he declared:

I must frankly confess that I am a socialist and a republican, and am no believer in kings and princes, or in the order which produces the modern kings of industry, who have greater power over the lives and fortunes of men than even the kings of old, and whose methods are as predatory as those of the old feudal aristocracy.1

Over six years later, upon the occasion of his second Presidential address to the Indian National Congress, at Lucknow, Nehru reaffirmed his commitment:

I am convinced that the only key to the solution of the world's problem and of India's problem lies in socialism, and when I use this word I do so not in a vague, humanitarian way but in the scientific, economic sense.2

In the intervening years, Nehru had propagated his socialist ideal at innumerable youth and trade union conferences, peasant gatherings, and Congress organised public meetings. He had urged the desirability and at times the inevitability of socialism in many of his published writings - most notably the series of newspaper articles published in October 1933 under the title, "Whither India?", and in his acclaimed Autobiography, written in gaol between June 1934 and February 1935. Above all, Nehru had propagated socialism within the Indian National Congress, seeking to educate and persuade the INC's membership of its necessity, and constantly urging
upon the INC that it define its goal of independence more clearly - and to make that 'definition' consist of social and economic change for the benefit of the 'masses'. Such urgings sometimes brought Nehru into conflict with the more conservative elements which dominated the INC\textsuperscript{3}, but they also yielded some limited successes. The 'Resolution on Fundamental Rights' adopted by the INC at its Karachi Congress in 1931, which declared that "This Congress is of the opinion that in order to end the exploitation of the masses, political freedom must include real economic freedom of the millions"\textsuperscript{4}, was the outcome of Nehru's persistent efforts. The emphasis placed by the INC on economic issues during the election campaign of 1936-37 had much to do with Nehru's urgings, and he was the most energetic and effective campaigner for the Congress in the lead-up to the election. Nehru was also virtually the sole architect of the anti-imperialist and generally 'progressive' policies adopted by the INC on international issues.

In the years following 1936, the emphasis Nehru placed on socialism lessened, although he did not renounce his adherence to it. With independence and the assumption of power by the INC, and by Nehru personally, socialist rhetoric increasingly served to justify the pursuit of state-capitalist ends.

However, in the years 1927-37, there is no doubting the sincerity of Nehru's convictions and the energy with which they were pursued. This was something other than the - by now familiar - pattern of nationalists in colonial countries more-or-less cynically employing Marxist rhetoric in the service of non-Marxist ends. 'Nehruvian socialism' was characterised by a seriousness of intent and an intellectual coherence that marked it as a politically and intellectually genuine attempt to combine nationalist and socialist goals.

Nehru's socialist declarations were frequently delivered from Congress platforms, and were usually couched in the first person, as in the two passages quoted above. The use of the first person was a consequence of Nehru's position - that of a nationalist and a socialist who played a leading role in a heterogeneous, non-socialist
nationalist organisation. The sometimes President and frequent General Secretary of
the INC could only speak for himself when speaking of socialism.

This 'position' was itself an indication of one of the defining features of Nehru's
socialism - the fact that nationalism, and a commitment to the INC, were the
foundations upon which it was based. Nehru's conversion to socialism did not
compromise his absolute dedication to the nationalist cause and to the INC as the
vehicle for its pursuit. Where his commitment to the INC came into conflict with other
commitments or beliefs, the same pattern invariably ensued: personal crisis and soul
searching, the occasional threat of resignation, but always, in the end, capitulation.5

This assignment of priority to nationalism and the INC was not only reflected in
Nehru's practice as a political activist; it was provided with a theoretical justification
by him. Despite the importance of socialism, the national goal, under 'present
conditions' - namely, the British subjugation of India - of necessity had priority.
Sometimes this was argued with reference to the existing level of consciousness of the
Indian people:

It seemed clear to me that nationalism would remain the outstanding urge
till some measure of political freedom was attained. Because of this the
Congress had been, and was still (apart from certain labour circles) the
most advanced organisation in India, as it was far the most powerful...It
had not exhausted its utility yet, and was not likely to do so till the
nationalist urge gave place to the social one. Future progress, both
ideological and in action, must therefore be largely associated with the
Congress...6 (emphasis added).

At other times, the priority assigned to the nationalist goal has 'structural'
causes. Nehru tells an audience of railway workers,

it is obvious that in order to have socialism in this country, we must have
political power in our hands...We have thus two definite things to work for
and to fight for, and the first in order of precedence is independence.7
If so far in this work we have examined the attempts of Marxists to 'become' nationalists, in Nehru we encounter the opposite - one for whom nationalism always came first, and who sought to 'graft' socialism onto nationalism.

This did not mean that Nehru's socialism was confined to public declarations. It did mean, however, that Nehru's various activities in promoting the socialist ideal were constrained by his commitment to nationalism and to the INC. Nehru sought, above all else, to radicalise the INC - to introduce socialist elements, step by step, into the programme and practice of the INC. He sought to do so at a pace which would not endanger the unity of an ideologically diverse organisation. Thus in his 1936 Presidential address to the INC, after proclaiming his commitment to socialism, Nehru hastens to reassure his audience regarding his method of achieving it:

Much as I wish for the advancement of socialism in this country, I have no desire to force the issue in the Congress and thereby create difficulties in the way of our struggle for independence. I shall cooperate gladly...with all those who work for independence even though they do not agree with the socialist solution. But I shall do so stating my position frankly and hoping in the course of time to convert the Congress and the country to it.8

Thus unlike Roy and the Indian communists examined earlier, the organisational and strategic aspects of the struggle for socialism did not figure prominently in Nehru's thought or activity. The nationalist and the socialist goals were both to be sought, for the moment, through the INC. The task of promoting socialism therefore became an essentially ideological one - of winning over increasing numbers of adherents to socialism, and thereby facilitating the radicalisation of the INC. Even the shortlived radical organisations Nehru helped establish - the Republican Congress and the Independence for India League - functioned within the INC and had an essentially ideological and educational role. Similarly Nehru's public speeches were an exercise in 'converting' the Congress and the country. As he wrote of his hectic touring in 1928, "I wanted to spread the ideology of socialism especially among the Congress workers and the intelligentsia...".9
If, as all this suggests, Nehru's case is one of a nationalist who sought to combine his nationalism with socialism, any study of Nehru's thought should begin with his nationalism.

The Unity of India

The first question which Nehru had to address - as indeed did any Indian nationalist - was, what is India? What is this entity for which 'independence' is being sought, what constitutes its unity and distinguishes it from other nations?

This question had become particularly pressing and particularly difficult to answer with the growth of communalism in the nineteen-twenties. A brief period of Hindu-Muslim cooperation under the nationalist banner ended soon after the abrupt withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation / Khilafat movement. From the mid-1920's, one of the characteristic features of Indian politics was communal violence and a proliferation of communal bodies.

Thus Indian nationalists had to establish not only that the British had no right to dominion over India. They had also to establish, in argument and in practice, that there was an 'India', a unified collective entity rather than a conglomeration of (warring) religions, castes and princely states.

Part of Nehru's answer to the question, what constitutes the unity of India, is culture. In an article directly addressed to this question, entitled "The Unity of India", Nehru writes that despite the immense variety of India, "the tremendous or fundamental fact of India is her essential unity throughout the ages...This Indian background and unity were essentially cultural".10

Similarly in The Discovery of India, Nehru writes that although Gujaratis, Punjabis, Kashmiris and others all have their own 'peculiar characteristics', they are nevertheless also 'distinctively Indian'. For "Ancient India, like ancient China, was a
world in itself, a culture and a civilisation which gave shape to all things...Some kind of a dream of unity has occupied the mind of India since the dawn of civilisation".

Nehru is only too well aware, however, that 'Indian civilisation' is composed of many religions, languages and customs - is composed, in short, of many cultures. What allows us to assimilate all these into a single, all-encompassing 'Culture'? The answer is that Indian culture was an eclectic mix of all these diverse elements. Or, as Nehru prefers it, it was a 'synthesis':

we see in the past that some inner urge towards synthesis, derived essentially from the Indian philosophic outlook, was the dominant feature of Indian cultural and even social development. Each incursion of foreign elements was a challenge to this culture, but it was met successfully by a new synthesis and a process of absorption. This was also a process of rejuvenation and new blooms of culture arose out of it, the background and essential basis, however, remaining much the same.

This composite culture was dominated, it is true, by one particular strand within it - Hinduism. Hinduism in pre-modern times, however, was "vague, amorphous, many sided, all things to all men. It is hardly possible to define it...". Because it could not be defined, because it was a 'way of life' rather than a religion, it was inclusive rather than exclusive. Indian culture was Hindu only in the sense that it was marked by a flexibility and tolerance which enabled it to synthesise many cultures into the one culture, one dominated not by any specific set of beliefs and practices, but by the principle of tolerance. Thus "A Christian or a Moslem could, and often did, adapt himself to the Indian way of life and culture, and yet remained in faith an orthodox Christian or Moslem. He had Indianised himself and become an Indian without changing his religion".

Culture, then, is part of Nehru's answer as to what constitutes the unity of India. Taken by itself, however, this answer does not satisfy him. For this unity is the combination (or synthesis) of so many particularities of religion, caste, custom and so on. It is not an inner or organic unity - unless all these particularities are conceived,
in metaphysical terms, as so many 'expressions' of a single *Geist*. Although Nehru is not above recourse to such an argument (particularly in writings after the period under consideration, such as *The Discovery of India*) it does not satisfy his desire for intellectual clarity. Moreover, as we shall shortly see, Nehru is a vehement critic of many of these particularities; it is not upon these that he wishes to found an independent nation.

Furthermore, such a unity is an unconscious one. Culture may provide bonds which unite Hindus and Muslims, Bengalis and Pathans, and so on; but it does not provide a subjective desire to realise and express this unity politically, in the form of a nation-state. Nehru himself writes that even if a cultural unity has existed in India for thousands of years,

> The desire for political unity, in India as in other countries before the advent of nationalism, was usually the desire of the ruler or of the conqueror and not of the people as a whole.16

It is only with the rise of nationalism that an 'objective' unity finds subjective expression:

> The growth of the powerful nationalist movement in India, represented by the National Congress, has demonstrated the political unity of India...This voluntary organisation, commanding the willing allegiance of millions, has played a great role in fixing the idea of Indian unity in the minds of our masses.17

Culture may provide the foundations for unity, but this unity finds its active expression in an organisation, one which represents the will of the people. This organisation is the Congress, which is at once the proof of the unity of India (because it commands the 'willing allegiance of millions'), and the instrument for forging that unity. It is the latter because even the INC is not an adequate expression of the unity of India. It is an instrument in pursuit of that goal which will properly express that unity - Swaraj, or independence.
What is Swaraj? Seeking to present this idea in a form relevant and accessible to a semi-rural audience in the town of Sultanpur, Nehru describes it as follows:

Swaraj means a kind of *panchayati* [village council] rule under which the common people will elect their representatives and manage their own affairs...a *panchayati* rule in which all the people of the country -whether they are Hindus, Muslims, or people of any other faith - will have equal rights and they will rule their country, with the help of these rights.18

The unity of India is to be embodied in a nation-state, where all people, irrespective of their religious and other identities, will have equal rights - above all, the right to representation. The Indian nation will represent the 'Indian people' without regard to their numerous particularities. This is the message Nehru takes to the Indian masses, particularly to the peasant who, with his 'limited outlook', had to be taught the meaning of 'India' and of independence. In *The Discovery of India* Nehru describes the pattern of his nationalist pedagogy as he toured the Indian countryside during the election campaign of 1936-37:

Sometimes as I reached a gathering, a great roar of welcome would greet me: *Bharat Mata ki jai*, 'Victory to Mother India'. I would ask them unexpectedly what they meant by that cry, who was this *Bharat Mata*, Mother India, whose victory they wanted? My question would amuse them and surprise them...I persisted in my questioning. At last a vigorous Jat, wedded to the soil from immemorial generations, would say that it was the *dharti*, the good earth of India, that they meant - What earth? Their particular village patch, or all the patches in the district or province, or in the whole of India? And so question and answer went on, till they would ask me impatiently to tell them all about it. I would endeavour to do so and explain that India was all this that they had thought, but it was much more...what counted ultimately were the people of India, people like them and me, who were spread out all over this vast land.*Bharat Mata*, Mother India, was essentially these millions of people, and victory to her meant victory to these people. You are parts of this *Bharat Mata*, I told them, you are in a manner yourselves *Bharat Mata*.19

Despite some use of an imagery which belongs to a nationalism very different to Nehru's own - the nation as Mother20 - this is an eminently 'modern' nationalism.
The nation is the people who constitute it, and whom it represents. But this 'people' is itself, of course, a construct - to characterise Hindus, Muslims and so on as 'the people' is to abstract from their particularities a common essence, and thereby construct them as homogeneous. Thus the demand for an Indian nation is at once made possible because an abstract and homogeneous 'people' have been posited, and its achievement also creates this people - the Indian nation, once founded will, through its panoply of abstract laws and juridical rights, constitute out of Punjabis, Gujaratis, Hindus and so on an Indian people.

Culture, then, is a point of departure in Nehru's argument for the unity of India, but the argument itself departs from its reliance upon culture. It is a shared culture - with all the particularities of religion, caste, language and region which that implies - which confers unity upon India. But 'India' is not simply culture; this unity finds its concrete expression, its material embodiment, in the form of a nation-state, which must posit and render its own foundations abstract and homogeneous - as a 'people'. India is thus the Indian people stripped of all their particularities; the citizen is the foundation of the nation.

The constituent elements of this nationalism are rooted in a history and a culture other than that of India. Some of the central concepts in Nehru's nationalism - the people, democracy, rights, representation - derive from a sensibility different to that which informed the nationalism of a Tilak or a Gandhi. This 'sensibility' makes its first appearance, and is elaborated, in the course of the European Enlightenment, and it is this Enlightenment sensibility which is at the heart of Nehru's very notion of 'India'. We turn now to a further examination of this aspect of Nehru's thought.

**Rationalism and Historicism**

The independent India for which Nehru struggles is one which will be modern. One of the central aspects of modernity, which accompanies and defines it, is the
sovereignty of Reason. Nehru is one of her most ardent champions. Thus he urges a youth conference to "reject also everything, however hallowed it may be by tradition and convention and religious sanction, if your reason tells you that it is wrong or unsuited to the present condition".21

As this passage indicates, Nehru espouses Reason in a battle against unreason. In an unpublished article he writes of India, "The world has marched on and left us far behind immersed in our superstitions and observances which we do not even understand".22 In India, "Our chief enemy today is absence of reason, and its necessary consequence - bigotry".23 The corrective to this, which Nehru continually urges, is that "We must honour reason more and test everything by the light of that reason...We must cultivate the spirit of enquiry and welcome all knowledge whether the source of it is the East or the West".24

Thus reason or science are the 'spirit of the age',25 and they must also be applied to the manner in which the independence struggle is conceived and conducted. The mysticism and revivalism which have accompanied the growth of Indian nationalism must be rejected:

Our politics must be either those of magic or of science. The former of course requires no argument or logic; the latter is in theory at least entirely based on clarity of thought and reasoning...Personally, I have no faith in or use for the ways of magic and religion and I can only consider the question on scientific grounds.26

Such an Enlightenment espousal of reason, science and critical enquiry - of rationalism, to employ a convenient shorthand- was not new in the history of Indian nationalism. Such an outlook - albeit in a less consistent and uncompromising version - more or less dominated the Congress before the advent of the Extremists and, later, of Gandhi.

Such a rationalism, however, sat uneasily with nationalism. Since science was seen as a peculiarly European product, and its arrival in India was inseparable from the
British conquest of India, admiration for and a desire to emulate this 'virtue' were not easily compatible with a militant nationalism.

This dilemma found all manner of resolutions. Very schematically, we may identify three. One was to accept science and reason (and, usually, rule of law, stable government etc.) as European qualities worthy of respect and emulation, superior to an Indian tradition of unreason. In this case - and this was the dilemma of Indian liberalism - rationalism compromised nationalism. 'Demands' for self-government took the form, not of demands, but of appeals - appeals to the British to confer upon India those British rights and traditions which the Indian supplicants so greatly admired and desired. This 'Moderate' or liberal tradition was later to be denounced as 'mendicancy', as Indian nationalism took a more assertive and militant form in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Another 'solution' to this problem was to reject the claims of European science and reason to superiority, in favour of an Indian tradition, usually one of faith and spirituality. Here, nationalism was maintained by a rejection of rationalism - but inconsistently, for inasmuch as this solution still aimed at founding a modern nation, it necessarily drew upon a European tradition.

A third solution was to acknowledge the superiority of the West in certain matters, but to characterise these as 'material' or even technical; and to postulate the existence of another domain which was peculiarly Indian. From this position, a synthesis could be sought, one in which Western virtues could be acknowledged and emulated whilst leaving an Indian 'core' intact. Such a resolution bifurcated the world and knowledge of it into two domains; further, in self-consciously seeking to identify and define the Indian/spiritual domain it almost inevitably defined that as essentially Hindu.
In the case of Nehru, rationalism is not compromised in any such way. For his rationalism is accompanied by a rejection of essentialising categories in favour of a *historicism*:

We are often told that there is a world of difference between the East and the West. The West is said to be materialistic, the East spiritual, religious, etc...but there is no such thing as East and West except in the minds of those who wish to make this an excuse for imperialist domination, or those who have inherited such myths and fictions from a confused metaphysical past. Differences there are but they are chiefly due to different stages of economic growth.27

The differences between East and West are the product of their different economic development, which is embedded in *history*. Science and industry are the products, not of Western culture, but of history; that they are so closely associated with the West is a function of the uneven nature of historical development, not of any essential superiority of Westerners or their culture. Specifically, these differences are largely a result of the industrial revolution, which occurred in the West:

fundamentally there was no basic difference between the East and the West before the advent of the machine age...The real difference that we observe today between the East and the modern West was therefore introduced by the industrial age. The virtues of the West are the virtues of industrialisation: science, organisation, cooperation, activity; and the so-called virtues and vices of the East are those which, in a large measure, could be found in the West before the machine age.28

The 'virtues' of the West are acknowledged, but also immediately historicised, and thereby detached from their Western origins. Rationalism and nationalism are reconciled with the aid of historicism. Western science and industry can be praised and emulated by a militant nationalism - precisely by postulating their socio-historical origins, rather than their origins in a specific spirit or culture. Indeed, it is now possible for nationalism to assume a radical, transformative position, to criticise Indian culture vigorously from a 'modern' rationalist perspective, without ceasing to be nationalist. Nehru writes,
I see no particular reason to pride ourselves on our peculiarities, angularities and insularities...I am not unconscious of the greatness of our past. But when I study our later history and survey our present condition I see very little of the chosen people about us...Indian civilisation today is stagnant.29

Nationalism need no longer take recourse to the glorification of Indian culture and history. Indeed, all such attempts to find peculiarly Indian virtues are simply delusions designed to offer solace:

It is commonplace that in the modern industrial West outward development has far outstripped the inner, but it does not follow, as many people in the East appear to imagine, that because we are industrially backward and our external development has been slow, therefore our inner evolution has been greater. That is one of the delusions with which we try to comfort ourselves and try to overcome our feelings of inferiority.30

Because Western 'virtues' are no longer seen as specifically Western, a project for the transformation of India along Western lines is compatible with nationalism. Nehru bluntly writes to Gandhi,

You have stated somewhere that India has nothing to learn from the West... I entirely disagree with this viewpoint and I neither think the so-called Rama Raj was very good in the past, and nor do I want it back. I think the western or rather industrial civilisation is bound to conquer India...31 (emphasis added).

Such an outcome - the transformation of India along Western, 'or rather industrial', lines - is precisely what Nehru aims at:

I believe in industrialisation and the big machine and I should like to see factories springing up all over India. I want to increase the wealth of India and the standard of living of the Indian people and it seems to me that this can only be done by the application of science to industry resulting in large scale industrialisation.32

Thus Nehru's rationalism goes hand in hand with a desire to 'modernise' India. These are, in fact, both aspects of what Nehru terms the 'spirit of the age' - the spirit...
of science and its achievements (industry, technology etc.). This commitment to a spirit which has its origins in Europe is reconciled with nationalism by the aid of a historicism which owes much to Marxism.

Having been reconciled, they are declared to be inseparable. For, Nehru writes, even if "In the past we have seen the curious phenomenon in India of the political extremist being a reactionary in social matters, and not unoften the political moderate has been more advanced", today it is clear that "the social reactionary is the ally of those who wish to keep India in subjection". Nehru provides militant nationalism with new foundations, where it must perforce go hand in hand with rationalism. Both liberalism and revivalist nationalism are, from the viewpoint of this nationalism, found to be not 'truly' nationalist.

Nationalism and Internationalism

'Reason' is for Nehru not merely a category or a viewpoint; it is in the process of being actualised in history. Science, industry and technology are all so many manifestations of the march of Reason through history - of progress. Progress is the development and spread of science and industry - the progressive universalisation of Reason. It is necessary to Nehru's argument that Reason be seen as potentially universal - that what began in the West is seen as capable of developing in the East - for only then is the marriage between rationalism and a militant nationalism viable.

The development and spread of science and industry (with the economic and social changes which accompany them) have the effect of creating doubt and instability, as the old is criticised and transformed by the new:

The whole world today is one vast question mark...The age of faith, with the comfort and stability it brings, is past, and there is questioning about everything, however permanent or sacred it might have appeared to our forefathers. Everywhere there is doubt and restlessness and the
foundations of the state and society are in process of transformation... We appear to be in a dissolving period of history...\textsuperscript{34}

However, all this turmoil also makes for the creation of a single world, one marked by increasing commonalities and interdependence - "Science and industry and new methods of transportation have made each country dependent in a large measure on others..."\textsuperscript{35}, and today "The world has become internationalised... No nation is really independent, they are all interdependent".\textsuperscript{36}

This increasing internationalisation of the world is a symptom of progress. Nehru laments the Indian nationalist movement's ignorance of world developments - "I am afraid we are terribly narrow in our outlook and the sooner we get rid of this narrowness the better".\textsuperscript{37} India's ignorance of and isolation from the world mean she runs the risk of not being part of the world's 'progress'. To call for the establishing of international links is therefore not simply a matter of publicising the Indian nationalist cause in foreign countries,

but of ending the isolation in which India has lived for generations and of developing contacts with other parts of the world. Whether we wish it or not, India cannot remain, now or hereafter, cut off from the rest of the world. No country can do so. The modern world is too closely knit together to permit of such isolation.\textsuperscript{38}

In accordance with these views, an important aspect of Nehru's activity in the INC was directed towards breaking down its insularity. Nehru was instrumental in the INC joining (as an associate member) the League Against Imperialism, and was virtually the sole contact between the latter and the INC. From 1927 he began to urge the INC to establish a foreign department, eventually meeting with success. Through his writings and speeches, and the resolutions he sponsored through the Congress, he was the architect of what eventually emerged as a coherent foreign policy, covering most of the important issues and events of his day - peace, empire, China, Abyssinia, Spain and so on.
But if internationalism is an embodiment of progress, what then of nationalism- the elevation of the particular?

Nehru's response is uncompromisingly honest. Nationalism is normally narrow, provincial and particularistic, and as such it is contrary to the real movement of history -"Although the myth of nationalism flourishes and holds men's minds, it is an outworn creed and internationalism approximates more and more to reality".39

Such a narrow nationalism is not to be emulated -

I do not want our country to be a victim of that narrow nationalism which is now to be found in almost all countries of Europe and Africa.40

Here indeed is a 'mature' nationalism - one that points to Europe not as the justification for its own project, but as an example to be avoided. At the same time, a commitment to internationalism does not lead to a rejection of nationalism as such. Instead, a distinction is made between 'good' and 'bad' nationalisms, distinguished by their content and their historical context (for nationalism also does not escape history).

For, Nehru's argument runs, even if Reason (in the form of science and industry) is becoming universal, the manner of this universalisation is a profoundly 'unreasonable' and inequitable one. One of the specific historical mechanisms by which the world is increasingly becoming 'one' is imperialism , which is also characterised by inequality and oppression. The increasing interdependence which the nations of the world show is not one between equals, but between imperialist powers and the colonised. In the form of imperialism, it represents not the progress of the world, but a problem of world dimensions- "The world problem is ultimately one of imperialism - the finance-imperialism of the present day".41 And if India has become part of a single world, it has also become part of the same problem - "the Indian problem is but part of the world problem of imperialism, the two are indissolubly linked together...42
Thus although imperialism is one of the mechanisms by which connections are established between different peoples and nations, this is not itself a true internationalism, for it lacks the crucial elements of equality and freedom. "The British Empire and real internationalism", Nehru writes, "are as poles apart, and it is not through that empire that we can march to internationalism".43

The 'true internationalism' which Nehru seeks requires, not a rejection of nationalism, but an affirmation of it:

progress can only come through more and more internationalism. But there can be no real internationalism unless the component parts are entirely free...Thus though we must look forward to an international order, we can only reach it by achieving national independence first.44

In Nehru's thought, then, the universal and the particular, nationalism and internationalism, are reconciled by means of the crucial mediating concept of imperialism. Indeed, not only are they reconciled, national freedom is declared to be essential to the achievement of real internationalism.

Through a circuitous route, then, we discover that nationalism is, after all, part and parcel of the march of Reason and freedom. Not in the terms normal to much nationalist thought, for not all nationalism is progressive - all too often, it is 'narrow and aggressive'. But where it is the nationalism of the oppressed, and where it is self-consciously anti-imperialist and internationalist, it is an essential part of the progress of history.45

'Nehruvian Socialism'

Nehru's nationalism, we see, is a rationalist, modernising and 'universalising' nationalism. Marxist historicism and the concept of imperialism are what make this combination possible, enable Nehru to combine nationalism with rationalism, and nationalism with internationalism.
It should not be thought, however, that Nehru merely 'borrows' from Marxism selectively, in order to fill embarrassing gaps in a non-Marxist discourse. The notions of 'history' and 'its' progress, as we have seen, are central to Nehru's thought. In his 1936 Congress Presidential address, he urges his audience:

Let us try to develop the historic sense so that we can view current events in proper perspective and understand their real significance. Only then can we appreciate the march of history and keep step with it.46

This 'historic sense', Nehru writes in his Autobiography, was provided for him by the Marxist conception of history:

the theory and philosophy of Marxism lightened up many a dark corner of my mind. History came to have a new meaning for me. The Marxist interpretation threw a flood of light on it, and it became an unfolding drama with some order and purpose, howsoever unconscious, behind it. In spite of the appalling waste and misery of the past and the present, the future was bright with hope, though many dangers intervened.47

Thus Nehru's Marxist historicism is part of his more general acceptance of the materialist conception of history. This conception provides history with meaning and purpose, and hope for the future. In these respects, far from contradicting, it complements Nehru's Enlightenment rationalism.

For Nehru historical materialism represents, as it did for most of his contemporaries, a form of economic determinism. He writes of Marxism:

Essentially it is based on certain scientific methods of trying to understand history, trying to understand from past events the laws that govern the development of human society...Marx showed that the economic factor was the most important factor.48

This view, to which Nehru subscribes, gives him the means by which to understand India's problems and their solutions - "as I conceive it, the fundamental problem of India really is economic in its various aspects".49 Thus for example communalism, that bane of the Indian nationalist movement, is analysed by Nehru as a
case of elites pursuing their economic interests by manipulating the religious sentiments of the masses; a manipulation made possible by the economic disparities between the two communities. Part of the solution, then, is to bring to the fore the 'real', economic interests which underly and determine religious conflict. In an independent India, Nehru writes, "parties will be formed with economic ideals. There will be socialists, anti-socialists, zamindars, kisans and other similar groups. It will be ridiculous to think of parties founded on a religious or communal basis".

Since economic causes shape history, and economic interests determine the behaviour and allegiances of classes, it is imperative that the INC address itself to the economic interests of the Indian masses. Delivering the Presidential address to the U.P. Provincial Congress Conference in October 1928, Nehru urges this upon the INC:

My present object is to impress [upon] you that we can no longer make any progress by the cry of Swaraj only. We must make it clear that we aim at economic and social Swaraj as well as political, and for this purpose we must lay down a definite economic and social programme.

Ultimately, a recognition of the importance of economic factors means embracing socialism. Nationalism alone is necessary but incomplete - "Nationalism, as such, though inevitable under the present conditions, offers no solution of the basic economic problems of the country...Socialism, on the other hand, directly tackles all such problems".

Roy's Marxist pedagogy could scarcely have found a more receptive pupil. Embracing the ideas of economic determination and the primacy of economic interests, Nehru sought to act upon these - to persuade the Congress to adopt an economic programme which would appeal to the masses, and eventually to adopt the socialist goal.

If Nehru's historicism is part of his more general acceptance of historical materialism, he similarly does not simply use the concept of imperialism rhetorically.
Although the concept is not developed or used rigorously by him, it plays a similar role in his thought to the role it played in Lenin's. By distinguishing between oppressor and oppressed nations, it legitimates certain nationalisms, whilst adopting a critical stance to nationalism 'in general'. Furthermore, Nehru draws what a Marxist might consider the 'logical conclusion' which follows from the theory of imperialism - namely, that as an anti-imperialist struggle, the Indian struggle for independence must also tend towards being an anti-capitalist struggle.

It is not the case, then, that Nehru appropriates certain 'elements' of Marxism in order to bolster a rationalist and modernising nationalism. Nehru's nationalism is constructed upon a foundation which is not only rationalist, but also socialist. Nor, as we shall see below, does Nehru conceive of these as different elements simply 'added' together.

In "Whither India?", Nehru answers the question posed by his title as follows:

Whither India? Surely to the great human goal of social and economic equality, to the ending of all exploitation of nation by nation and class by class, to national freedom within the framework of an international cooperative socialist world federation.54

This passage contains many of the elements which we have identified as central to Nehru's thought. The goal which India must pursue is a universal one, embodied in a cooperative federation of nations. The path to this universal goal, however, requires an end to imperialism, requires national freedom instead of national oppression. The goal is also one of social and economic equality, a goal to be achieved by, and embodied in, socialism.

Underpinning all this is a notion of progress - a 'goal' to which humanity tends, marked by the triumph of reason, universality and justice. There are different conceptions and measures of progress, however, and Nehru urges his nationalist
colleagues to adopt the right measure, for only then can progress be properly recognised and facilitated:

Most of us have grown up under the nationalist tradition and it is hard to give up the habits of a lifetime...the process of crossing over to a new ideology [socialism] is always a painful one...But the crossing has to be made, unless we are to remain in a stagnant backwater, overwhelmed from time to time by the wash of the boats that move down the river of progress.55

Here socialist theory, with its emphasis upon economic equality and international cooperation, points to the direction in which to move and criteria by which progress is to be measured. It thus not only 'makes possible' a world-view which sees history as the progress of reason ; it is a constitutive part of that rationalism. In fact, in helping to define the ultimate 'human goal', socialism is not only part of, but is the highest point of, rationalist thought.

If this is so of socialist theory, it is also true of socialism as a social system. The conflict between capitalism and socialism, Nehru writes,

is not, fundamentally, a moral issue, as some people imagine...the question now is whether the capitalist system has not outlived its day and must now give place to a better and saner ordering of human affairs, which is more in keeping with the progress of science and human knowledge.56

Socialism, in other words, is that 'saner' and more 'scientific' ordering of society - it is the application of science and knowledge to human affairs. It is thus part of, indeed the culmination of, the march of Reason through history. If what we have termed 'rationalism' is a constitutive element in Nehru's nationalist vision, socialism is in turn a constitutive element of his rationalism, and not something external to and 'added on' to it.
'Nehruvian Socialism' and Marxism

Does this mean, then, that Nehru was a Marxist? Does 'Nehruvian socialism' belong to the history of Marxism in the colonies?

A number of facts support an answer in the affirmative. Nehru publicly committed himself, not only to socialism, but to Marxian or 'scientific' socialism. As a nationalist he desired independence for India not only, or even primarily, as a goal in itself, but as a necessary means through which the economic and social problems of the country could be addressed. The means by which he sought to achieve independence were connected to this end; Nehru repeatedly emphasised that national liberation could only be achieved with the help of the masses, and that mobilising the masses required that 'Swaraj' be given an economic content. Nehru was a passionate nationalist, but one not uncritical of nationalism, including varieties of Indian nationalism other than his own. On international questions there was usually not much to distinguish his position from that of communists.

Here, then, was a nationalist who had imbibed the lessons of Marxism - one who was a living proof of the communist contention that any consistent and clear-minded nationalism had perforce to have socialistic leanings. In the periods immediately before and (in particular) in the period immediately after the one under consideration this is more-or-less how he was seen and characterised by Indian communists, though during the years 1928-35 he was condemned by them as an 'agent' of the Indian bourgeoisie.

Against characterising Nehru as a Marxist we have the fact that his efforts to combine socialism and nationalism were constrained by his commitment to the INC, and took place largely within it. Nehru did not believe, as the communists did, that the involvement of the masses in the nationalist struggle would be most efficacious (and best serve their interests) where they were mobilised under the banners of their own class organisations. Nor did he assign a preponderant role to the working class in the
struggle for national liberation, as the communists did. All these are certainly reasons enough to avoid mistaking Nehru for a communist - a label he himself disavowed. Whether they are reason enough to eschew calling him a Marxist is another question. Obviously, to raise the question of whether Nehru was a Marxist is also to raise the issue of what it meant to be a Marxist in the colonies; it is to raise the question of what differentiated Marxism from other political philosophies aiming at national liberation. This is an issue we will return to.

We could answer the question we have posed ourselves by switching our attention to the historical meaning of Nehruvian socialism. Here the historical record would seem to provide a clear answer, demonstrating as it does the gap between Nehru's socialist protestations and what was actually achieved, and even what he in actual fact sought to achieve. Nehru was not a Marxist.

Such an exercise in 'debunking' would be to the point, in demonstrating the limitations of 'Nehruvian socialism', and, in the ultimate analysis, the inaptness of the latter term. It would also be politically salient, since Nehru's legacy continues to be a matter for political debate and contestation in India. However such an analysis would leave unexplained why Marxism is, nevertheless, an important element in Nehru's thought. It would highlight, but not explain, the gap between the historical significance of Nehruvian socialism and its intellectual content.

To explain this one could take the argument a decisive step further, by situating Nehru's thought within another, non-Marxist project, and specifying the relation between this and Nehru's 'socialism' - as Partha Chatterjee has done so well. Chatterjee argues that nationalists like Nehru appropriated Marxism's emphasis on economic factors as determining social development, and Marxism's claims to possessing a 'scientific' outlook, finding in these "a particularly useful theoretical foothold from which they could reach out and embrace the rationalist and egalitarian side of Marxism, leaving its political core well alone".
For nationalists who sought to 'modernise' their nation, the criteria of 'economic progress' provided a 'scientific' basis upon which to distinguish the progressive from the backward. Marxism "provided a new scientific legitimation to a whole set of rationalist distinctions between the modern and the traditional, the secular and the religious, the progressive and the obscurantist, the advanced and the backward".59 Chatterjee suggests, as we have done, that for such a nationalism Marxism appears (and hence its attraction) as "the most advanced expression yet of the rationalism of the European Enlightenment".60

Once interpreted in this way, Marxism is then appropriated by a modernising, secular, rationalist but non-revolutionary nationalism. This nationalism, a new development in the history of nationalist thought in India, represents a 'reconstruction' of nationalist thought, "a reconstruction whose specific form was to situate nationalism within the domain of a state ideology".61 For in this nationalism the establishment of an independent Indian nation-state is desired not simply as a question of sovereignty; that state is seen as the motor, the instrument, for the modernising of India. This was a nationalist etatisme, "explicitly recognising a central, autonomous and directing role of the state and legitimising it by a specifically nationalist marriage between the ideas of progress and social justice".62

Thus according to Chatterjee, Marxism is appropriated by and becomes an important and necessary element in a new, reconstructed, nationalist thought. This nationalism is deeply committed to 'progress', and to the notion that progress in general depends upon economic progress in particular, and also upon increasing economic equality. These notions are borrowed from Marxism, but the manner of their combination is a specifically nationalist and etatist, rather than a Marxist, one.

Nehru's ideology, then,
is an ideology of which the central organising principle is the autonomy of the state; the legitimising principle is a conception of social justice. The argument then runs as follows: social justice for all cannot be provided
within the old framework because it is antiquated, decadent and incapable of dynamism. What is necessary is to create a new framework of institutions which can embody the spirit of progress or, a synonym, modernity. Progress or modernity, according to the terms of the 20th century, means giving primacy to the sphere of the economic, because it is only by means of a thorough reorganisation of the systems of economic production and distribution that enough wealth can be created to ensure social justice for all...the principal political task before the nation is to establish a sovereign national state. Once established, this state will...take an overall view of the matter and, in accordance with the best scientific procedures, plan and direct the economic processes in order to create enough social wealth to ensure welfare and justice for all.63

This analysis seems to us persuasive. We have already discussed the importance of Marxism to Nehru's nationalism - how it enables him to adopt a critical and transformative stance towards Indian society, how it enables him to combine nationalism with internationalism, and so on. Situating Nehru's Marxism within another project in this way explains why his Marxism nevertheless did not lead to a revolutionary politics. It also, we may note in passing, helps explains the post-Independence trajectory of Nehru's politics - the efforts to modernise and create some degree of economic equality through a state-sponsored capitalism.

Despite its explanatory power, however, to the extent that such an analysis implies - as even Chatterjee does - that Nehru's appropriation of Marxism was deliberately selective and hence superficial (even if the suggestion of cynical 'trickery' is avoided)64, it is mistaken.

For what is distinctive about Nehru's thought, as we have sought to show, is that Nehru's appropriation of Marxism is not carefully selective and superficial. Nehru is not a communist, it is true; but nor does he simply borrow a few phrases and concepts from Marxism to buttress a modernising, etatist nationalism. Marxism, as we have argued, is a central, constitutive element in his modernising, etatist nationalism.
Chatterjee's analysis, then, takes us further, but it still leaves us with a paradox. Namely - 'Nehruvian socialism' did not cynically 'use' Marxism for non-Marxist ends, yet it did represent the appropriation of Marxism in the service of a nationalism which was not Marxist.

Conclusion

How was this possible? The answer lies in the relationship of Marxism to its intellectual heritage, and also in the position Marxists came to take on the national question.

Marx's thought, as we observed in the 'Introduction' to this work, is at once intellectual heir to the Enlightenment, and an attempt to develop a radical critique of some of the central concepts which Enlightenment thought bequeathed to subsequent intellectual systems. 'Enlightenment thought' is used here in a very broad sense, to denote not only the 'movement', but some of the related and even critical currents of thought associated with it (e.g., Hegel and Herder).65 'Enlightenment' here denotes, in effect, modernity - a 'way of thinking', embodied in certain notions and concepts, which begins with the Enlightenment, and which has shaped the Western intellectual tradition since.

Prominent in these ways of thinking were notions of the paramountcy of Reason; of history as progress, and particularly as a process of the emergence of Reason into its own; of knowledge as science (a conception of knowledge deeply indebted to the developments in natural science); an evolutionist view of history and a view not only that history has order and meaning, but that order and meaning reside in history; and so on. Not all of these notions were 'discovered' by the Enlightenment, and some (certainly, historicism) do not strictly speaking belong to it at all. But the Enlightenment sensibility marks the ground in which such conceptions grew, until
they gained a currency which marked them, precisely, not as features of Enlightenment thought, but of 'modern' thought.

Marx, as is obvious at first glance, also accepted many of these notions. At the same time, he sought to subject this whole intellectual system to a far-reaching critique, in at least two important senses. He accepted and 'developed' some of the central categories of bourgeois thought, thereby revealing their contradictions and limitations; the method of an 'immanent critique'. His *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, and the first part of *Capital I* (on value) are particularly good illustrations of this.

Marx also sought to show that all systems of thought were products of particular historical and social conditions. Thus the Enlightenment became the bourgeois Enlightenment, and its most fundamental propositions (and errors), it was suggested, bore the marks of these historical conditions. It was not simply a question of 'errors' and 'shortcomings' of particular thinkers (though these existed), which were to be discovered and then corrected or else rejected. Marx's relationship to pre-Marxist thought, rather, was first to show the conditions which produced and shaped that thought; and second, recognising these fundamental (because historical) limitations, to develop a new world view based upon different historical conditions, precisely by 'overthrowing' and 'superseding' past systems of thought - by subjecting them to a radical critique.

If Marxism, in the hands of its founder, bore such a two-fold relationship to Enlightenment thought - as part of the 'modernity' which the Enlightenment ushered in, but also as a critique of it - it is also true that in Marx's thought this relationship was uneasily maintained. In Marx's writings, the project of critique is always present, but always also partial and incomplete. It is this which provides many ambiguities - but also much of the creative tension - in Marx's thought.
In Marxism, as it came to be systematised by Engels and leading figures of the Second and Third International - Plekhanov, Kautsky, Stalin and even (though here the picture is more complex) Lenin - much of this ambiguity and tension was lost. Marxists came to conceive of their theory as a science, above all, as a science of history. This was possible precisely because history was assumed to be a rigid evolutionary process, governed by ironclad laws. Scientism and evolutionism came to reinforce each other - history and society were governed by 'laws', and science was the grasping of these laws in thought.

Marxists thus came to accept, and incorporate, the central notions and categories of the Enlightenment. To be sure, their content was transformed - progress was above all a matter of economic progress; science was itself imbedded in history, and thus shaped by historical conditions; and so on. But, with their new content, these concepts became central to Marxism. And Marxism's relationship with Enlightenment thought thus changed fundamentally. Marx's immanent critique was not pursued. In the hands of most of his successors his 'historical' critique now took the form of saying: Enlightenment thought, because of the historical circumstances of its production, is 'blind' to things such as the class 'motor' of social development, to the historically bound nature of its own vision of society, and so on. That is, Enlightenment categories were treated as 'mistaken' in the sense that they were incorrectly or incompletely developed. But take away the veil and the self-same categories - of Reason, science and progress - were held to yield truth. Reason, science and progress were not themselves to be subjected to a critique. Marxism became and presented itself, often explicitly, as the fulfilment and true heir to the Enlightenment, a knowledge expunged of its 'bourgeois' limitations and mistakes, and thus constituted as a true science.

Thus even where Marxism remained, politically, a radical, transformative project, it no longer aimed at a critique of Enlightenment thought. Indeed, its political radicalism increasingly rested upon its particular manner of interpreting and
appropriating this thought. Science revealed that history's laws led to socialism; science and evolution were the guarantors of the truth and ultimate victory of socialism.

It is this - Marxism as a scientific theory of historical evolution - which lent itself to appropriation by a theory and a project which was not Marxist. In Europe this took the form, not of Marxism being appropriated, but rather of one section of the Marxist-inspired workers' movement 'surrendering'. After the great split in the communist movement in the aftermath of World War One and the Russian revolution, that section of it which remained faithful to the politics of the Second International soon ceased to be qualitatively different from other brands of radical or liberal politics. Marxism in its Leninist form, which had broken with some of the political consequences of such an uncritical assimilation of Enlightenment concepts, provided in its emphasis on class struggle, the dictatorship of the proletariat and the necessity of revolutionary rather than evolutionary roads to socialism a 'political core' which continued to distinguish Marxists of this type from other radicals and liberals. Wherever this 'core' has been diluted - as during the 'Popular Front' period and as in many Western communist parties today - the differences between Marxism and other post-Enlightenment radical political philosophies has narrowed.

However in the East Marxism in its Leninist reformulation itself narrowed the gap between its own positions and one of the main forms of non-Marxist politics and thought in the colonies. It did so the moment it endorsed 'progressive' nationalism. When a communist politics came to be developed in and for India, nationalism was at the heart of it. The 'political core' of Marxism in the colonies - that which distinguished it from others seeking national liberation - shrank to a series of propositions relating to strategic and organisational questions. Thus in the East there was an added element which had the effect of narrowing the gap between Marxism and other political philosophies and movements, and thus making possible an appropriation of Marxism - the Marxist endorsement of nationalism (and, one could
add, Soviet socialism's strong emphasis on the state as the instrument for industrialisation).66

It was this combination of Marxism's endorsement of nationalism, and its development into the most consistent form of Enlightenment rationalism, which facilitated its appropriation by a nationalism which was also committed to modernisation, and also wedded to notions of science and progress. In the colonies, where Marxism was not a critique of 'modernity', and where it was largely shorn of a distinctive 'political core', it could be appropriated by a rationalist and modernising nationalism without doing violence to Marxism - that is, without cynicism and careful selection. Indeed, such a 'fusion', amounting to the appropriation of Marxism by nationalism, would be successful - would result in the production of a nationalism which could at once be critical of India yet nationalist, internationalist and rationalist, one which could define progress and identify its project as representing progress - in the very measure that it was 'genuine' rather than cynical and selective.

This, then, is the meaning of Nehruvian socialism. It represents the appropriation of Marxism in the service of a non-Marxist nationalism; an appropriation made possible, not by the cunning of Nehru, but by the nature of Marxism as it developed after Marx, and by its attitude towards nationalism in the colonies.
Notes


3. As in, for example, when the Congress Working Committee effectively censured Nehru for 'loose talk' about class conflict and appropriations. Despite such run-ins, on the whole Nehru's socialist proclamations were treated indulgently by his less radical colleagues, for they posed little real threat. Thus Gandhi was consistently Nehru's 'patron' in the INC, supporting his candidature for high positions. In 1929 - as again in 1936 - it was Gandhi who urged that Nehru become INC President. The best of Nehru's biographers writes that Gandhi realised that "to Jawaharlal discipline was more important than revolution and political freedom took priority over economic and social change. There was little to fear from a man whom Gandhi described as a confirmed socialist who wanted for his country only what it could manage, a practical statesman who tempered his ideals to suit his surroundings. During the next ten years, no single individual did more to build in the Congress an awareness of economic issues ; but Jawaharlal was also the best shield of the Congress against left-wing groups and organisations" - S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography*, v. 1 (1889-1947), Jonathan Cape, 1975, pp. 136-37.

4. *S.W.*, v. 4, p. 511. The resolution goes on to commit the INC to pursue a national independence which will include a living wage for industrial workers, the right to form trade unions, a progressive income tax and an inheritance tax, state control of key industries and mineral resources, and so on (pp. 512-13). Nehru, who drafted successive versions of the resolution until he and Gandhi reached agreement on the final one, described it as "a step, a very short step, in a socialist direction..." - *An Autobiography*, John Lane (The Bodley Head), London, 1936, p. 266. Hereafter cited as *Auto*.

5. Nehru describes one such incident in his *Autobiography* - how he offered his resignation as INC General Secretary when the All Parties Conference added a clause to the (Motilal) Nehru Report guaranteeing the feudal *taluqdar*s continued possessions of their *taluq*s under the proposed Constitution. The Congress Working Committee persuaded Nehru to withdraw his resignation, and Nehru
writes, with remarkable ingenuousness, "It was surprising how easy it was to win me over to a withdrawal of my resignation. This happened on many occasions, and as neither party really liked the idea of a break, we clung to every pretext to avoid it" - p. 173.


14. "It is interesting to compare the intolerance of Europe in matters religious to the wide tolerance prevailing almost throughout history in India" - "Unity of India", p. 16.

15. *Discovery*, p. 78.


20. Partha Chatterjee, after quoting this passage, writes - "To this leadership, the representation of nation as Mother carried little of the utopian meaning, dream-like and yet passionately real, charged with a deeply religious semiotic, with which the nationalist intelligentsia had endowed it at its late 19th century phrase of Hindu revivalism... The nation as Mother comes to him [Nehru] as part of a political
language he has taught himself to use...It does not figure in his own 'scientific' vocabulary of politics...So he interprets the word, giving it his own rationalist construction: the nation was the whole people..." - Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World, Zed Books, 1986, p. 147.


23. ibid., p. 439.

24. ibid., p. 436.

25. "science is the spirit of the age and the dominating factor of the modern world. Even more than the present, the future belongs to science and to those who make friends with science..." - Address to Indian Science Congress, Dec. 26, 1937, in The Unity of India, p. 175. Nehru treats reason and science as synonymous because by science he usually means the method of science, rather than scientific activity narrowly conceived. This method is valid for all purposes - "it is to that [method] that we must adhere in our thought and activities, in research, in social life, in political and economic life, in religion" - Address to National Academy of Science, Allahabad, March 5, 1938, in The Unity of India, p. 180.


27. ibid., p. 5.

28. Paper read to International League of Women for Peace and Liberty Switzerland, Sept. 1927, S.W., v. 2, p. 333. Similarly, "there is a good deal of talk about differences between East and West. I confess I fail to see it...There is much difference between Europe and Asia today because Europe is industrialised and Asia is not. Europe of the Middle Ages was much the same as Asia of the Middle Ages" - Speech to student meeting, Bombay, 20 May, 1928, S.W., v. 3, p. 185.

29. Speech to student meeting, S.W., v. 3, pp. 185-86. Nehru goes on to describe the Indian religion of his day as nothing more than a series of taboos relating to food and social relationships; the music of his day as "nothing more than infernal din and painful noises"; and most of the Hindi and Urdu literature of his period as "sloppish and soppy" - p. 186.

31. Letter to Gandhi, 11-1-1928, *S.W.*, v. 3, p. 14. Harking back to a golden past is not only an exercise in mythmaking, it is also, Nehru declares, disabling - "We think of the golden age of past times, of Rama Raj. And this very looking back makes us still more stagnant and rigid and incapable of creative work" -"India and the Need for International Contacts", 13 May, 1928, *S.W.*, v. 3, p. 380.


34. 'Presidential Address' to Lahore Congress, 1929, *S.W.*, v. 4, p. 185. Similarly, "Every intelligent person knows that the world is in a state of intellectual turmoil today...A world is coming to an end..." - *Auto*, pp. 585-86.


36. "India and the Need for International Contacts", 13 May, 1928, *S.W.*, v. 3, p. 379. Nehru also writes, "The different parts of the world today are becoming extraordinarily interrelated with each other, and events which happen in one part of the world immediately react and interact upon the other parts of the world" -"On the Indian Problem", 4 Feb. 1936, *S.W.*, v. 7, p. 95.


38. "A Foreign Policy for India", 13 Sept., 1927, *S.W.*, v. 2, p. 352. Similarly in his 1929 Congress Presidential address, Nehru says, "if we ignore the world, we do so at our peril. Civilisation today, such as it is, is not the creation of or the monopoly of one people or nation. It is a composite fabric" - *S.W.*, v. 4, p. 185.

39. "India and the Need for International Contacts", *S.W.*, v. 3, p. 379. 'Narrow nationalism' runs against the trend of history - "International and intra-national activities dominate the world, and nations are growing more and more interdependent. Our ideal and objective cannot go against this historical tendency and we must be prepared to discard a narrow nationalism in favour of world cooperation and real internationalism" - "Whither India", *S.W.*, v. 6, p. 15.


43. "Whither India", S.W., v. 6, p. 16.

44. Press interview, Calcutta, 16 Jan., 1934, S.W., v. 6, p. 90. Similarly Nehru writes, "Nationalism is of course a reactionary force in the modern world but it is an inevitable reaction to imperialism in colonial countries, and a step which cannot be avoided in the march to real internationalism" - "Exploitation of India", 2 Oct., 1933, S.W., v. 6, p. 36.

45. "I want to tell you that I dislike nationalism. But I do like nationalism as far as India is concerned, situated as it is today...For us, nationalism is a releasing force, and therefore, it is good. But nationalism in a country like Germany today or Italy is not a force which takes one to freedom. It confines and restricts. It is a narrowing thing...therefore nationalism in Europe today has become a bane and a curse" - Speech at Madras, 7 Oct., 1936, S.W., v. 7, p. 521.


47. Auto , pp. 362-63.


50. For a good summary and discussion of Nehru's views on communalism see Chatterjee, op. cit., pp. 141-43.

51. Speech at Bombay, 13 June, 1931, S.W., v. 5, p. 284.

52. S.W., v. 3, p. 260. Nehru's persistent efforts to persuade the Congress to outline the economic implications of Swaraj eventually bore fruit, as we have seen, in the Karachi resolution, and later in the Congress 'Election Manifesto' and 'Agrarian Programme'


54. "Whither India?", S.W., v. 6, p. 16.

55. ibid., p. 12.

56. ibid., p. 8.

57. In his Autobiography, immediately after the passage we have quoted (where he announces his acceptance of the Marxist conception of history) Nehru makes clear his disagreement with communists - "One of the reasons for the weakness in
numbers as well as influence of the Communists in India is that, instead of spreading a scientific knowledge of communism and trying to convert people's minds to it, they have largely concentrated on abuse of others..." - p. 366. In an oft-quoted passage from the same source Nehru writes, "...I am very far from being a communist. My roots are still perhaps partly in the nineteenth century, and I have been too much influenced by the humanist liberal tradition to get out of it completely" - p. 591.


60. *ibid*.


62. *ibid*.

63. *ibid.*, p. 133.

64. Thus in the passage quoted above Chatterjee refers to nationalists who appropriated some aspects of Marxism whilst leaving its 'political core' well alone. "This appropriation", Chatterjee adds, "was, of course, deliberately selective" - *ibid.*, p. 140.

65. Such a broad use of the term 'Enlightenment' is justified by the fact that even criticisms of it were launched from the same ground. Thus for example Romanticism, which amongst other things was a reaction against the Enlightenment, relied nevertheless upon Enlightenment conceptions for its own intellectual positions. Ernst Cassirer writes, "Without the aid of the philosophy of the Enlightenment and without its intellectual heritage, Romanticism could not have achieved and maintained its own position. However remote from the Enlightenment the Romantic view of the content of history may be, in method it remains dependent on, and most deeply indebted to, the Enlightenment" - *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, Princeton University Press, 1951, p. 197.

66. This point has often been emphasised, and it is certainly true that the statist character of Marxism in its 'official', Soviet, form offered an attractive model of state sponsored development for many of those nationalists in the East who saw in industrialisation the key to the modernisation of their countries. Indeed, it is this aspect of 'socialism' which has most often been appropriated by post-colonial states. The socialist pretensions of an Indira Gandhi, a Nasser, a Nkrumah and a
host of other Third World leaders are familiar to us all. However in these cases we
know instinctively, and can demonstrate with reference to the system of thought
itself (and not just by showing the interests it serves), that these appropriations of
Marxism are 'inauthentic', are selective and opportunist. What is special about
Nehru's case is precisely that he does not follow the well-tread path of treating
Marxism as little more than Five Year Plans; and his own nationalism is something
more than (and thus intellectually more interesting than) simply seeking
industrialisation and military might.
Chapter 7

The Politics of the United National Front

The years from 1936 to the outbreak of World War Two saw both the nationalist and the communist movements enter new phases in their development. The Indian National Congress (INC) recovered relatively rapidly from the tapering off and eventual suspension (in April 1934) of the Civil Disobedience movement, despite the severe repression unleashed by the British from early 1932. Within three years of the cessation of Civil Disobedience the Congress won a striking victory in the elections held under the Government of India Act, clearly establishing itself as the pre-eminent political organisation in the country.

The single major issue confronting the nationalist movement in this period was the Government of India Act. Enacted in the United Kingdom parliament in August 1935, it was the culmination of a long process which had begun with the appointment of the Simon Commission eight years earlier. India's new constitution made no mention even of Dominion Status. Its grant of elected responsible government in the provinces was compromised by the retention of important reserve and discretionary powers for the Provincial Governors, and by a limited franchise. The Federal part of the Act (which was to be implemented later) vested responsibility for foreign affairs and defence in the hands of the Viceroy; it provided only for indirect elections, and for a loose federal legislature dominated by the Princes. It thus met no nationalist demands.
The Congress opposed the new Act. Faced with British determination to implement it, however, it had to decide how most effectively to oppose it. The Congress opted to contest the elections held under the Act and, following its impressive performance, to form governments in provinces where it had a majority. Thus in this period the INC came to function both as a party of government and as a movement of opposition, dedicated to 'wrecking' the 1935 Act in its pursuit of full independence.

This was also a time of change for the Communist Party of India. It combined illegality (it was declared illegal in July 1934) with a re-entry into the 'mainstream' of Indian politics - that is to say, with a re-entry into nationalist politics. We suggested in Chapter 5 that the positions adopted by the Sixth Congress of the Comintern, and developed further at the Tenth Plenum of the ECCI - such as that class struggle and nationalist struggle were one, and could only be effectively conducted by the CPI - led to Indian communists becoming isolated from mass politics. Exacerbated by the arrest of communist leaders in 1929, this saw the communist movement in India split into competing, and increasingly ineffective, factions.

Reports to this effect which the Comintern received from its own emissaries, and may have received from the imprisoned CPI leadership\(^1\), led it to offer criticism and advice directed at remedying the situation. In June 1932 and November 1933 *Inprecor* published 'Open Letters' to the Indian communist leaders, the first under the name of the Central Committees of the communist parties of China, Great Britain and Germany, the second by the Central Committee of the CCP alone. Both letters accused the CPI of a self-imposed isolation from nationalist struggle.\(^2\) The letters called on the CPI to cease staying aloof from nationalist struggle, and not to counterpose strike struggles to the struggle for national independence.

The criticism was in bad faith, for the CPI was, in effect, being criticised for having faithfully followed the Comintern line, with disastrous consequences. On the presumption that the masses were deserting the INC, the Comintern had instructed the
CPI to concentrate its fire on the Congress and thus seize leadership of the nationalist movement. Since the premise was false, the policy directly contributed to the isolation of Indian communists.

The two letters to the CPI did not depart, in any significant degree, from the Sixth Congress line. Calls for the 'exposure' of the INC, and particularly resolute exposure of its 'Left Wing', were reiterated, and the CPI's ultra-left 1930 "Draft Platform of Action" was endorsed. Since the premises underlying the positions adopted at the Sixth Congress had not been abandoned, it followed - from the Comintern's point of view - that the CPI's failure to emerge as the leader of the national struggle could only be due to its failure to implement the prescribed policies, and/or from an inability to do so, due to organisational shortcomings. Thus both letters devoted considerable attention to organisational matters, expressing concern at the failure to build a united and all-India CPI, and offering suggestions as to how this might be done.

There was little the CPI could do in response to the political criticisms of the Comintern. The call to continue denunciations of the INC led precisely to that isolation which was being decried. In this regard the best the CPI could do was engage in further self-criticism and, more positively, pursue the call for trade union unity. In 1935 the Red Trade Union Congress and the All India Trade Union Congress were reunited.

Organisational problems were relatively easier to address, particularly as the Meerut prisoners began to be released from August 1933 (G. Adhikari was released a few months earlier). In late 1933 a 'Provisional Central Committee of the CPI' was established, and in early 1934 publication of *The Communist*, the 'organ of the Provisional Central Committee', commenced.

Even here, British repression made the process of reorganisation a slow and difficult one. In April and May 1934 a number of the former Meerut prisoners were
rearrested, and in July the CPI was declared illegal. Both the emergence of a united
CPI, and the ending of communist isolation from the mass nationalist movement, were
not to occur until later. They were to be achieved not along the unhelpful and
contradictory lines suggested by the two letters, but in response to the change in
analysis and strategy undertaken at the Seventh Congress of the Comintern.

The Seventh Congress of the Communist International

Hitler's appointment as Chancellor in March 1933, and the subsequent events
(Reichstag fire, the crackdown on the KPD, etc) marked the biggest disaster for the
line pursued by the Comintern since 1929-30. The initial Comintern response was to
refuse to even acknowledge that a disaster had occurred, let alone admit any error. Indeed, even after the Sixth Congress line was completely abandoned, it was never to
be repudiated; where failures were acknowledged, the procedure (well establishedby
1928-29) of scapegoating individual leaders of communist parties was followed.

Nevertheless, by 1934 pressures were building up in the Comintern and its
constituent parties to abandon the 'class against class' line. Perhaps the foremost of
these pressures resulted from the changing requirements of Soviet foreign policy.

From the late nineteen-twenties Soviet foreign policy had been directed towards
preventing an anti-Soviet alliance of the Western powers, and thus towards securing
the USSR's territorial integrity whilst collectivization and economic reconstruction
proceeded under the First Five Year Plan. Developing good relations with Germany,
and bi-lateral non-aggression pacts (with Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Turkey,
France and Italy) were among the key instruments in this pursuit.

With Hitler's accession to power, and increasing provocation from Japan in
Manchuria, such an 'even-handed' policy became difficult to sustain - despite the best
of Soviet endeavours. As relations with Germany and Japan deteriorated (culminating
in the German-Japanese 'Anti-Comintern Pact' of November 1936), Soviet diplomacy began the search for 'collective security' against the German threat.

The establishment of diplomatic relations with the U.S.A. in November 1933, described by Molotov as "the greatest success of Soviet foreign policy [in 1933]"[^9], was the outcome of diplomatic efforts pre-dating the changed situation. It did, however, symbolise and facilitate a shift in Soviet foreign policy in the direction of 'the West'. The Soviet entry into the League of Nations in September 1934 - after Japan and Germany had withdrawn from the League - was definitely a step in seeking allies and using an international forum in defence against the hostile policies of Germany and Japan. Another significant step in the pursuit of this policy was the USSR's Treaty of Mutual Aid with France, signed on May 2, 1935. This not only committed both parties to come to each other's aid if either was attacked, it also involved Stalin taking the unprecedented step of "express[ing] complete understanding and approval of the national defence policy pursued by France".[^10]

As this statement by Stalin - a complete reversal of the communist position on the 'national defence' of bourgeois states[^11] - indicated, the new goals of Soviet foreign policy had implications for the internal politics of allied or potentially allied countries. As the Soviet Union cultivated new allies, its national interest was best served by political developments in these countries which facilitated their alliance with the USSR. To the extent that communist parties in such countries had influence, this was best exercised by their adopting a 'moderate' stance - that is, placing friendship with the Soviet Union and anti-fascist struggle ahead of proletarian revolution.

The changing requirements of Soviet foreign policy found their counterpart in pressures 'from below' that is to say, from some of the communist parties themselves, most notably the Communist Party of France (PCF).

Even if, in the aftermath of the German debacle, the Comintern did not admit any errors, neither it nor any national communist party facing a fascist threat wished to see...
a repetition of the German events. The changes in Soviet foreign policy provided an opening for a change of tack. The party at first most affected, the PCF, was quick to seize the opportunity. Following a national conference in April 1934, the PCF offered the French Socialists (SFIO) a united front, which would include a cessation of communist criticism of the SFIO. A pact to effect was signed between the two parties on 27 July.¹²

This initiative, obviously undertaken with the expectation that it would meet with approval from above, was duly endorsed by the ECCI in August.¹³ Encouraged, Thorez in October proposed that the Radical-Socialist Party be included in the front. Given that the Radical-Socialists were a bourgeois party, this went considerably further than the united front agreement with the SFIO - it was the first major step in what would later be known as the Popular Front.

In May 1935 the signing of the Franco-Soviet treaty further confirmed the PCF's new course. The new front was tested in the local elections of May-June, where cooperation between the three parties resulted in major gains for the Left, particularly the PCF. On July 14 the three parties held a joint, and highly successful, demonstration. By the eve of the Seventh Comintern Congress, the united and popular fronts had already been born.

At the same time as all this was taking place in France, preparations were underway for convening a congress of the Comintern. Changes in Comintern personnel in the lead-up to this congress (must notably Dimitrov's rapid rise in the Comintern hierarchy), and the decisions made on the reports to be delivered¹⁴, signalled clearly what the function of the Congress would be.

The Seventh Congress of the Comintern, which began its meetings on July 25 1935, was to systematically formulate the change in strategy begun more than a year earlier; to explain and justify the circumstances necessitating its adoption; and to impress upon the assembled parties what was now required of them.
The keynote report was Dimitrov's "The Offensive of Fascism and the Tasks of the Communist International in the Struggle for the Unity of the Working Class Against Fascism", which elaborated and justified the new line and set the tone for the rest of the Congress. Dimitrov's report was notable for its more sober and realistic appraisal of the nature, strength and appeal of fascism, for its unreserved and urgent appeal for the adoption of the united front and popular front strategy, and (although criticism of the Sixth Congress line and the ECCI was avoided) for its sharp criticisms of communist habits of 'sectarianism' and 'formalism'.

A more realistic assessment of the dangers of fascism and the reasons behind its advance led Dimitrov to posit unity of the working class as the main defence against fascism, and the united front as the means by which such unity was to be achieved and the form which it would take. The resolution arising out of Dimitrov's report declared that, "at the present historical stage, it is the main and immediate task of the international labour movement to establish the united fighting front of the working class".15

Such a united front, Dimitrov made clear, could not be based on "bare appeals to struggle for the proletarian dictatorship". Unlike calls for a united front in the early nineteen-thirties (which amounted to little more than a demand that social democratic organisations and workers adhere to the communist programme), the united front being advocated by Dimitrov was not to be in pursuit of revolution and proletarian dictatorship. It was to be organised, rather, around "The defense of the immediate economic and political interests of the working class, the defense of the working class against fascism". These aims were to form "the starting point and main content of the united front in all capitalist countries".16

Communist parties were to seek the united front with reformist organisations and parties of the working class, which in most countries were Social Democratic or Labour parties, and which were represented internationally by the Socialist and Labour International.17 A measure of the extent of the change in policy being proposedby
Dimitrov was indicated by the fact that on the basis of the united front of the working class, communist parties were to approach non-working class parties, even those with bourgeois leadership (as long as they included the petty bourgeoisie and/or peasantry in their ranks), for participation in an 'anti-fascist People's Front'. Communist support for a government composed of such different classes and political tendencies was not ruled out, as long as such a government was one of "struggle against fascism and reaction". Such governments were, of course, to be formed in France and Spain not long after Dimitrov's speech.

The Seventh Congress was very much a European occasion; in a lengthy report, Dimitrov devoted a sum total of six paragraphs to the colonial and semi-colonial countries. More important, the whole strategy outlined and advocated in Dimitrov's report was a response to an essentially European phenomenon and a European problem - that of fascism.

Nevertheless, the few paragraphs in Dimitrov's report concerned with colonial affairs extended the theoretical and strategic shift represented by the call for a 'united front' to the East:

The changed international and internal situation gives exceptional importance to the question of the anti-imperialist united front in all colonial and semi-colonial countries. The united and popular fronts were to find their counterpart, in the colonial countries, in an anti-imperialist united front or anti-imperialist people's front.

The brief remarks by Dimitrov were amplified, for the colonial countries, by Chinese Communist Party and ECCI Presidium member Wang Ming - not in a separate report on the colonial question, for no such report was delivered at the Seventh Congress, but in the course of discussion on Dimitrov's report.
The brevity of his remarks aside, Dimitrov's extension of the united front strategy to the colonies, where there was no fascist threat, itself required explanation. As with Dimitrov, Wang Ming justified the new course not by acknowledging the errors of Comintern's past policy, but by reference to changed circumstances. The two such circumstances of principal importance which he cited as necessitating the adoption of 'united anti-imperialist front' tactics - increased imperialist oppression and exploitation on the one hand, and a growth in the 'forces of colonial revolution' on the other - were the very same two elements which at the Sixth Congress and subsequently had been cited in favour of a leftist line.\(^{21}\)

Another reason advanced by Wang Ming in favour of adoption of the united anti-imperialist front in the colonies was simply successful precedent. Brazil, and more importantly China, were referred to as examples which showed that pursuit of such a strategy yielded good results. The CCP's application of united front tactics, declared Wang Ming, although not done consistently enough, was proving successful, and was the key to meeting an 'unprecedented national crisis'- namely, the Japanese invasion.\(^{22}\)

Neither of these two justifications or explanations for the adoption of united front tactics was very convincing. No amount of casuistry could draw any convincing parallel between the rise of fascism in Europe (and hence adoption of a united front strategy), and changed circumstances in the East requiring a similar tactical shift - particularly when these 'changed circumstances' were little more than what had been standard Comintern rhetoric for years, namely, that imperialist repression was increasing, and anti-imperialist struggle mounting. The argument for a united front in China was, of course, quite persuasive - but precisely because the Chinese situation was unique. Other colonial countries did not face invasion by a foreign power.

Nevertheless, united front tactics were held to be necessary in all colonial countries. The CPI was one of the parties singled out and specifically enjoined, in Wang Ming's speech, to unlearn sectarian habits, to follow the Chinese example, and
to "formulate a programme of popular demands which could serve as a platform for a broad people's anti-imperialist united front".23

The 'Dutt-Bradley Thesis'

The Seventh Congress of the Communist International had instructed communists in Europe to adopt the united front strategy, and communists in colonial countries to build the anti-imperialist united front, or people's front. In the case of the colonial countries, however, this new line was couched in very general - and ambiguous - terms. Partly because of the low priority given to colonial issues, but also because, as argued, the new line was a response to European events which had simply been 'transferred' to the colonies, questions crucial to the application of the new strategy in colonial countries were not answered. In the case of India, such questions included - was the INC to be part of the united front?; if so, how was a united front to be effected between a small communist party and a large nationalist organisation?; did the united front mean that a Worker-Peasant Soviet Republic was no longer the culminating point of nationalist revolution?; if the INC was no longer to be regarded as counter-revolutionary, did this mean that the Indian bourgeoisie was also no longer counter-revolutionary, or did it mean rather that the INC was no longer to be regarded as a bourgeois organisation? - and so on.

As no logical, coherent position underpinned the change of line (the obvious one, that the old position was simply mistaken, being inadmissible), it was also a difficult exercise to 'deduce' the answers to such specific questions; to deduce specific applications from a general line. An authoritative pronouncement on the meaning of the new line for India was clearly required.

At this point the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) reassumed its role as mentor to the CPI and provided such a pronouncement. In January R. Palme Dutt and Ben Bradley, in their capacity as CPGB leaders with a long involvement in Indian
affairs, but also with the authority of their candidate membership of the ECCI behind them, sent the CPI an article outlining a strategy for India. In February this was published in *Inprecor*, and in March it was republished in the CPGB journal, *Labour Monthly*.

"The Anti-Imperialist People's Front in India" made a number of clarifications. First of all, with regard to 'ends'. Palme Dutt and Bradley made it clear that, just as in Europe the united front was a weapon in the defence against fascism, and for 'immediate' working class demands rather than the pursuit of socialism, so in India it was to be directed at the achievement of national independence and the 'vital needs' of the masses, rather than socialism. The demand for a Constituent Assembly, which when it was raised by Nehru was vehemently denounced by the CPI, was now described by Palme Dutt and Bradley as "a central rallying slogan" for the anti-imperialist front or united national front (UNF). The slogan of 'a Worker-Peasant Soviet Republic', raised in the CPI's "Draft Platform of Action" of 1930 and numerous subsequent documents, was thus abandoned.

If the main goal in India was the relatively modest one of independence, then unity between different classes and organisations, in pursuit of this goal, was possible. Dutt and Bradley announced that the UNF was to unite existing Left Wing forces, defined as "Congress Socialists, Trade Unionists, Communists and Left Congressmen"(p. 150). It had also, however, to include nationalist organisations, the most important of which was the INC, described by Dutt and Bradley as "the principal existing mass organisation of many diverse elements seeking national liberation"(p. 152).

The obviously unlikely possibility of the CPI David successfully proposing a united front agreement to the INC Goliath was not even considered by the authors of this document. Instead, they described the INC as having already "achieved a gigantic task in uniting wide forces of the Indian people for the national struggle"(p. 152); the task was to "strengthen and extend this unity to a broader front"(p. 153). Thus in the
Indian context, the UNF was to take the form, not of an agreement between different classes and their organisations, but of the coming together of different classes and organisations within a single body, the INC.

Palme Dutt and Bradley posed this only as a possibility:

It is even possible that the National Congress by the further transformation of its organisation and programme, may become the form of realisation of the Anti-Imperialist People's Front. (p. 152)

They then proceeded to sketch in some detail how such a 'transformation' might be effected, making it clear that this 'possibility' was in fact what they proposed to realise (pp. 153-57). To make the Congress the locus of the UNF required, first of all, that the 'collective affiliation' of trade unions, peasant organisations and youth leagues to the INC be secured. By supplementing individual membership of the INC by such class-based affiliation, the INC could become an organisation which at the same time was the UNF.

Second, the masses, once drawn into the Congress in this way, had to be given more of a say in the Congress. Its constitution had to be democratised, with a reduction of power at top levels, and an enhancement of it at rank and file level.

Third, programmatic changes had to be made. If the Congress was to become a UNF, it had unequivocally to declare its goal to be full independence and a Constituent Assembly, and this had to be linked to the immediate demands of workers and peasants.26

Finally, the UNF was to be a 'fighting front', and this meant it was to be a front of 'mass struggle'. Such struggle was incompatible with the doctrine of non-violence, which had, therefore, to be renounced.
The 'Dutt-Bradley thesis', as it came to be known, was a faithful application of the Comintern's new line to Indian conditions. It answered some of the questions the Seventh Congress had not addressed, and translated the generalities of the new line into specific proposals and a concrete strategy.

The political 'moderation' of the Dutt-Bradley thesis - its perfunctory references to the ultimate socialist goal, its more modest demands and slogans for the present, and the premium it placed upon unity - had their counterpart in the theory and practice of all communist parties in the post Seventh Congress period. What was unusual in this thesis was its proposal that the INC, a non-socialist, non-working class organisation, could become not simply a partner in the UNF, but the very form of its realisation. This was a volte face, not simply in relation to the Sixth Congress analysis and line, but in relation to all earlier analyses by Indian communists. For the INC had always been regarded by them as a bourgeois or middle-class organisation which, if not outrightly counter-revolutionary, had clear limits to both its social / economic radicalism and its nationalist militancy. On the question as to whether this volte face was based upon a reevaluation of the role of the Indian bourgeoisie, or else upon a changed understanding of the class nature of the INC (or both), the Dutt-Bradley thesis was conspicuously silent; just as it was silent on why, if national independence and not socialism was the main goal in India, the united front strategy had not been applied throughout.

The Initial Reception and Application of the New Line

The CPI's two delegates to the Seventh Congress never reached their destination, being arrested en route. Thus information on the decisions made at the Seventh Congress filtered through slowly.

At this time the CPI was still factionalised and disorganised. The reconstitution of a single leadership in late 1933 to early 1934 had been a step forward, but continued
political differences, and British repression, meant that a united party under a single, functioning leadership was still a goal to be achieved.\textsuperscript{27} In April the Politbureau was re-formed, with P.C. Joshi, one of the most able of the former Meerut detainees\textsuperscript{28}, and a leader not closely aligned with any faction, as General Secretary. The new leadership was in the course of time to successfully establish a united party, but initially factional and organisational problems persisted. In August 1936 a Politbureau plan for party reorganisation referred darkly to 'underhand' factional plotting and 'sectarian' resistance to the new line, and admitted that "To-day we exist by the grace of British imperialism. At any minute the police likes it can wipe us out of existence".\textsuperscript{29}

In these circumstances, the party was slow to react to news of the Seventh Congress decisions, and to its receipt of the Dutt-Bradley thesis in January 1936. It was not until March that the CPI responded to and accepted the Seventh Congress decisions, and that too in a manner which indicated that it did not understand, or wilfully misunderstood, the full extent of the change in line.\textsuperscript{30} Internal party debate revealed significant opposition to the Dutt-Bradley thesis, with opponents claiming that Dutt and Bradley were advocating a 'Royist' line (that is, one similar to that which Roy, now no longer a member of the Comintern, was advancing at this time) in suggesting that the INC could be transformed into an anti-imperialist front, and reaffirming, against this, "the Marxian principle, that the INC [is] an organisation of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie".\textsuperscript{31}

In late July the Politbureau adopted a lengthy statement on the Dutt-Bradley thesis, and this was published in \textit{The Communist} in September. This statement accepted the Dutt-Bradley thesis "as embodying an entirely sound policy which must be immediately put into practice".\textsuperscript{32} However, in this statement as in other CPI pronouncements in the course of 1936 and early 1937, ambiguity, confusion and contradiction prevailed.
These arose both out of what the Dutt-Bradley thesis advocated, as well as what it left unanswered. The call to transform the INC into the very form of the UNF, instead of just one of its elements, was obviously too much of a radical departure from previous positions for the CPI to be able to accept without reservation. Although the call for 'collective affiliation' was raised, and communists were also instructed to join the INC individually, CPI statements on this remained ambiguous and sometimes contradictory.

The Dutt-Bradley thesis had not addressed a crucial and, as we have seen, much debated question: that of the role of the Indian bourgeoisie in the nationalist struggle. On this issue the CPI's statements were markedly more 'left' than was warranted by the general tenor of the Dutt-Bradley thesis - and markedly more left than was consistent with a tactic of making the INC the UNF.

These ambiguities and contradictions meant that, even as the call for the UNF was raised, it was very unclear as to what form it would take, and whom it would and would not include. The only point of (relative) clarity was on method. The CPI raised the call for collective affiliation of class organisations to the INC, proposed a 19 point platform for the INC to adopt in its election manifesto, and instructed its members to energetically popularise this platform and support INC candidates in the scheduled elections, "as out of the united front work for elections can arise the united front work for the Anti-Imperialist People's Front line..." Indeed, the CPI's calls to united front action around the elections functioned as a means of avoiding answering some of the more difficult questions, and giving the call for a UNF some form and shape.

The CPI's acceptance of the Seventh Congress decisions and the Dutt-Bradley thesis was, then, not without its ambiguities. A decision had, nevertheless, been taken - a decision to raise the call for a UNF, to seek allies amongst formerly reviled organisations and individuals, and a decision to work within and outside the INC to develop its radical and nationalist potential, rather than assail it as the chief impediment to national revolution.
The Political Context

Political circumstances favoured such a strategy, for this was a time of growing militancy and struggle, both outside the INC and inside it.

Within the INC, the formation of the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) in 1934 meant that for the first time the call for a leftward shift in INC programme and tactics was not largely limited to the solitary voice of Nehru. Such a call now had an organisational base, and included senior and respected Congressmen, some of national stature.

The CSP sought to "agitate within the Congress for the adoption of an economic programme with a view to socialise the nationalist struggle", in connection with which it also sought to mobilise and organise workers and peasants. In fact it was a very heterogeneous organisation, one including left-nationalists of various descriptions, socialists, and Marxists. The future political trajectory of its leaders was to include anti-communism (Minoo Masani) and Gandhian mysticism (J.P. Narayan).

The CSP was an almost ideal point at which to begin implementing the new united front tactic. It afforded the CPI a point of entry into the INC and the nationalist mainstream, and as a body bringing together a diverse collection of 'leftists', it constituted a ready made and potentially receptive audience to CPI influence.

Tentative discussions between CSP and CPI leaders on forms of cooperation between the two parties had begun in late 1934. According to Minoo Masani's later account, CPGB leaders approached him in connection with this matter soon after the Seventh Congress, when he was visiting Moscow. The initiative, however, came from the CSP, when at its Meerut conference in January 1936 it decided to admit communists to its ranks, subject to supervision (and to a record being kept) by its National Executive. Soon after, the 'Lucknow Pact' between the parties put the seal on united action, and communists began to join the CSP - with the 'safety clause' of National Executive approval not being enforced.
Cooperation yielded results for both parties. The CPI gained new respectability, the capacity to influence the nationalist movement from within, and a forum for the propagation of its ideas and the gaining of new recruits. The CSP gained a corps of disciplined and dedicated cadres, and a contact with the working class that it did not previously have.

Another factor conducive to united front tactics, and to 'transforming' the INC into a more militant organisation, was the emergence of a more-or-less organised peasant movement in parts of India. The Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha (Peasant Assembly), after its revival and re-formation in 1933, grew rapidly under the leadership of Swami Sahajanand. By 1935 it had 80,000 members and, at its height in 1938, 250,000. The growth of the BPKS coincided with its radicalisation. In November 1935, at the third session of the BPKS, the Sabha declared zamindari abolition (abolition of feudal landholdings of this type), without compensation, to be one of its chief goals. In 1936 the BPKS 'Manifesto' was adopted, with a constitution which included a radical charter of 'Fundamental Rights' for kisans (peasants).

In the course of its campaigns and struggles, most notably the protracted struggle over bakasht lands (land 'resumed' from tenants by their landlords), the methods of the Kisan Sabha also grew more militant. Mass rallies and campaigns were combined with forcible sowing and harvesting of land, leading to clashes with zamindars and big landlords.

In 1936, at the urging of the CSP (and over the reservations of Swami Sahajanand), the All-India Kisan Congress (later All-India Kisan Sabha, or AIKS) was founded. As with the BPKS, its largest constituent, the AIKS stood for "the achievement of ultimate economic and political power for the producing masses through its active participation in the national struggle for the winning of the complete independence of India", and regarded the INC as the vehicle for the achievement of this independence, as well as for measures to improve the lot of kisans. Although never a truly all-India organisation - its strength was mainly limited to Bihar, Andhra,
Punjab, U.P. and Bengal - the AIKS did grow in strength and influence, and its third conference in Comilla in 1938 assembled delegates representing 546,800 members.\textsuperscript{42} Neither AIKS nor the BPKS were dominated by the CPI,\textsuperscript{43} but the emergence of a peasant movement facilitated, and then seemed to vindicate, the CPI's adoption of UNF tactics. AIKS and the BPKS combined the 'social' with the national struggle, and in the process did contribute in some measure to the leftwards movement of the INC in the mid nineteen-thirties.

A third factor conducive to united front tactics was a renewal of labour militancy and strike activity from 1935,\textsuperscript{44} and the re-establishment of trade union unity at peak level. From 1935 onwards, there were strikes in all key industrial sectors - textiles, mining, railways, iron and steel, and the jute and oil industries, and the strikes included most industrial centres in India. In addition other, less organised sections of the working class - such as tonga-wallahs, bidi makers, dhobis, stonebreakers, municipal sweepers - began to utilise the strike weapon.

Trade union membership increased significantly, with a mammoth 50% rise between 1937 and 1938.\textsuperscript{45} The reuniting of the Red Trade Union Congress and the All-India Trade Union Congress in 1935, and then of this united body with the National Trade Union Federation in 1938, contributed to the consolidation of trade union organisation - although it made less of a contribution to successful conduct of strike struggles, which continued to be largely spontaneous affairs.\textsuperscript{46} After 1935 the reunified AITUC was to become an instrument through which united front policies were pursued, as it called not only for workers' demands to be met, but also added its voice to the call for a Constituent Assembly, for 'collective affiliation' to the INC, and so on.

Finally, the INC as a whole moved perceptibly to the left in 1936 and early 1937. This was, in part, a consequence of the efforts of the Left, and a response to the rising tide of peasant and worker struggles - as anticipated in the UNF strategy.
The leftward shift in the INC was indicated by Nehru's presiding over both the Lucknow (April 1936) and Faizpur (December 1936) Congress sessions, in the frankly 'socialist' speeches he gave there, and in the election manifesto and agrarian programme adopted by the INC. The Congress Election Platform, adopted by the All-India Congress Committee (AICC) in August 1936, declared that independence was necessary to "give us the power to solve our economic and social problems and end the exploitation of our masses". In its general tenor as in its specific proposals for ameliorating the lot of workers and peasants, the Election Platform clearly signalled the INC's increasing orientation towards the masses.

The Agrarian Programme adopted at the Faizpur Congress pledged the INC to a "radical change in the antiquated and repressive land tenure and revenue system", adding a few more demands/promises to those contained in the Election Manifesto, such as for abolition of all feudal dues and levies, wiping out of arrears of debt in most cases, a minimum wage for agricultural labourers, recognition of peasant unions, and 'fixity of tenure' for agricultural tenants.

Such promises of economic betterment for the poor figured prominently in the Congress election campaign, particularly, as we saw in the last chapter, in Nehru's energetic campaigning in the months prior to the April 1937 elections. And such a 'mass orientation' contributed greatly to the Congress' s electoral success. This was recognised by the Congress Working Committee (CWC) immediately after the elections, when it paid tribute to the 'great awakening of the masses'. It was also recognized, though expressed more crudely, by the Viceroy, who wrote, "I have little doubt that...undertakings to skin the well-to-do for the benefit of the cultivator have played a great part in persuading the electorate to vote for Congress".
The Politics of the United Front

As we have seen, the initial reaction of the CPI to the Seventh Comintern Congress decisions, and to the Dutt-Bradley thesis, was a somewhat ambivalent one. The CPI began to seek united action with other forces, and called for the building of a UNF, but without specifying what form this would take; in particular, by remaining evasive on the crucial question of whether the Congress could 'become' the UNF, as envisaged by Palme Dutt and Bradley.

With the elections over, and the assumption of office by the INC in six provinces in July 1937 (later Congress ministries were also formed in the North West Frontier Province and Assam), such an ambivalent position could no longer be maintained. The call to build the UNF through election work was no longer relevant, and with the Congress in government, it was no longer possible to avoid clearly specifying its role in the UNF.

The Congress had, quite clearly, moved to the left. On the other hand, the Election Platform and the Agrarian Programme did not go much beyond the 1931 Karachi Congress Declaration of Fundamental Rights. Like it, they were vague on specifics. Both fell well short of the CPI's proposed 'minimum programme' for the UNF, which had been ignored by the INC. An attempt to get individual Congress candidates to sign a 'Peasants Pledge' incorporating AIKS demands as a condition of AIKS support had been publicly denounced by Patel, the right-wing Congress leader, forcing AIKS President N.G. Ranga to back down. In some labour reserved constituencies communist supported candidates had won as a result of 'united front' agreements with local Congress committees, but these were more in the nature of 'gentlemen's agreements' not to compete against each other than joint efforts around a shared platform.

Organisationally, the right wing remained in control of the INC. The CWC appointed by Nehru at the Lucknow Congress included three CSP leaders, but they were still far outnumbered by the Right. Most important, the crucial communist demand for collective affiliation of class organisations to the INC had not been granted - though
for the CPI bringing revolutionary classes into the INC was to be one of the key levers for its 'transformation'. Instead, the Lucknow Congress had established a Mass Contacts Committee, to investigate means of promoting 'closer association between the masses and the Congress organisation'. Due to report by end-July 1936, the Committee's report had not been prepared even by the time of the Faizpur Congress.

The very decision to accept office under the 'slave constitution' marked a major defeat for the Left, which had promoted non-acceptance as an issue of fundamental principle, involving nothing less, in Nehru's words, than "the question of independence and whether we seek revolutionary changes in India or are working for Parliamentary reforms under the aegis of British imperialism".53 The CPI was one element of the Left which regarded the issue of accepting office as a tactical question rather than one of principle, but the very logic of the UNF had led it to add its support to the rest of the Left on this issue, rather than break ranks.54

The 'balance sheet' drawn up over the last few pages can be summed up as follows: the early phase of the application of united front tactics yielded and was encouraged by some promising developments, but the picture was a mixed one, with the INC in particular 'moving left' only to a limited degree. Thus the question confronting communists in the aftermath of the elections and the decision to form Congress ministries, when further development of the UNF required outlining its shape and form more clearly, was - should the UNF be treated as something being formed, requiring further radicalisation of the Congress ? ; or was it something already achieved, with the INC as its central element or even its very 'form' ?

In the course of 1937-38, answers to these questions emerged, and the politics of the united front assumed clear and coherent shape. The central elements in the UNF strategy, as developed and promoted in the CPI press (particularly *The New Age* and *National Front*, which began publication in December 1936 and February 1938 respectively), in pamphlets and leaflets specifically on this issue, in communist appeals
and addresses to the INC, and of course in the practical-political activity of the CPI, can be identified as follows.

First, there was a clear and unambiguous identification of independence and a democratic regime as the immediate goal in India, without the normal 'rider' that independence and radical social transformation would necessarily coalesce, under the leadership of the working class. As The Communists and the Congress, a pamphlet clarifying the communists attitude to the INC announced, "the immediate task before us is the liberation of the Indian people and the creation of a democratic regime".55 Communists thus ardently embraced 'democratic' demands, chief amongst them the demand for a Constituent Assembly. Communists were to demonstrate to nationalists and patriots that their goals were shared, just as the united front in China had "taught the Chinese people that the Chinese Communists were the best Chinese Nationalists."56

A second aspect of the UNF was that it involved a re-evaluation of the nature and role of the INC. Although communists continued to criticise the INC, such criticisms were generally directed at specific actions or policies, rather than as parts of a general indictment of the Congress. "The formulation that the Congress is a bourgeois organisation", declared The Communists and the Congress, "is wrong in the given situation, to-day".57 As the INC was not to be regarded as a bourgeois organisation, it clearly could be the form of realisation of the UNF, as "the great National organisation which to-day embodies the growing unity of our people".58

If the characterisation of the Congress as 'bourgeois' had been re-evaluated, the role of the bourgeoisie had itself been re-evaluated. The Indian bourgeoisie too, or at least a section of it, was to be part of the UNF. The editorial in the first issue of National Front defined the UNF as "a unity of different classes including a considerable section of the capitalists and a section of the landlords against imperialism".59 The bourgeoisie's conflict of interest with imperialism was declared to be greater than its fear of the masses - "The scope for extension of Indian capital is
being restricted. None of the demands of the Indian bourgeoisie, which cut across imperialist interests, have been satisfied...The bourgeoisie cannot afford to isolate itself from the masses, without whose support it has no weapon of offence or defence against Imperialism...This is the basis of the united national front embracing all sections of the people whose interests are opposed to the policy of Imperialism, including even the nationalist bourgeoisie".60

Third, it was now argued that programmatically the INC had become the UNF; that is, it was suggested that the INC's policies were already an appropriate platform around which to mobilize all nationalist forces and classes. Nothing indicated more clearly that the CPI had consciously opted, by 1937, for a UNF which involved a highly conciliatory and supportive attitude towards the INC. Although the Lucknow and Faizpur Congresses had not accepted the CPI's proposed platform, the CPI nevertheless hailed the outcome of these INC sessions as "a programmatic victory for the Left, official adoption by the Congress of the programme which the Left had been advocating for a decade". The UNF had been built or won, programmatically; the task was now "to implement it in practice".61

Fourth, the central slogan of the UNF strategy - that of 'unity' - referred, above all else, to the INC. The unity of the UNF was not merely a unity of the various organisations and classes which constituted it, but unity within the INC. This was held to be both necessary and possible. It was necessary because, inasmuch as the INC was the 'form' of the UNF, the unity required by the latter was simply extended to the former. Thus the communist press became the most ardent proclaimer and guardian of Congress unity in this period, with the National Front assigning responsibility for the preservation of this unity to the Left - "to preserve the unity of the National Front and the National Congress is the two-fold task before the Left to-day".62 (emphasis added).

The unity of the INC implied, of course, unity with its bourgeois or right-wing leadership. This implication was embraced in full. In the past, communists had seen an
intensification of worker and peasant struggles as the harbinger of disunity within nationalist ranks. The growth of such struggles, once held to be the catalyst for the Indian bourgeoisie's capitulation to imperialism and thus of a split in the INC, were now seen as a means of preventing precisely such a development - "with the increasing strength and sweep of the mass movements of the workers and peasants and with the growing strength of the Left Wing inside Congress itself, the possibility of checking the vacillations of the leadership has increased more than ever before".63

Thus militant (and class-based) struggle and Congress unity were no longer seen as incompatible, but rather as mutually reinforcing. Unchecked, the vacillations of a section of the Congress leadership would produce demoralisation and a disintegration of the INC; but struggle would "neutralize the conciliatory drift of a part of the leadership...without allowing any section of [the] leadership to split off".64

Another aspect of this emphasis on unity within the INC was the CPI characterisation of the Congress leadership as 'Right-Wing' rather than 'bourgeois' in most of its propaganda. This semantic shift at once reflected and subtly reinforced the theme of unity, emphasising a difference of strategic/political perceptions and not what were hitherto seen as 'objective' and fundamental class differences. Such a change in terminology was not required by the logic of the UNF strategy, for a section of the bourgeoisie was in any case now seen as a part of the UNF. It did, however, 'ease' the way to the CPI's frequent call for distinguishing between struggle against the British and struggle against elements within the INC - "The fight for the UNF does not imply a simultaneous struggle on two fronts - against the Right INC leadership and against Imperialism. Our main and one enemy today is British Imperialism...".65

Fifth, such a 'blurring' in the analysis and language of class was also reflected, to some degree, in the CPI analysis of worker and peasant struggles. These were, of course, encouraged and vigorously supported by the CPI, and the bulk of CPI activity continued to be in the trade union and peasant fronts. However, even here there was a tendency, in theory at least, to 'appropriate' class struggles to the nationalist struggle.
This was despite the fact that the reality was very different, and one of the frequent laments of CPI leaders was precisely the failure of the Left to give strikes and peasant struggles a nationalist orientation. In June 1937 *The New Age* admitted, "there has been little progress in the task of linking up the working class struggle with the national struggle". Two years later, CPI and trade union leader B.T. Ranadive was still complaining that "the bulk of workers remain strangers to the national organisation [i.e. the INC] and to the specific political task facing them in connection with it".

Despite this, the call for class conflict to be given a nationalist content was occasionally confused with the existence of such a content. A few months before complaining that workers remained 'strangers' to nationalist politics, the same Ranadive proclaimed, "Strike-struggles are nothing but economic revolts against the results of Imperialist misrule, and constitute a part and parcel of the Indian discontent and unrest against British domination. Their national significance lies in the fact that thousands of workers have started resisting imperialism in their daily life ...".

Here, from the twin premises that imperialism oppressed workers, and that workers were an essential part of the nationalist movement, worker's struggles became nationalist outbreaks by definition - and wish became reality. In the process, of course, the varied causes and the history of workers' struggles was appropriated to the one struggle and the one history - that of nationalism.

Communists also occasionally described strikes as 'sectional', 'partial', 'local' and 'economic', usually when engaging in self-criticism. Here, in another semantic slide, what was being implicitly counterposed to 'local' was not simply 'national', but nationalist; the opposite of 'economic' was not simply 'political', but a particular politics, those of nationalism.

Even as they were championed, the strikes of workers and the struggles of peasants were 'read' as instances of a growing tide of nationalist struggle. They were cited as evidence of the correctness of the fundamental propositions of the UNF
strategy (unity, etc.), and thus as proof of the fact that the INC needed to develop closer links with such struggles. Or else, they were criticised for being 'sectional' and 'local' rather than properly national and political (i.e. nationalist).

Sixth and finally, the CPI's conception or theorisation of the UNF not only involved declaring that the struggle for national independence was the 'primary' task in the sense of being temporally prior to socialism. Nationalist struggle also came to be treated as primary in the sense of being objectively more important than class struggle.

This followed from, and was implicit in, the other constituent elements of the UNF strategy. If the immediate struggle was for an independent bourgeois-democratic state; if a section of the bourgeoisie was a partner in that struggle; if the unity of the INC was a means to it; and if class struggles were, or should be, instances of anti-imperialist struggle - then it could easily follow that the conflict between the greater part of the Indian people and British imperialism was objectively primary (and not just prior), while class struggle within the Indian nation was secondary. In this case, 'class struggle' was an important element of the UNF strategy not in its proper sense (as a relational concept, denoting conflict between classes which are linked in their opposition), but in the almost tautological sense that it brought into nationalist struggle hitherto excluded classes and their organisations.

Such a conclusion, no matter how logically it followed from the other elements of the UNF strategy, was not an easy one for communists to reach. It ran counter to what in a sense had been the primary theme of Marxism in India since the 1920's, namely that class and nationalist struggle were inextricably connected, and nationalists ignored the former at their own peril. Thus this element of the UNF remained largely implicit, although on occasions it was made explicit and attempts were made to give it a theoretical justification, in Marxist terms - as when Communists and the Congress found that the UNF "does not abolish the class-conflict, but shifts it to a new dividing line - the one between the anti-imperialist people on the one hand and Imperialism and
the anti-national vested interests on the other, so that it assumes the form of a great National conflict”.70

As in the past, the pursuit of a strategy went hand in hand with the propagation of an ideology explaining and legitimating the strategy. In explaining the premises governing their actions, communists also sought to convince others of the validity and viability of these actions.

During the period of the UNF, this ideology may be termed a 'Left-nationalist' ideology. It accepted many of the premises of 'bourgeois nationalism' (and accepted its main organisation, the INC), whilst insisting that these required a more pronouncedly 'leftist' orientation. As before, it was declared that class struggle and nationalist struggle were closely interlinked. But more so than before the inherently nationalist character of class struggles was emphasised, and the potential conflict between these and nationalist struggle was downplayed, even denied.

The elaboration of such a united front strategy, and its energetic pursuit, yielded the CPI rich dividends. It re-entered the mainstream of Indian politics, increased its membership and, although it remained a small party, its influence was greatly disproportionate to its membership.71

The tactic of working with and in the CSP, both to extend the influence of the Left within the nationalist movement, and the influence of communists within the CSP, proved remarkably successful. The relatively greater political clarity of the communists, as well as their undoubted commitment and organisational skills, won them many allies and converts in the CSP - including such later communist leaders as E.M.S. Namboodiripad, A.K. Gopalan and R. Krishna Pillai.72

In association with the C.S.P. and independent mass leaders such as Swami Sahajanand, the CPI also partially realised its goal of building a nationwide peasant
movement. As we have seen, the BPKS and the AIKS grew in numbers and militancy, with the AIKS even adopting the Red Flag as its emblem in 1937.

Similarly on the trade union front labour militancy (and trade union membership) grew in this period. In the early months of the Congress Ministries, labour agitation did result in some pro-labour legislation being enacted, vindicating the communist contention that working class and nationalist struggle could be mutually reinforcing through the UNF. Strikes in Kanpur in 1937, beginning with textile workers but spreading to include most of the city's workforce, secured the support of the local and (for a while) provincial Congress committees, an occurrence the communist press hailed as "a decisive turning-point not only in the history of Labour but of our entire anti-Imperialist movement, demonstrating in real life the power of the UNF in action".73

Despite the extension of communist influence over sections of the working class, however, this remained a problem area in the context of the UNF. The CPI, as we have noted, repeatedly bemoaned the fact that nationalist and trade union struggles were conducted in isolation from each other. The very significance the CPI attached to the Kanpur events was an indication of how isolated this example was.

In the student area and the 'cultural' field, CPI efforts to promote UNF politics met with great success. The All India Students' Federation and the Progressive Writers' Association, both founded in 1936, were to prove important vehicles for consolidating the hold of a 'left-nationalist', communist-influenced ideology over sections of the intelligentsia in India.

The leftward drift of the INC also seemed to vindicate the UNF strategy. The attention paid to the needs of the 'masses' at Lucknow and Faizpur was followed by action in the early months of the Congress Ministries, with some pro-labour and pro-peasant legislation being implemented, and British restrictions on civil liberties being repealed. In general, mass struggles were strengthening the hand of the Congress as a
nationalist organisation, whilst it in turn became more attentive to the demands of the masses - as anticipated in the UNF strategy.

Contradictions of the United National Front (I)

The very successes of the UNF strategy - a strategy premised upon and striving towards unity of all anti-imperialist forces - were a factor in undermining that unity. Communist successes in working through the CSP generated tensions between the two parties; working class and peasant demands and struggles come into conflict with the INC, and particularly the Congress Ministries, which were subject to strong countervailing pressures; and the increased influence of the Left in the Congress was met with a consolidation and a fightback by the Right.

Almost from the outset, it became clear that the CPI and the CSP had quite different understandings as to the nature and purpose of their unity. In the CPI's view the CSP was not "a socialist party of the working-class, but rather the growing organisational expression of Left unity". As such, strict membership controls and attempts to enforce ideological / political homogeneity (and discipline) were out of place. As a 'platform' or expression of Left unity, it was rather necessary for the CSP to "open its door to all active left anti-imperialists...".74

By contrast most CSP leaders saw their party as precisely that, a disciplined party rather than a heterogeneous collection of leftists. They defined the CSP as such in proportion as communists sought to define it otherwise. Minoo Masani made the point strongly in his Chairman's address to the Lahore Conference of the CSP in April 1938 - "The Congress Socialist Party is a Revolutionary Socialist Party. As such, it is a Party which must act as a homogeneous team...In a revolutionary Party there is no room for internal conflicts that inevitably lead to paralysis and stagnation".75
Underlying these doctrinal and definitional disputes were very practical considerations, chief amongst them the CPI's desire to extend its influence in the CSP, and the alarm of CSP leaders at the CPI's success in doing so. The fears of the CSP's leadership were expressed concisely by Narendra Dev - "Those who desire the C.S.P. to be the party of socialist unity also demand the broadening of the Party to include all active anti-Imperialists. The intention is clear - to transform the C.S.P. into a platform of broad unity wherein the Communists would get ample opportunities to increase their influence".76

As early as end-1936, only a few months after the two parties signed the Lucknow Agreement, CSP leaders were expressing concern at reports of communists working in fractions and seeking to 'capture' the CSP. In August 1937 an internal CPI document questioning the CSP's credentials as a socialist party was tabled, to great indignation; the CSP National Executive thereupon barred further admittance of communists to the CSP.

The extent of communist influence was revealed at the Lahore Conference of the CSP (April 1938), where the communists put up their own list for the Executive elections, in opposition to the 'official' list, and were only narrowly defeated; and by what was allegedly an internal CPI document, published with great fanfare by Minoo Masani in late 1938, which claimed that the Andhra, Tamil Nadu and Madras provincial units of the CSP were entirely under CPI influence, and a majority of CSP members in Bengal, Orissa and Punjab were CPI sympathisers.77

Such conflicts continued to develop. When sharp political differences between the two parties emerged a few months after the outbreak of World War II, the combination of organisational jealousies and political differences ended the period of unity. In 1940, communists were expelled from the CSP. The CPI walked away with a significant section of the CSP membership, including the entire Kerala unit and most of the Tamil Nadu and Andhra membership.
At the same time as strains were undermining unity on the Left, the mass movements and the INC were also coming into conflict. The formation of Congress Ministries, elected with promises of economic and social reform, had raised expectations in the worker and peasant movements. The Congress Ministries did, particularly in the first months after they assumed office, enact measures for agrarian reform, including rent reduction and tenancy reform. However these fell far short of even the Agrarian Programme adopted at Faizpur, and were further diluted in the course of their passage through the legislature, as with the Bihar Tenancy Amendment Act (1937) and the Bihar Restoration of Bakasht Lands and Reduction of Arrears of Rent Act (1938). In Bihar, where the kisan movement was strongest, legislation was enacted, but in a weak form; and at the same time the Congress made its peace with the rural landlords through the infamous Congress-Zamindar Pact.

Thus pressure from below generated conflict with the Congress Ministries; their failure to implement radical reforms, in turn, led to the alienation of the peasant movement. In 1937 three Congress District Committees in Bihar banned Swami Sahajanand from touring in their districts (a ban he promptly defied). In late 1937 the Bihar Provincial Congress Committee (PCC) Executive passed a resolution condemning the 'cult of violence' being promoted by some elements in the BPKS, and directed Congressmen not to involve themselves in such activities. This resolution was approved at a national level by a Congress Working Committee (CWC) meeting in January 1938, which also approved disciplinary action against Congressmen who offended in this manner, and which sanctioned 'coercive action' by Congress Ministries in response to incitements to violence over any issue. Official repressive measures were in fact undertaken by the Bihar and other Congress governments, as were unofficial means such as the employment of thugs to break up kisan rallies. In early 1938 the Office of the Secretary to the Governor-General approvingly remarked, "the policy of the Congress party towards the Kisan organisations has been firm, and even repressive...".
As conflicts between the Congress Ministries and the kisan sabhas and other movements escalated, the INC took a tougher line. Mass pressure for an extension of civil liberties, including repeal of all British repressive legislation, was partly met. But when such pressure took militant forms and embarrassed the Congress, the AICC (at its Delhi meeting in September 1938) declared that "the Congress...will support measures that may be undertaken by the Congress Governments for the defence of life and property". Such blatant pandering to the fears of businessmen and landlords, and endorsement of repressive action by the Congress Ministries, led to a Left walkout from the AICC meeting.

As with peasant concerns, the Congress governments were initially sympathetic to labour demands. However as strikes in pursuit of such demands and led by the Left mounted on the one hand, and business pressures increased on the other, the Congress Ministries became increasingly authoritarian in their response. In Bombay and Madras Congress Chief Ministers worked closely with the British Governor to maintain 'law and order' and in November 1938 the draconian Bombay Trades Dispute Act was passed. Repressive ordinances which had been used by the British and long condemned by the INC were used against workers, and a massive 80,000 strong protest rally against the Bombay Trades Dispute Act was fired upon by police.

Thus the growth of the peasant and worker movements, although they did provide the Congress with a base of active support, and did function to 'push' the Congress governments into enacting some progressive legislation, also served to create conflict between what were, in the communist analysis, mutually supportive elements of the UNF. Moreover, not only were cracks beginning to appear in the UNF - the nationalist militancy of the INC was becoming blunted, as the Congress Ministries settled down to governing under the Constitution of India Act, rather than making it 'unworkable from within'. This was what the British Indian Government had hoped for, and after a year of Congress being in office, a British report concluded,
when due weight has been given to every activity of Congress Ministries and of the Congress High Command, it is impossible not to feel that the main strength of the party has gone into the tasks of administration rather than into preparations for renewed revolt. 84

The Haripura session of the INC, held in February 1938, was a very different occasion to the Lucknow and Faizpur Congresses. It met in an atmosphere of tension and internal conflict, with many fearing a destructive confrontation between the Right and Left of the party. In the event the feared brawl did not eventuate, partly because the resignation of the U.P. and Bihar Ministries over the Governor's refusal to sanction release of political prisoners united the various elements in the Congress, but also because the Left was decisely trounced whenever it opposed the Right. As communist leader A.K. Ghosh conceded, "The delegates voted overwhelmingly for the Right Wing on each and every issue". 85

On the critical question of where the nationalist movement was to go next, the Left's concrete proposals for action were ignored in favour of leaving it to the AICC to determine a course of resistance in the event of the Federal provisions of the Constitution being implemented by the British. The Right Wing not only won handsomely, but aggressively, with Patel attacking the Left and apparently declaring, "Let me make it clear we have tolerated you for two years, but the time has come when we shall no longer tolerate you". 86

Indeed, in the course of 1938 the Right Wing did become increasingly aggressive, as reflected in the conduct of Congress Ministries and the pronouncements of the Congress High Command. Gandhi lent the weight of his authority to this campaign, condemning labour and peasant agitations in the name of 'discipline' and 'non-violence', and authoring the AICC resolution committing the INC to defence of life and property. 87 An unhappy Nehru was amongst those who recognised (in private) what was going on, referring in a letter to Bose to "the new orientation of Congress policy which involves a suppression of left elements and mass movements". 88
The Right Wing also moved to further consolidate its control of the organisational machinery of the INC. Throughout this period, the Right dominated the INC organisationally. Nehru's two terms as President of the INC had been the occasion for advance by the Left, not a consequence of it - Gandhi had installed him as President, and the CWC remained overwhelmingly Right Wing and Gandhian, as had the influential Congress Parliamentary Board established in 1936. As Right-Left conflict sharpened, the Right further extended this control; constitutional changes adopted at Haripura, and recommended by the CWC at the end of 1938, were directed not only against opportunist and corrupt elements which had flocked to the INC now that it was in power, but also against the Left. Here again, Gandhi lent his considerable weight and prestige to such moves, conducting a campaign against those who joined the Congress without unreservedly accepting its creed.

Thus in the course of 1937 and (particularly) 1938, in the same measure that the UNF strategy was successful - seeing cooperation within the Left, an advance in worker and peasant struggles, and so on - it undermined its own foundations. Unity of the Left became increasingly fragile; the mass movements came into conflict with the Congress Ministries and the High Command; and conflicts between Right and Left in the INC increased, being resolved in most cases not by the Left 'pulling' the Right along in its wake, but by the Right demonstrating that it was still securely in control of the Congress.

The communist reaction to such evidence of disunity was, on the whole, conciliatory. The CPI strove ever harder for unity, and proclaimed all the louder that such unity was possible and necessary. Thus, for example, a communist evaluation of the Haripura Congress was titled "Haripura - A Step Forward". Despite the fact that the resolutions adopted at this congress had little in common with those which had been proposed by the CPI, it found that "Haripura opens the doors to acceptance of what the Left has been insisting on, the unity of Parliamentary and extra-Parliamentary struggle."
By the latter part of 1938, however, as the Right Wing offensive mounted, the CPI and the Left more generally responded with greater aggression. The Left walkout at the Delhi AICC in September 1938 was a gesture not only of frustration, but of (somewhat ineffectual) defiance. The CPI press, whilst continuing to call for unity, began to acknowledge the evidence of growing disunity, and began to blame the Congress Right Wing for this. The cracks which were beginning to appear in the UNF found their reflection in the CPI 'line', which began to show signs of inconsistency and incoherence.92

Contradictions of the United National Front (II) - Tripuri and After

These developments - an access of strength to the Left outside the Congress, and a polarization within the Congress, resulting in a Right Wing offensive and reassertion of control - found their culmination at the Tripuri session of the INC, in March 1939. Here the relative success of the UNF strategy also starkly revealed its fundamental weaknesses, and limits.

The elections for the position of Congress President (to be held before the Tripuri session of the INC) saw the incumbent Bose decide to a stand for re-election against Gandhi's preferred candidate, Pattabhi Sitaramayya. In the public polemics between Bose and mostly Right Wing CWC which preceded the election, Bose treated the contest as a Left / Right struggle, and as a contest between a policy of militant nationalism verses a policy allegedly willing to compromise with the British, even to the extent of agreeing to the Federation provisions of the Constitution. The CPI threw its support behind Bose - indeed, was amongst the first to urge him to stand - and it endorsed his 'Plan of Action' for the INC as "an alternative line - the line of struggle, of no-compromise, of building the United National Front...the line for which the Left - the communists and socialists - have always stood".93
The events that followed are well known. The Presidential election in late January 1939 saw Bose elected by 1580 votes to 1375. The vote did to some extent indicate the Left's strength amongst the Congress rank-and-file, although it owed more to Bose's personal popularity in certain regions, and to dissatisfaction with the performance of Congress Ministries and the directionlessness of the INC. Gandhi immediately declared Sitaramayya's defeat to be 'more mine than his', challenged Bose to appoint an entirely Left Wing CWC, and strongly hinted that he and his supporters might withdraw from the INC altogether. Thus prompted by Gandhi, 13 of the 15 members of the CWC resigned on February 22, in protest at the aspersions cast against them by Bose in the exchanges preceding the election.

The Tripuri Congress met in an atmosphere of polarization and crisis. The Pant resolution, expressing confidence in the CWC, Gandhi, and Gandhian policies, and asking Bose to appoint a CWC in accordance with Gandhi's wishes, was easily passed - thereby effectively censuring Bose. After Bose's attempts at some sort of compromise were rebuffed by Gandhi and the Right, Bose resigned as President in late April 1939, and the Right Wing leader Rajendra Prasad was appointed President.

The fact that Bose had declared himself to be a candidate of the Left, and had been supported by it, transformed the election contest into a Right / Left conflict - even if, given Bose's record, there were good reasons to doubt his Leftist credentials. Subsequent events demonstrated both the unwillingness of the Congress Right to accept such a defeat, and its capacity to reverse it.

The significance of the events at Tripuri lay not only in the fact that the Left was ultimately defeated in a direct confrontation with the Right, but in the fact that it capitulated. The moment Gandhi threw down the gauntlet, making it clear he would not accept the election result, the CSP and CPI developed cold feet. The Congress rank-and-file's vote for Bose, editorialized the *The New Age*, "is not a vote against the present leadership; nor can it be interpreted as a vote for an alternative leadership. They have voted for militant action and a democratic functioning".94
Gandhi's challenge to Bose to appoint an entirely Left CWC had thus to be rejected. The need of the hour, declared a statement signed by 16 communist leaders, "[is] not a new leadership, not a homogeneous cabinet, not a new ideology, not even a new programme... [but] full implementation of the Congress Programme", a need which for its fulfilment required "A united Congress moving forward under a united leadership".

Having won a victory, of sorts, the CPI immediately began to downplay it, as its implications became evident. At the Tripuri Congress itself, the main political resolution, although much less militant than the one Bose had campaigned on (and which the Left had endorsed), was actively supported by the CPI and CSP.

The Tripuri crisis was precipitated by a victory of the Left. It was, in a limited sense, evidence of the success of the UNF - of a radicalization of sections of the nationalist movement. However the reaction of the Congress leadership put the lie to another 'thesis' or premise of the UNF strategy - that unity and militant struggle were entirely compatible, that the Right could be pulled along in the wake of Left advances. The Presidential crisis was an illustration of the contradiction that lay at the heart of the UNF strategy - namely, that Left advance came into conflict and contradiction with preservation of the unity of the UNF. That the actions of the Congress leadership did not 'comply' with the UNF analysis meant the CPI was confronted with a choice between pyrrhic victory (accompanied by the collapse of any pretense of unity), or the preservation of 'unity' in the UNF - through capitulation. For the final time, the CPI opted for unity at any cost.

Subsequent to its humiliating backdown over the Presidential conflict, the CPI sought to defend its actions from criticism from within and outside the Party, and to develop the implications of its actions 'theoretically'. To this end the central propositions of the UNF strategy, outlined earlier, were asserted with great vehemence, and extended to their further-most limit.
The emphasis on unity now expressly ruled out any challenge to the Congress leadership - "No negative opposition to the Right Wing, no attempt to create a parallel and alternative leadership to overthrow the present leadership...at no stage and in no case must the struggle degenerate into factional opposition to the Right Wing". The implications of this were now explicitly recognized and embraced. "It is not the time to emphasize our ideological differences with Gandhiji and his followers", cautioned the *The New Age*; those committed to the UNF "had no hesitation in considering Gandhian leadership as inevitable for the present stage".

This was justified by a further reassessment, and an explicitly appreciative one, of the Congress leadership and Gandhi. S.G. Sardesai called upon Leftists to recognize the progressive role played by the Gandhian leadership, and "Gandhiji's unique role as the greatest unifier of nationalist ranks". G.A. Adhikari went so far as to describe the Indian bourgeoisie as "an oppressed class", which was a vital part of the UNF.

Given all this, the role of the Left had to be clearly understood. CPI members had to abandon the mistaken "notion that the Congress is merely a platform for airing one's own or the party's views". Leftists had to cease acting as propagandists and seek instead to 'move' the Congress towards struggle, not by opposing or seeking to replace the Congress leadership, but by "forcing it to be part of the fighting anti-imperialist front". Whereas before the adoption of united front tactics the interests of the nationalist movement had been submerged into the needs of worker and peasant struggle, on the basis that no national independence was possible without the participation of these classes, now the opposite was urged - complete identification of the Left with nationalist struggle: "the task of the Left is not to work for sectional gains, but to strive their best for national adance, and to the extent that they do that, they advance their own strength and the strength of the nation".

Finally, an element implicit in the UNF, but seldom made explicit - the proposition that the struggle for national independence was not only temporally prior
to, but in some 'objective' sense more important than, class struggle - was now made very explicit and given theoretical justification. "The fundamental principle of Lenin's theory of colonial revolutions", adjudged a statement responding to criticism of the CPI for neglecting class struggle in pursuit of opportunistic alliances, signed by 15 leading communists, is "that the basic class relation which determines social and political developments in the colonies is the conflict between Foreign imperialism on the one hand and the colonial people on the other". Here nationalism was elevated to the status of a class conflict, with reference to no less on authority than Lenin; and it was declared to be prior to and more important than that 'other', and secondary, class conflict. The slogan of the Anti-Imperialist People's Front, the communist leaders declared, held good for the 'whole epoch of the colonial revolutions', and was based upon a recognition of the fact that the central issues and priorities in this epoch were determined "not by the struggle of the rival classes within the national front but by the basic cleavage between Imperialism and the colonial people".

The United National Front Undone

The CPI's frantic efforts to preserve the unity of the UNF in the aftermath of the Tripuri Congress, by further moderating its own position and its conception of the UNF, were also its final such efforts. They foundered on the rock of the Congress leadership's determination to subdue the Left, and then upon a transformed international situation.

The CPI's conciliatory attitude towards the Congress Right was not reciprocated. The Left was not allowed a single representative on the CWC appointed by Rajendra Prasad. The Bombay AICC meeting in June 1939 saw the Right press home its advantage, passing resolutions barring Congressmen from organising any satyagraha without approval from the relevant Provincial Congress Committee, and reducing the power of PCC's over Congress governments, including prohibiting public criticism of
these governments. Between them, these resolutions greatly restricted extra-
parliamentary activity by Congressmen, such as those active in the peasant or trade
union movements. Constitutional changes were also made, preventing election to
Congress office of anyone who had not been an INC member for three consecutive
years, and restricting voting rights in such elections to those with at least one year's
membership. These amendments restricted the participation of not only those corrupt
elements who had recently joined the INC, and at whom the changes were ostensibly
directed, but also of Leftists, peasants and workers who had joined the INC
subsequent to the inauguration of the UNF strategy.

Faced with such provocation, this time the Left responded with greater
independence. The newly formed Left Consolidation Committee, bringing together the
CPI, CSP, Royists and Bose's newly formed Forward Bloc, called for a nationwide
'day of protest' against the AICC decisions, and then for a 'National Struggle Week'
from August 31 - September 6. Virtually for the first time the CPI and the Left were
taking an independent initiative not in the name of assisting and buttressing the
Congress's position, but in protest at the actions (and inaction, in not launching civil
disobedience) of the Congress leadership. This call was all the more significant in that
it was undertaken in direct defiance of the Congress Right Wing's demands that it be
called off. The Congress High Command responded by removing Bose from his
position as President of the Bengal PCC, and debarring him from Congress elective
office for three years.

This newfound initiative and independence of the part of the CPI did not involve
its repudiating the UNF strategy. Its actions were undertaken in response to the
Congress Right Wing's offensive, and were undertaken in association with all other
important elements of the Left. Nevertheless, such actions did mark a departure from
the hitherto prevailing conception of the UNF, and CPI statements sought to justify
and give some shape to this new position. A National Front article with the common
(for the UNF period) title of "In Defence of Unity and Struggle" acknowledged that
'unity' and 'struggle' could be conflicting aims, and took the uncommon step of opting for the latter, adjudging, "It was better to pay the price of discipline [for calling a 'day of protest']...than patiently submit to Rightist disruption".106

The CWC action against Bose for his participation in organising the 'day of protest' was strongly condemned in a statement under the names of senior communist leaders Joshi, Adhikari, Bharadwaj and Ghosh,107 and a National Front editorial provocatively titled "Provocateurs at Work" linked the attacks on the Left with the Congress leadership's desire to "appease imperialism" and "make possible a deal over the heads of the masses and against their will".108

This newly critical assessment of the Congress Right Wing was systematically expounded in an important article by Adhikari, which sought to clarify the 'confusion' within CPI ranks on the meaning of 'united leadership':

It appears that some comrades in our ranks understand the achieving of united leadership mechanically. It is viewed as a task of 'pushing' the present leadership to the position of struggle by merely developing partial struggles on a nationwide scale. There is a tendency to underestimate the task of carrying out political exposures of the anti-unity and anti-struggle acts of the present homogeneous Gandhian leadership...a sharp but well-balanced and concrete criticism of the present decadent phase of Gandhism is a part of the task of forging unity for struggle.109

This 'clarification', of course, was in fact a repudiation of what had earlier been one of the tenets of the UNF strategy. The prospect of maintaining unity by 'pushing' the bourgeois or Gandhian leadership was now summarily dismissed; the UNF required, instead 'exposure' of that leadership. This, and the reference to Gandhism entering its 'decadent' phase, were to become important new themes in the CPI press, and in its understanding of the UNF.

At this point, as the contradictions within the UNF had become unmistakably apparent and impossible to reconcile, leading to CPI attempts to reinterpret and redefine it, the outbreak of World War II transformed the situation.
The failure of Soviet attempts at 'collective security', and Stalin's territorial ambitions, had resulted in the Nazi-Soviet Pact and the subsequent carve-up of Poland between Germany and the USSR. Thus when the long dreaded world war was declared, the position of the Soviet Union was very different from its position in 1935, at the time of the Seventh Comintern Congress. Instead of being seen as a war against fascism, it was described as an 'Imperialist war'. With such a changed assessment went a change in strategy. The strategy of the UNF against fascism, in Dimitrov's words, was 'no longer thinkable' for the communist parties of Western nations, which were instead urged to conduct "resolute struggle against the treacherous principal leaders of the social-democratic parties".

If such a characterisation and response to the war isolated the communist parties of Western countries, the same was not true in India, where the Viceroy's declaration that India was a party to an as yet distant war, without even a pretence at consultation with Indian opinion, was deeply unpopular. The CPI's description of the war as 'imperialist', and its proclamation that "The most effective way in which the Indian people can serve the cause of world peace and democracy is by striking for their own freedom and weakening British imperialism..." struck a responsive chord with nationalist sentiment.

Such a position was, moreover, entirely consistent with the stand of the INC, which from 1927 onwards had repeatedly declared India's unwillingness to be party to any of Britain's wars. This had been reaffirmed on the eve of the war, in a statement by the CWC in August, which declared that India could not participate in any war as long as freedom was denied her.

Thus the CPI, along with an expectant nation, waited for the INC to give a call to action. The CWC met in September and issued a carefully worded statement on September 14. This reiterated that "India cannot associate herself in a war said to be for democratic freedom when that freedom is denied her", but made no call for resistance,
and even left the British an opening by inviting them to declare their present and future plans for India.112

The Viceregal response, when it finally came a full month later, offered nothing new. The CWC was now forced to instruct the Congress Ministries to resign, as a gesture of 'non-cooperation' with the British war effort. But no further call to action was given. Congressmen were instructed to prepare for civil disobedience (by 'spinning and promoting the cause of khadi', or handspun cloth), but the form and timing of this was left up to Gandhi, who in November told an audience of U.P. Congressmen that he did not care if it took six years before civil disobedience was launched, as what was important was that it be undertaken by a purified Congress, firmly committed to non-violence and khadi.113 This pattern - that of the INC's conducting its own 'phoney war' - continued down to August 1942, when it was abruptly shattered by the Quit India resolution and the explosive events which followed. The Congress remained opposed to Indian participation in the war - although in July 1940 the CWC offered the British cooperation in efforts for organising the 'defence of the country' if they promised India independence upon conclusion of the war, and in the interim constituted a 'National Government' of Indians -but little was done to translate this opposition into effective action. The decision on when to launch civil disobedience was left up to Gandhi, who did not initiate any such action until August 1940, and then too over the specific issue of freedom of speech, with resistance to be offered by individuals courting arrest. This was a particularly ineffective campaign, one controlled entirely from above, and one which certainly fell short of resistance to the war and struggle for independence.

The other side of leaving it to Gandhi to determine when and how to fight was, necessarily, preventing others in or connected with the INC from taking independent actions. The instruction that Congressmen prepare for civil disobedience was thus accompanied by repeated calls for discipline and non-violence, and the October 1939 CWC specifically warned "against any hasty action in the shape of civil disobedience,
political strikes and the like"114 - a warning addressed to the CPI (amongst others),
which had organised a successful anti-war strike of Bombay workers on October 2,
1939. The December CWC reformulated the traditional Independence Day Pledge to
include the principles of the Gandhian ‘constructive programme’, thus further
committing would be participants in civil disobedience to Gandhian doctrine.

In a situation where the INC was inactive, and demanding similar inaction from
others, the CPI was confronted with a clear choice. It could either, in the name of
‘unity’, acquiesce in the INC position, as the CSP eventually did; or it could criticise
it, and take a more independent course of action. Having already, as we have seen,
travelled the first few steps down the latter path, the CPI opted for ‘struggle’ over
unity.

A Politbureau’s statement on ‘CPI Policy and Tasks in the Period of War’, while
it reiterated the customary call for the UNF and INC unity, also accused the Congress
leadership of seeking “compromise and not struggle”, because “It knows that today to
a far greater extent than in 1930 or 1932, the revolutionary forces have grown and are
capable of transforming even mass satyagraha into a revolutionary movement”.115
This change of tack was indicated at the Ramgarh session of the INC, in March 1940,
where, when their amendments to the main political resolution were defeated, the
communists voted against this resolution. At Haripura and Tripuri, even though the
main resolutions fell well short of what the communists called for, they had voted for
them, and put the best possible gloss on them. In 1940 they broke ranks and bitterly
denounced the main resolution, whilst attacking the INC leadership and their former
Left allies in publications distributed at Ramgarh.116

Bose, who was calling for ‘two Congresses’ (i.e. for a split in the Congress)
was also attacked117, for the CPI was not willing to renounce the UNF by calling for
a split in the Congress. Instead, it stressed the need to “implement the UNF in a new
way”. This new conception of the UNF was required by the situation of war, where
rising mass militancy saw an alarmed Gandhian leadership “come out as sabotageurs
(sic) of real mass struggle, [reveal itself] as a leadership which, every time it moved, moved away from the forces of the people and towards a peaceful compromise with Imperialism for minor concessions".  

Given this, militant nationalist struggle required "Not the tactic of 'inducing or pushing' the Gandhian leadership into struggle, but of isolating that leadership and smashing its mass influence".

Such exposures had, however, to be carried out within the framework of the UNF. The CPI reaffirmed, "The national Congress is the only people's organisation today through which successful national struggle can be launched", and therefore "Struggle against Gandhism has to be carried on within the framework of national unity, without disrupting the basic unity of the Congress". Independent struggles had to be developed through political strikes and no-rent campaigns, mobilised around the new slogan of 'National Democratic Revolution', and in this way the nationalist movement was to be simultaneously carried forward and detached from its bourgeois leadership.

This new CPI analysis and strategy, whilst it was presented as a readjustment of the UNF strategy pursued since 1936, marked a reversion to earlier positions. For the emphasis on 'independent' struggles did conflict with professions of faith in the INC, and attacks on the INC leadership did undermine unity with the Congress, and were reciprocated. These conflicts were in no way obscured or resolved by facile calls to 'unity through struggle'. Once workers and peasants were being mobilised, not in support of the Congress programme and strategy, but against (and in defiance of) Congress inaction, the slogan of unity became purely rhetorical.

Thus when it came to defining what the UNF now meant in practice, the CPI could come up with little more than a call to 'develop lower Congress committees', and a call to workers to observe National days fixed by the INC with political strikes. A changed assessment of the Congress leadership (and thus a changed perception of who was and was not part of national unity) led to an overturning of all the other elements of the UNF strategy. The emphasis on independent class action, where the
nationalist leadership could not give the lead for such action, led to an elevation of the role of the proletariat, not as an element of the UNF, but as its leading force. This, when combined with attacks on the INC leadership, led to an elevation of the role of the CPI, at the cost of the INC. Thus a major statement of the CPI position, first published just before the Ramgarh Congress, was titled, significantly, *The Proletarian Path*. In February 1941 an editorial in *Communist* announced that the CPI was the only party capable of welding the diverse struggles of different classes into one national struggle.123

By 1940-41, the United National Front was dead; all that remained was for the CPI to administer the last rites. Before this could be done, external developments intervened to make this irrelevant. The Nazi invasion of the USSR in July 1941 transformed the war into a 'People's War', in the characterisation of the international communist movement. Communist parties everywhere were required to adapt to the new situation and its changed requirements.

In the Allied countries, a reversal of position was made easier by the fact that it allowed the communist parties to come into step with the bulk of popular opinion. In India, the *volte face* had no such compensations. Some months passed before the CPI adopted the new line. Under conditions of illegality and isolation from developments abroad, with much of its leadership having been jailed in the course of 1940, the CPI initially responded by declaring that continued opposition to the 'imperialist war', and energetic pursuit of national independence, was "the biggest aid we can give to the Soviet Union".124 When the jailed leadership first raised the new slogans, the leadership outside jail repudiated them, attributing the formulation of such erroneous policies to the 'isolation' of those in jail.125

It was not until December 1941 that a change in line was effected, after much soul searching and opposition to the change within the Party. The famous Deoli thesis declared that implementation of the 'People's War' line required "a united front which extends to the foreign bureaucratic government...the Indian people, led by the
proletariat, must apply the logic of united front to imperialism - the same logic which they applied to the national bourgeoisie all these days".126

With this, the CPI entered a new chapter in its history. The united front, reinterpreted beyond all recognition, now included imperialism; and although this slogan was soon dropped, the British Indian government responded by legalizing the CPI in 1942. Defence of the Soviet Union was now the overriding slogan, and it saw the CPI discourage strikes, urge peasants to grow more food, and remain aloof from, and critical of, the final and greatest phase of the nationalist struggle, the Quit India movement.

Conclusion

After some initial hesitation, in the course of 1937 the CPI fully embraced a strategy which had been formulated by the Comintern in response to the fascist threat in Europe, and which had been developed for the very different conditions prevailing in India by R.Palme Dutt and Ben Bradley. The CPI came to accept that the paramount political project in India was that of achieving national independence, and that this independence would take a bourgeois, parliamentary form. It declared that the Congress was not a bourgeois organisation, but a multi-class party with a bourgeois or Right Wing leadership. It even accepted that the unity demanded by the UNF strategy encompassed this Right Wing leadership. Above all, the CPI embraced a conception of a united front in which, in a situation where the premier nationalist organisation was very strong and the CPI extremely weak, the UNF was to take the form of the INC incorporating all other elements into its organisational framework, rather than the form of an agreement between different parties.

Once accepted, this conception of the UNF was vigorously expounded and consistently followed by the CPI. Whether the CPI leaders actually believed that national independence could be achieved under the aegis of the Congress, and that too
without splitting it and displacing its leadership - or whether they regarded this as a tactic to be pursued until the bourgeoisie was compelled to draw back and leave the field open for the CPI to 'go it alone', as some of their opponents alleged - is a moot point. Conversely, for the INC the UNF was something of an illusion. Nehru and the CSP notwithstanding, for most of the Congress leadership the programmatic and other changes adopted by the INC in this period were part of the normal responsiveness of a mass organisation to a changing political scene, rather than evidence of its transformation into a UNF. For this leadership, as it frequently made clear, the Congress had always represented all Indians, and thus there was no need for 'collective affiliation' and a UNF. In this sense the UNF was something the CPI and other sections of the Left pursued, fought for and proclaimed, but not something which ever took formal shape or form.

The CPI's very pursuit of the UNF strategy, however, had real political effects, making it much more than a tactical ploy or convenient illusion. The Congress, as we saw, moved leftwards in this period, addressing itself more directly to questions of poverty and exploitation, and defining its goal of 'swaraj' unambiguously, as a demand for full independence. This change was in significant measure due to the development of peasants' and workers' struggles, and to the growth of the Left in the INC - developments which owed much to the United National Front.

Another, closely related effect and success of the UNF strategy was the development and popularisation of a 'left nationalist' ideology in this period. Not only the CPI, but also Nehru and the CSP were important sources for this ; but in all cases an attempt was made to marry nationalism to some version of Marxism, and the very proliferation of such attempts was indication of the growing influence and hold of this ideology.

The successes of the UNF strategy, as we have also seen, revealed some of its weaknesses. New social forces served to radicalise the Congress, but only up to a point. In circumstances where the INC had formed governments, and where it was
thus subject to the 'demands of administration' as well as countervailing conservative pressures, radical social forces came into conflict with the INC leadership. Militant class and national struggles and Congress unity, it soon became apparent, were not always compatible; and in the dying moments of the UNF they seemed to many to be mutually exclusive.

Ironically, this seemed to vindicate an earlier and long-standing communist analysis. Beginning with Roy, Indian communists had argued that were limits to the INC's commitment to the pursuit of independence, limits which revealed themselves in the same measure as the mass struggle advanced in strength and militancy. By 1939, if not by 1938, this key contention of an earlier analysis (an analysis which, however, had itself failed to yield a viable strategy) seemed borne out.

Relatedly, 'left nationalism' proved more nationalist than left. The CPI's one-time allies began to go in their own directions, either one of accommodation with the Gandhian leadership (Nehru, the CSP) or one of anti-INC but opportunist nationalism, as with Bose. 'Left-nationalism', which the CPI had played no small role in popularizing, assumed a life of its own, as was recognized by CPI leader Ranadive when he wrote,

Left-nationalism stands today as a programme popularized by the Socialist movement; yet because of the failure of the Socialists to take Organizational Lead, it confronts the Socialist movement as an independent force.127

Written in August 1939, before the CPI split with the CSP, the 'failure' referred to here was the failure of the CPI and the Left to build an organisational base of a strength corresponding to the strength of the left-nationalist ideology it had disseminated. It is indeed true that the advance of the Left and the CPI in this period, whilst significant, never matched the rapid advance in popularity and influence of left-nationalism as an ideology.
This organisational failure, however, was the product of a political failure, of a deep and fundamental weakness in the politics of the United National Front. For inasmuch as the CPI sought to build the UNF on the basis of adoption and propagation of a left-nationalist ideology - around slogans of a Constituent Assembly, unity with the bourgeoisie and so on - this ideology was always going to have an existence beyond the CPI (as it was, of course, intended to), but also independent of it and beyond its control. The compromises and ambiguities inherent in such an ideology, one with which Marxism accommodated itself to nationalism, contained the possibility, if not inevitability, of such a development. The moment the CPI began to take a more radical tack, even if only to more strongly assert the 'left' in left-nationalism, it was bound to find that its own creation stood independent of it and often hostile to it.

These observations help to 'place' the period when the CPI pursued the UNF strategy within the history of Marxism in India. In previous chapters we have traced how, faced with the problem of combining the nationalist project and the socialist one, and thus of effecting a relation between the nationalist and the class struggles, Marxists in India provided different answers at different times. If the position adopted following the Sixth Comintern Congress and the Tenth Plenum of the ECCI represented one extreme, where the nationalist project and struggle was subsumed under the socialist one, the UNF strategy represented the other extreme. In this latter case Marxism identified itself unreservedly with the nationalist project, effacing many of its own concerns and adapting others to nationalist requirements in order to woo the INC, and in order to popularise a left-nationalist ideology which could serve as the basis for the broadest alliance of forces.

This latter 'extreme' proved much more rewarding for the CPI than the other. Coming at a time when social and political circumstances were favourable to such a venture, the adoption of the UNF strategy facilitated the growth of the CPI. However this strategy was such that even its ultimate success would, arguably, have meant
failure of another sort. For such a success would have been bought at the cost of abandoning or greatly tempering the central concerns of Marxism; would have been bought, that is, by collapsing the Marxist project into the nationalist one.

In the event, the experiment failed even in its own terms. There were limits to the INC's social radicalism and its nationalist militancy, and as these revealed themselves the UNF began to crumble. As it did so, the left-nationalism which had formed its ideological basis proved to have an existence independent, and beyond the control, of the CPI.

Between 1941 and 1947 the CPI's position underwent further changes. At the end of the war the CPI returned to a position in many ways similar to that which it had adopted in the period of the UNF. National independence, when it was finally achieved in 1947, was not the product of a united front of left and nationalist forces, nor of a struggle led by workers and peasants. The manner of its advent contradicted or 'put the lie' to many communist presuppositions and contentions. Nevertheless, in August 1947 the CPI joined in India's independence celebrations, and declared its (qualified) support for India's Constituent Assembly and the provisional government headed by Nehru. Very soon thereafter this position was reversed. The Congress was denounced for having made a deal with the British. India's independence was declared to be a false independence, a trick which gave the illusion but not the substance of genuine national independence.

Thus Marxist theory's preoccupation with and engagement with the question of Indian nationhood and nationalism continued into the post-Independence period. The question of national independence, and the role of different classes in maintaining / extending it, continued to be central issues in communist debates in the years after 1947. Why this should be so is one of the questions considered in the Conclusion to this work.
Notes

1. According to the then Director of the British Indian Government's Intelligence Bureau, the Meerut prisoners smuggled at least three documents addressed to the Comintern out of jail, although it is not known if these ever reached their destination - H. Williamson, *India and Communism*, Calcutta, 1976, pp. 176-77.

2. "The biggest mistake made by Indian Communists consists of the fact that in reality they stood aside from the mass movement of the people against British imperialism" - "Open Letter to the Indian Communists" (by CP's of China, Germany and Great Britain), *Inprecor*, 23 : 22, 19 May, 1932, p. 437.

3. "The revolutionary people are prepared to struggle, but they have lost faith in the treacherous policy of the National Congress and are seeking new paths, a new programme, new leadership" - "Open Letter to the Indian Communists from the C.C. of the C.P. of China", *Inprecor*, 13 : 51, 24 Nov., 1933, p. 1155. The later (CCP) letter, however, was, relatively speaking, more 'moderate'. It called for a united front (albeit one excluding the INC), and suggested that communists seek to reunify the communist and 'reformist' trade union federations. By contrast the earlier '3 parties letter' had disparaged 'united front illusions'.


5. The 'Political Theses of the C.C. of C.P. of India', published in slightly abridged form in *Inprecor* (14 : 40, 20 July, 1934), repeated the criticisms of the two letters, this time as self-criticism. As with the 3 parties letter and the CCP's letter, criticism of CPI sectarianism went hand in hand with a reiteration of the Sixth Congress line - that is, with denunciations of 'left reformism', of the slogan of a Constituent Assembly, etc. A later CPI document, "Problems of the Anti-Imperialist Struggle in India" (*Inprecor*, 15 : 10, 9 March, 1935), marked a more significant change of position, calling for a united front which would include (local units of) the INC. This, however, was still a united front 'from below', with one of its aims being "exposing the tricksters of national reformism" (p.292).


7. Thus on April 1, as the ferocious crackdown on the KPD was proceeding, the Presidium of the ECCI declared, "The establishment of an outright dictatorship,
which destroys all democratic illusions among the masses and frees them from the sway of social democracy speeds Germany on its road to a proletarian revolution" - quoted in B.L. Gross, "The German Communists' United-Front and Popular-Front Ventures", in M.M. Drachkovitch and B.Lazitch (eds), *The Comintern: Historical Highlights*, Hoover Institute Publications, 1966, p. 119. The Thirteenth Plenum of the ECCI in Nov-Dec 1933 was, of course, to endorse the strategy pursued by the KPD, and lay all blame for the rise of Hitler at the feet of Social Democracy.

8. Developing good relations with Germany had been an important goal of Soviet foreign policy since the Rapallo Treaty. Thus Litvinov sought hard to limit the damage caused by Hitler's victory, repeatedly declaring that the internal regime of any nation made no difference to the USSR's relations with it. Similarly, despite Japanese provocations over the Chinese Eastern Railway in Manchuria, the Soviet's were conciliatory, offering to sell the CER, and eventually selling it in 1935 to the puppet state of Manchukuo for a quarter of the original asking price - Max Beloff, *The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia, 1929-36*, v. 1, Oxford University Press, 1947, p. 173. Relations with both states, nevertheless, declined rapidly.


14. The initial confusion, and then the slow emergence of a new position (accompanied by personnel changes) in the Comintern between the Thirteenth ECCI and the Seventh Congress, are detailed in *ibid.*, Chapter 7.

16. G. Dimitrov, *The United Front*, Lawrence and Wishart, 1935, pp. 35-36. A striking feature of Dimitrov's report was that its few references to revolution or proletarian dictatorship were negative ones, in that these were described (and decried) as 'formal demands' or 'bare appeals' in the 'current historical situation'.

17. Despite its relative frankness, reflected also in its energetic and (relatively) cliche-free prose, Dimitrov's report contained significant evasions and lacunae. Chief amongst these was an unwillingness to acknowledge that the Comintern had pursued an erroneous strategy in the past. Out of this omission arose an evasion. If the communists bore no responsibility for the successes of fascism, the entire blame necessarily lay with Social Democracy. This, however, was difficult to reconcile with proposing a united front to social-democratic parties. Ingeniously (but not entirely inaccurately), Dimitrov reconciled the inconsistency by claiming that under pressure from the masses, Social Democracy was dividing into a bourgeois and a revolutionary camp, the former responsible for the fascist victories, but the latter increasingly revolutionary and favouring a united front with communists.


20. The Seventh Congress's silence on the colonial question was partly filled by the publication of Wang Ming's speech (slightly expanded) as a pamphlet, *The Revolutionary Movement in the Colonial Countries*, no publisher or date given. This step was made all the more necessary as only those sections of his speech dealing with China were published in *Inprecor's* (English edition) account of the Seventh Congress proceedings (*Inprecor*, 15 : 60, 11 Nov., 1935).

21. The significant new element in Wang Ming's analysis was that the colonial bourgeoisie was described (albeit cautiously, even tentatively) as part of the forces of revolution, rather than (as at the ECCI's Tenth Plenum) as part of the growing tide of imperialist exploitation (*Revolutionary Movement*, pp. 3-4).
only in passing in Wang Ming's report, this point was to become the crux of the new strategy in the colonies - a united front directed not against imperialism and the colonial bourgeoisie, but with nationalist organisations with bourgeois leadership, against imperialism.

22. Despite its lack of attention to colonial affairs, the Seventh Congress could not ignore China, both because of the strength and importance of the CCP, and because of the importance of Japanese expansionism. Nevertheless, even discussion of China was, as Carr observes, marked by "an almost total ignorance, or lack of understanding, of Chinese affairs" - *op. cit.*, p. 421. It was also marked by a strongly 'patriotic' note, sounded repeatedly in Wang Ming's speech. Just as the united front in Europe, as an anti-fascist struggle, was to strongly sound a 'democratic' note, so the united front in colonial countries, directed against imperialism, was to assume strongly nationalist overtones, not least of all in China.

23. Wang Ming, *Revolutionary Movement*, pp. 29-32. Wang Ming was particularly harsh on the CPI, describing some of its actions as "an example of how not to carry on the tactics of the anti-imperialist united front" (p.30).

24. Dutt and Bradley, "The Anti-Imperialist People's Front in India", *Labour Monthly*, 18:3, March 1936, p. 156, pp. 159-60. Hereafter all page references to this article are given in the text of this chapter. An effort was made to suggest that the slogan for a constituent Assembly 'led on' to a Soviet Republic, but this claim was made in rather desultory fashion, and no argument was advanced in favour of it.

25. *ibid.*, p. 152. Even such a proposal for 'left unity' was a significant departure from previous positions - and not just for the 'sectarian' CPI. Soon after the formation of the CSP in 1934 Palme Dutt, for example, described the new party as "a manoeuvre of the bankrupt Congress leadership" - "'Congress Socialism': A Contradiction in Terms", *Indian Forum*, Oct. 1934, p. 119.

26. Dutt and Bradley provided a list of possible such demands - modest ones, such as the freedom to strike, a minimum wage and eight hour day, and so on - *op. cit.*, pp. 155-56.

27. Many of the Meerut prisoners were rearrested soon after their release, and in one year, the CPI had three different General Secretaries - Overstreet and Windmiller, *op. cit.*, p. 156. In January 1936 a number of CPI leaders were arrested, as a result of which the CPI leadership all but collapsed - Intelligence Bureau report, in
28. British Indian Intelligence was soon to develop a high opinion of Joshi's organisational skills - as, for instance, in the DIB's Weekly Report of 11-6-1936, in ibid., p. 60.


31. 'Moonje's Thesis Against Individual Enrolment', CPI Archives, 1936 file (later published in The Communist, Aug. 1936). This was one of a number of theses discussed at leadership level, and circulated within the CPI. It was rejected by the Politbureau as "embodying sectarian prejudices leading to a policy of isolation and inactivity" - 'Individual Enrolment to Indian National Congress', Politbureau Circular No. 4 (CPI Archives, 1936 file). That Moonje was not alone in expressing such views is testified to by the Politbureau document referred to earlier (fn.29). A district committee level response to the new line similarly describes the Dutt-Bradley thesis as 'Royist', and therefore as unacceptable (in CPI Archives, 1936 file).


33. The above Politbureau statement avoided the issue altogether. Other CPI statements contradicted each other. The Road to Power, a pamphlet under the name of the Central Committee, seemed to be calling for a UNF between organisations, in declaring that "the Communist Party is prepared to join forces with the Congress in its fight for [a] Constituent Assembly" (p. 26). Another Central Committee pamphlet, however, suggested that the INC could, with the necessary 'transformation', become the UNF in India - To All Anti-Imperialist Fighters : Gathering Storm, Dec. 1936. (CPI Archives, 1936 file).

34. Thus The Road to Power concluded, "The bourgeoisie can never play a revolutionary role in India. It will always betray and seek to sabotage the revolution when it senses danger to itself" (p.47). Similarly the Politbureau statement on the
Dutt-Bradley thesis described the bourgeoisie as "moving towards the right", and warned that "It should not be forgotten that the Indian bourgeoisie though at present oppositional is finally an anti-revolutionary class"; it interpreted the UNF as a strategy ultimately leading to displacement of the INC's leadership - *op. cit.* , pp. 17, 18.

35. "Draft Election Platform", *The Communist*, 1: 10, July 1936. The proposed platform was a fairly modest set of nationalist, democratic and class demands; more radical platforms were proposed for the CPI and the CSP.

36. "Communist Party and the Coming Election" (Editorial), *The Communist*, 1: 10, July 1936, p. 4. CPI members were given direct instructions to support the Congress in its election campaign in Politbureau Circular No. 5, 'On Elections' (CPI Archives, 1936 file).

37. Acharya Narendra Deva's 'Presidential Address' to the All-India Congress Socialist Conference, Patna, 17 May, 1934 - in his *Socialism and the National Revolution*, Bombay, 1946, p. 29.

38. M.R. Masani, "The Communist Party in India", *Pacific Affairs*, XXIV(1), March 1951, pp. 21-22, fn. According to Masani, he was approached by Dutt, Politit and Bradley, who proposed a united front between the CSP and CPI; the talks proved inconclusive.

39. J.P. Narayan, "Problems of Socialist Unity in India" (April 1941), in his *Towards Struggle : Selected Manifestoes, Speeches and Writings*, Bombay, 1946, p. 170. According to Narayan the CSP acted unilaterally, as the CPI had made no overtures at this point.


42. *ibid.*, p. 22.

43. The CSP was the pre-eminent party in the AIKS, and for most of the 1930's the BPKS's highest executive. organ, the Bihar Provincial Kisan Council, had a CSP majority (Hauser, *op. cit.*, p. 79, fn). But more than any party, it was Swami Sahajanand who dominated the BPKS.


46. As the communist journal, *The New Age*, was to lament, "It is characteristic of the present stage of the working class organisation in India, that the majority of the struggles begin spontaneously...The organised working class leadership rushes in after the struggle has started and unfortunately is often a hindrance [rather] than a help" - "Indian Working Class in Action", IV(1), June 1937, pp. 1-2.


50. Thus whilst the 'radicalism' of the Lucknow and Faizpur Congresses alarmed some sections of the capitalist class, it did not upset the more far-sighted of the capitalists. G.D. Birla's assessment of the Lucknow Congress was that "Mahatmaji kept his promise...he saw that no new commitments were made. Jawaharlalji's speech in a way was thrown into the wastepaper basket...things are moving in the right direction" - Birla to Thakurdas, 20 April, 1936, quoted in Sarkar, *Modern India*, pp. 345-46.


52. As was admitted by N. Dutt Majumdar (MLA) in his article, "The United Front in Bengal", *The New Age* (henceforward cited as NA), IV(1), June 1937, p.20. The same point was made in a fascinating CPI internal document on the CPI's election campaign in Sholapur (CPI Archives, 1937 file)

54. The CPI's position on this issue - its reluctance to make office acceptance a fundamental right-left issue, but its willingness to go along with the rest of the left to preserve unity, was sketched early, in "The Issue of Ministry vs. Anti-Ministry" (Editorial), *NA*, I(10), July 1936, and later reiterated.

55. *The Communists and the Congress*, CPI (Socialist Literature Publishing Co.), Agra, 1938, p.5 (CPI Archives, 1938 file). Drafts of these 'theses' on the CPI and the Congress had earlier been published in *National Front*.


58. *To Haripura: Manifesto of the CPI to Indian National Congress*, 1938 (CPI Archives, 1938 file).

59. Abridged reprint of editorial in *NF*, Feb. 13, 1938; reproduced in *Communists and Congress*, p.19. This new evaluation of the bourgeoisie was first made in Feb. 1937, when it was criticised by the CSP (see Overstreet and Windmiller, *op. cit.*, p.164). An ingenious but ultimately unconvincing attempt to reconcile such an evaluation of the bourgeoisie with the Sixth Congress characterisation of it was Venkatayya, "The Role of the Indian Bourgeoisie in the United National Front", *The Communist*, 1: 18, June 1937.


62. *NF* editorial in *Communists and Congress*, p. 22.

63. *Communists and Congress*, p.10.

64. *ibid.*, pp. 10-11.


68. B.T. Ranadive, "India's Proletarians Wake Up", NF, 12 March, 1939, p. 76.

69. Thus, for instance, the article "Unity of the Left", NA, V(5), Oct. 1938, accused the Left of promoting worker and peasant struggles as "'independent' struggles" (the disparaging marks around independent are in the original), thereby "not broadening sectional struggles into people's struggles..." - pp. 161-162. In the aftermath of the Tripuri Congress such self-criticism became more pronounced, with the National Front accusing the Left of acting on a 'local' and 'sectional' plane rather than a 'national' and political one - Editorial, NF, 9 July, 1939.

70. Communists and Congress, p.20.

71. Membership figures for this period are not known, but CPI membership is known to have increased significantly from the figure of 140 members in 1934. An Intelligence Bureau note in 1939 estimates CPI membership as "no more than a few hundred" (although a chart appended to this note estimates CPI membership as between 1000-2000), but adds that the CPI's influence is much greater than membership figures indicate - D.I.B. Note, 'Communism in India: A survey of recent developments (to 31 Oct. 1939)', (ACHI 1939 / 8).


75. M.R. Masani, Chairman's Address, All India Congress Socialist Party Fourth Annual Conference, 1938, Bombay, p. 19 (ACHI, CSP collection 1938 / 6).


78. A British assessment concluded that the "Ministries realise the difficulty of reforms in the existing Tenancy laws, and are moving as cautiously as their extreme supporters and past promises will allow" - "Quarterly Survey of the Political and Constitutional Position in British India", No.1 (to Oct. 31, 1937), Anderson Collection, IOLR, Eur F 207 / 21.


80. "Quarterly Survey of the Political and Constitutional Position in British India", No. 3 (Feb. 1-April 30, 1938), Linlithgow Collection, IOLR, Eur F 125 / 142.

81. Encyclopaedia of INC, v. 11, p. 447.

82. Reporting on a meeting he had had with Munshi, the Bombay Home Minister, the Governor-General (in a letter to Zetland, Dec. 16, 1937) remarked, "You may judge the surprise with which I listened to a request from a Congress Home Minister for my assistance in putting the C.I.D. of another Province in touch with his own C.I.D., with a view to helping to deal with the problem of communists in and around Bombay" - Linlithgow Collection, IOLR, Eur F 125 / 4.

83. In a letter to the Governor-General the Governor of U.P. had remarked, "The longer the Congress Government remains in office, the more deeply does it become involved in administrative problems and policies and the more do the ordinary reactions of political forces come into play" - Haig to Linlithgow, Dec. 24, 1937. In his reply Linlithgow agreed, adding, "my anxiety to keep the present Government in office as long as possible is largely based on a full appreciation of that fact - Linlithgow to Haig, Jan 6, 1938 - Linlithgow Collection, IOLR, Eur F 125 / 113.

84. "Quarterly Survey", No. 4 (May 1- July 31, 1938), Linlithgow Collection, IOLR, Eur F 125 / 113.

86. Quoted in B. Bradley, "India: The Haripura Session", *Labour Monthly*, 20(4), April 1938, p. 240. Patel's attack was an effective one, as the resignation of the Bihar and U.P. Ministries did seem to put the lie to the Left's complaint that the Ministries were cooperating with Imperialism. *The New Age* admitted that Patel's attack "appeared to expose them [the Left], to make them look foolish, isolated and ineffective" - "Haripura - A Step Forward", *NA*, IV(10), March 1938, pp. 448-49.

87. Through the pages of *Harijan*, Gandhi in this period kept up a campaign against what he saw as a growing tide of violence and indiscipline. He condemned picketing of factories and declared that on such occasions factory owners would be justified in calling for police assistance, which the Congress Ministry would be obliged to provide. He similarly condemned 'lightening or unauthorized strikes' and deprecated 'exaggerated expectations of the radical betterment of the condition of labour' - D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, v. 4, Govt. of India, 1961 (revised edition), various pages.


89. In response to the Left walkout from the Sept. 1938 AICC, Gandhi went as far as to suggest that those who could not submit to the Congress creed should leave the Congress - or else that the true believers in non-violence leave it - Tendulkar, *op. cit.*, v. 4, p. 277.

90. The CPI proposals to the Haripura Congress had been presented, in general terms, in the CPI's 'Manifesto' to the Haripura Congress, and in the form of specific resolutions in the Feb. 13 issue of *NF*. None of the CPI's proposals - for immediate mass action against the Constitution, repeal of resolutions condemning the 'violence' of BPKS etc - were adopted.


92. To quote a representative statement from the communist press in this period, "Disruption is growing within the National Front. The conciliatory [towards imperialism] policy of the Ministers, and of the Congress High Command, is responsible for it" - G. Adhikari, "People's Unity in Danger : Will Nehru Act?", *NF*, Nov. 20, 1938, p. 1. However since the preservation of unity was the responsibility of the Left, disunity also became an occasion for self-criticism. Following the Left walkout from the Delhi AICC, *The New Age* accused the Left of playing an oppositional role, of continually criticising the Congress Right and
seeking to move the INC to the left, not realising that with its programmatic victories at Lucknow and Faizpur, "The role of the Left become not merely that of agitators for a rival programme but active organisers of a common programme" - "Unity of the Left", NA, V(5), Oct. 1938, p. 162.

93. "For a People's Offensive" (Editorial) NA, V(8), Jan.1939, p. 293. Earlier the CPI had called upon Bose to stand, and urged the Left to 'whole-heartedly campaign' for him - "The Congress Election Campaign" (Editorial), NF, Oct. 16, 1938.

94. "Tripuri Must Sound the War Drum" (Editorial), NA, V(9), Feb. 1939, p. 329.

95. Dange, Joshi et al, "Indian Communists Call for All-Round Unity, All-Round Advance", NF, March 12, 1939, p. 54. An earlier editorial in National Front had pledged, "Neither we nor the Left as a whole is against the Right as such" - "Arm in Arm, Not Face to Face", Feb. 5, 1939, p. 329.

96. "Defeat Disruption" (Editorial), NF, March 7, 1939, p. 204.


98. ibid., p. 412.


102. R.D. Bharadwaj, "National Situation and Our Tasks" (signed Editorial), NA, V(12), May 1939, p. 412.


105. Nehru, whose support for the Left was becoming increasingly unreliable, came out publicly against the 'day of protest'.

106. NF, July 16, 1939, p. 361.

107. NF, Aug. 20, 1939.

108. NF, Aug. 20, 1939, p. 428.
109. Adhikari, "The Slogan of a United Leadership", *NF*, July 16, 1939, pp. 365, 366. This article was a thinly veiled repudiation of S.G. Sardesai's earlier call for a more positive evaluation of the INC's Gandhian leadership (see note 99), and may have reflected political differences within the communist leadership, as well as the formulation of a new 'version' of the UNF.

110. Dimitrov, "The Tasks of The Working Class in the War", Nov. 1939, in Degras, *Comintern Documents*, v. 3, pp. 448-59. This article and an ECCI statement of Nov. 1939 sketched the implications of the 'Imperialist war' analysis for the tactics of communist parties. Although he declared the united front inapplicable for European communist parties, Dimitrov reaffirmed its continued relevance in the colonial countries.


112. Reprinted in *Congress and War: Being the resolutions on war passed by the CWC, AICC and Open Session since 1927*, Allahabad, Oct. 5, 1939.


116. *The Proletarian Path* set out the CPI's new analysis, including its newly critical evaluation of the Congress leadership and the Indian bourgeoisie. *Unmasked - Parties and Politics* sought to reveal how, with the war, "the true face of each party becomes visible", and contained articles by Adhikari, Joshi and Ghosh attacking the CSP, Gandhism, Bose and Roy. Such publications become all the more necessary as *The New Age* and *National Front* had been forced to cease publication in September 1939 and January 1940 respectively, due to British harassment.

117. P.C. Joshi, "Whom, How and Why Does Bose Fight?", *Unmasked-Parties and Politics*, no publisher or date (CPI Archives, 1940 file).

118. CPI, *Your Questions Answered*, 1940, p. 3 (CPI Archives, 1940 file).

120. *Your Questions Answered*, p. 5.

121. The CPI came in for attack not only from the Congress Right, but also from Nehru, and of course from its former ally, the C.S.P.


Conclusion

In Marx's thought the phenomenon of nationhood occupied an ambivalent position, as did the non-European parts of the world. In his writings the nation appeared as an important feature of modern existence, one which constrained the 'form' of the proletariat's struggle for socialism, though the 'substance' of that struggle, and its goal, remained universal and international. The East appeared as something partly outside Marxism because it was outside capitalism and world history, but also as a region rapidly becoming part of world history, by becoming Western. The two issues - nationhood and the East - remained on the whole separate ones for Marx, though he did at one point indicate that a consequence and symptom of the Westernization of the East might be the formation of independent nations there. He did not, however, argue this closely or convincingly.

With Lenin the 'national question' and the 'colonial question' became closely linked within Marxism. The 'essence' of the national question was declared to be the distinction between 'progressive' and 'reactionary' nationalism, a distinction based upon a new analysis of capitalism as 'imperialism'. The former type of nationalism - found to be especially prevalent in the non-Western, 'oppressed' countries - was endorsed. It was declared to be historically necessary and politically desirable.

This position, accepted and systematised by the Communist International, contributed greatly to the 'internationalisation' of Marxism, and particularly to its extension to the East. However it also contained certain dangers. Once struggles for national liberation were found to be 'inevitable and progressive', the distinction between national 'form' and universal class 'substance' was blurred. In the oppressed nations not only the form but also the substance of the struggle was declared to be
national and nationalist. Once blurred in this way, there was always the possibility that this distinction - unargued in the first place - would disappear altogether.

'Internationalism' was never sufficient safeguard against this. The claim that the proletarian struggle was an international and internationalist one was founded upon two linked propositions. First, that workers had more in common with each other than with other members of their nation; that is, that class was more important than nationality. Second, that socialism, because universal, could only take the form of an international brotherhood of nations, perhaps eventually dispensing with nationhood altogether. But in recognising that there was a national 'dimension' to the class struggle, and even (initially at least) to socialism, 'proletarian internationalism' unwittingly acknowledged the existence of a potential, at the very least, for contradiction. Like the distinction between 'form' and 'substance' on which it was based, it did not 'resolve' this in theory, much less in practice, though it was pretended that it did so.

The closest thing to a 'guarantee' against national form swallowing universal substance, once the universality of that substance had itself been compromised, was where polarization within the nation was heightened to the point where conflict, even if national, did not thereby become nationalist. Which is to say - the only guarantee was not the rhetoric of internationalism, or even the rhetoric of class struggle, but actual class struggle, raised to an acute form.

Communists in India and other colonial countries, like their European counterparts, sought to organise and direct such struggles. They kept within their sights the fact that such struggles ultimately led to socialism. They publicly proclaimed this to be so. But because national independence was seen to be a necessary stopping point on the road to socialism, they also sought to link class struggles to nationalist struggles and the nationalist goal. Since class struggle could, simultaneously, be the 'motor' of national struggle, it did not serve to keep form and substance distinct.
In seeking further to make the connection a 'necessary' one - in declaring that national liberation could only be achieved through class struggle, and with the active involvement, if not under the leadership, of the working class - communists in the colonies only succumbed to this danger, as we shall argue in greater detail below. By insisting that national independence could only be achieved by the exploiting classes (and acting on this presumption in practice), communists in the colonies sought to accord themselves and the class they represented a more significant role in the 'bourgeois-democratic' national struggle than they would otherwise have had. They sought also to make this struggle something 'more' than a bourgeois democratic one. They sought to harness class struggle to nationalist struggle, hoping that in this way nationalist struggle, and its outcome, would reflect the interests of the exploited, rather than exploiting, classes.

In the event, the communists' contention that Indian independence could not be achieved other than through class struggle and ultimately under the leadership of the working class proved to be wrong, thereby demonstrating that this was not an objective necessity, but a possibility. It was a task which communists set themselves, and one which was achieved in some countries, but not in others - not an objective and inescapable 'fact'. The struggle for India's independence was in fact led and won by its bourgeoisie and rich peasantry, although this proved to be a very tragic 'victory', given the truncated nations which emerged, and the communal bloodshed which accompanied their emergence. The peasantry - much less so the working class - did prove crucial to this victory, but it was mobilized primarily behind various forms of non-Marxist nationalism. By far the most important of these was Gandhian nationalism, which based itself upon a recognition of the importance of 'horizontal' divisions within Indian society, and appealed to pre-modern (but not always 'traditional') values and images.

We have examined some of the different ways in which the necessity of the connection between class struggle and nationalist struggle was argued, and the
different ways in which communists sought to effect such a link. We have also seen how this lent itself to appropriation by non-Marxist but radical and modernising nationalists, and was so appropriated by Nehru. What we wish to further suggest here is that this process did not simply result in Marxism being appropriated by others, but that it eventually resulted in Marxism itself becoming a form of nationalism. We suggest, with Eric Hobsbawm, that "Marxist movements and states have tended to become national not only in form but in substance, i.e., nationalist". We wish to suggest further that in the former colonial and semi-colonial countries, where this is perhaps especially true, this is connected to Marxism's endorsement of progressive nationalism in the East, and the analyses and positions subsequently adopted by Marxists.

Hobsbawm's is an empirical observation, as his reference to Marxist 'movements and states' indicates. Our contention is somewhat different. While accepting Hobsbawm's claim, we wish to suggest that in Asia Marxism as a theory proved itself unable to maintain the distinction between form and substance, and in this sense became nationalist.

To clarify. Our contention is not that Marxists, in engaging with nationalism, came gradually to be seduced by it, that they succumbed to nationalist ideology. During the period examined in the second part of this work Indian communists did not, by and large, treat the interests of 'their' nation as more important than those of other nations. Nor did they pursue national independence as an end in itself; it was a means to other ends - democracy and socialism. Indeed, soon after the point at which our study concludes Indian communists were for a period to support the 'right to self-determination' of the various nationalities and religions of India; scarcely evidence of their having succumbed to the seductions of Indian nationalism. The international dimension to communist activity in India should also not be forgotten. Whether they were highly critical of nationalist organisations and their ideology, or supportive of them, the attitudes and strategies of Indian communists were approved of by an
international communist body which was certainly not guilty of Indian nationalist proclivities.

Our contention that Marxism has 'become nationalist' is not, then, a reference to a 'corruption' of consciousness, though such corruptions have also occurred. It is to suggest, rather, that in the East Marxism as a body of theory came to see in the nation not simply a given framework within which the class struggle occurred, but the form and substance through which Marxist goals could be realised and in which they would be embodied.

Some of the reasons for this have been traced in this work. The first important step, in what we are suggesting was a process culminating in the 'nationalisation' of Marxism, was the distinction Marxists came to draw between oppressor and oppressed nationalism, and their endorsement of the latter (examined in chapters 1 to 3). This in itself blurred the distinction between nationalist 'form' and universal socialist substance. It did not, however, efface this distinction.

The second and decisive step in this process was when Marxists identified the exploited classes in the colonies as those which most consistently sought, and were best able to achieve, national liberation. How this was done varied greatly, as we saw in chapters 4, 5 and 7. In this sense this was less a 'process' (to the extent that that implies an evolution over time) than a series of different answers to the same problems and questions, centreing around the relationship between socialism and nationalism, and between class struggle and nationalist struggle. Despite such differences, the crucial element all these analyses and strategies had in common was this: all sought to identify the exploited classes, and particularly the proletariat, as essential to, if not the leading element in, the nationalist struggle. With this step the working class, seen as the negation of capitalism and the 'bearer' of socialism in Marxist theory, could not also be seen as the negation of nationhood and nationalism. The nation was not even seen simply as an 'environment' which the proletariat inherited. Instead, the proletariat came to be identified as the bearer of socialism as well as of nationhood.
The class struggle, which grew out of and would eventually destroy capitalism, was now also seen as necessary to national liberation, and indeed was seen as always being, at some level, simultaneously a national struggle. Nationhood was now something more than just a necessary 'step' on the road to socialism. The relationship between socialism and nationhood had become symbiotic rather than only temporal, since both were embodied in the working class. That is, once the working class was seen as the bearer of both socialism and nationhood, then the struggles this class engaged in, the goals it allegedly sought, and the emancipatory interests with which it was identified, came to be identified with both socialism and nationalism.

Socialism was not thereby reduced to, or equated with, nationalism. Socialism remained something different, and something 'more'. The nation-state continued to be a form, and socialism the substance. But the nation-state was no longer a 'form' in Marx's sense - in the sense of being a 'husk'. It was rather a necessary form, the form which was essential to, and which corresponded to, the achievement of socialism.

This helps explain, too, why Marxism in the colonies has continued to be nationalist even after independence has been achieved, and that too even where the nation which has emerged is not socialist (as in the case of India). The exploited classes and the progressive possibilities they embody having been so closely identified with national independence within Marxism, the defence of that independence has come to be seen as necessary to the defence and pursuit of other, 'substantive' goals. In the post-Independence period, even where Indian communist parties have adopted 'left' positions, denouncing and opposing the party in government, an important reason given for doing so has always been that the government in question is compromising the independence of the nation, and thus frustrating the pursuit of economic progress, social justice etc. Conversely, where communists have given support to non-communist governments one justification has always been that the government in question is a truly 'national' government, and thus pursues (or makes possible the pursuit of) progressive domestic and foreign policies.
The other side of identifying national liberation and (subsequently) the preservation of national independence with exploited classes is, of course, the identification of dominant classes as 'anti-national'. These classes are held to be less than resolute in their defence of the nation's economic and political independence, where they are not outrightly willing to compromise this independence in pursuit of their own class interests. As we have seen, in the pre-Independence period the debates on the Indian bourgeoisie in the ranks of the Indian communist movement were usually concerned less with the relation of that class with the proletariat than with its relationship with imperialism.

In the post-Independence era, just as the interests of the nation have continued to be identified with the interests of the working class, so the dominant classes (or a section of them) have continued to be identified as anti-national. It is the status of classes intermediate to these, and the relation of the ruling classes to different political parties, which have formed the subject of many controversies within Marxist ranks, and have been the occasion for changes of strategy as well as splits. The main disputes within the ranks of the (now divided) Indian communist movement have been over questions such as, for instance, whether the Congress is a party of the 'big bourgeoisie' and feudal landlords (and is therefore reactionary and pro-imperialist) or whether it is a party of the 'national bourgeoisie' (note the juxtaposition of terms) and rich peasantry, and is therefore relatively progressive and committed to maintaining India's independence from the economies and governments of imperialist powers. That the preservation and extension of national independence is the \textit{sin qua non} of economic, social and political advance, if not the very measure of it, is taken for granted.

In the course of these post-Independence debates and disputes, it has not always been clear whether a party is being opposed or denounced because it is seen as reactionary and therefore as anti-national, or whether it is seen as anti-national and therefore reactionary. The distinction is a subtle but important one. In the latter case the
identification of class interest with the national interest is so complete that nationalist
criteria have, in effect, replaced Marxism, though the former are then rationalised with
the aid of Marxist concepts and terminology. This tendency too has been apparent in
the theory and practice of communists in India in the post-Independence period. That
Marxist theory has become 'national', in the sense we have suggested, seems to have
contributed to a tendency for Marxist parties to become nationalist, in the sense that
Hobsbawm suggests.²

Our contention that Marxism has become 'national', and displays a tendency to
become nationalist, is not limited to India. It can, we suggest, also be seen in other
former colonies and semi-colonies. The 'success' or 'failure' of communist
movements did not matter to this. The statement is true in China, where Marxists
succeeded in leading the class and nationalist struggles that established a non-capitalist
regime. Indeed, it is especially true where communist movements have assumed
leadership of the nation-state. The armed conflicts between the Chinese nation and the
Vietnamese nation, and between Vietnam and Kampuchea, illustrate this all too well.
But it is also true in India, where such attempts to harness class struggle to nationalist
struggle, and vice versa, proved unsuccessful. Success or failure certainly made a
great deal of difference in other ways³; but whether it succeeded in the task it set itself
in the colonies or failed, Marxism has become nationalist.

Just as this can be seen in what communist states and movements do, so it can be
seen in how Marxists write their history, and the history of nationalism. In those states
where communists are in power the two histories are written as one, after past enemies
have been eliminated from both, usually by declaring that they were not truly
nationalists. In those countries, such as India, where the nationalist struggle was not
led by communists, and where the nationalists of yesteryear are now part of the ruling
class, and therefore cannot be appropriated (and are in a position to resist it),
previously hidden virtues are nevertheless discovered in nationalism. There are
constraints on how far Party communists can travel this road, since it involves, to
some extent at least, a repudiation of past criticisms and actions. But 'Marxists' who do not owe allegiance to any communist party do not operate under any such constraints. In India the efforts of some such Marxists to understand the efficacy of nationalism (an eminently desirable exercise) frequently end in adoration of it. In a comic reversal, whereas previously what Marxists thought desirable was also declared to be necessary, what 'actually happened' is now found to have been inevitable, and desirable. Communist parties come to be criticised for not being nationalist enough.4

Marxists have come to identify so strongly with nationalism, as a progressive and anti-imperialist force, that they frequently begin to safeguard its honour, and to legislate on it. Since nationalism is treated, almost by definition, as being 'progressive', 'secular' and so on, those movements or individuals which do not meet these rigorous standards are declared to be not 'truly' nationalist. The nationalist label comes to be treated as an exclusive one, only to be bestowed upon those of whom Marxists approve.

Such exercises culminate not only in a total failure to comprehend nationalism, which as history amply demonstrates is frequently illiberal even where it is anti-colonial, but in something even more serious. Marxists become party to the suppression of some nationalisms, either because they are adjudged to be 'reactionary'- a verdict which may, of course, be correct - or, better still, because they are not nationalist at all, but simply reactionary. Eritrean nationalism, or Sikh nationalism, or Muslim nationalism are 'regionalism' or 'communalism' rather than nationalism, and / or are the products of sinister imperialist plots directed at destroying the 'true' and progressive nation.

In any history of ideas there is an inbuilt bias towards seeing historical phenomena as the outcomes of ideological and theoretical 'causes'. We do not wish to succumb to this by implying that the 'nationalisation' of Marxism was simply and
solely caused by the theoretical 'errors' made by Marxists as they came to confront the question of nationalism.

That Marxism has become nationalist not only in Asia but also in Europe, where even if nationalism remained untheorised it was nevertheless not also endorsed, would suggest otherwise. So too would the fact that becoming nationalist is a fate Marxism shares with many other philosophies which couched their message, and their mission, in universal terms. It is a characteristic of our age that many of the values and features of 'modernity' - democracy, liberty, industrialisation and so on - have come to be things possessed by, sought by and embodied in nations. 'The nation' and 'nationalism', not central categories in an Enlightenment thought which was universal, have come, in the post-Enlightenment age, to be seen as the repositories of Enlightenment ideals. Marxism, then, is only one of a number of rationalist and universal philosophies which has become nationalist. Socialism has joined democracy in being seen as a universal ideal which nonetheless is achieved through and embodied in nations.

Part of the explanation as to why Marxism has become nationalist, perhaps the greater part, no doubt lies in the objective weight and strength of the nation-state as a historical phenomenon, and in the power of nationalism. An understanding of Marxism's failure re nationalism - not simply in failing to theorise it adequately, but in succumbing to it - requires, then, Marxist studies of nationalism. Such studies must break with the tradition which has dominated Marxism from the outset; they must study nationalism historically, disregarding or at least bracketing the question of which nationalisms are progressive and which reactionary.

Some recent studies along these lines - notably Tom Nairn's *The Break-Up of Britain* (especially the essay, "The Modern Janus"), Eric Hobsbawm's reflections on this, and Benedict Anderson's thoughtful and stimulating book, *Imagined Communities* - all attest to the power of nationalism, though they explain it in different ways. Nairn takes the Marxist bull by the horns and suggests that nationhood and
nationalism are 'inescapable' aspects of capitalist development, more deeply rooted and stronger than class, and therefore that Marxism's failure to understand nationalism and its helplessness in the face of it were 'inevitable'.

One need not accept Nairn's sketchy explanation of nationalism in order to acknowledge the possibility that nationalism is so deeply rooted (whether in the logic of 'uneven development', as Nairn suggests, or in something else) that the failure of Marxism in this regard was historically inevitable; to accept that, in Nairn's words, "Socialism was a premature birth". But socialism and Marxism are not the same thing, and it does not follow that an intellectual and theoretical failure were equally inevitable. If socialism were a premature birth, it would imply rather that Marxists were confronted with a choice between intellectual depth (developing an understanding and also a critique of nationalism) bought at the price of political impotence, or with sacrificing some of the intellectual power and emancipatory possibilities of Marxism in seeking to be politically efficacious. The latter, one could then reasonably conclude, was the choice which was made - without it being realised that such choices were involved.

If all this is true, it is necessary to acknowledge it, and confront it. It need not lead to political paralysis. For example, there may cogent reasons why the 'integrity' of the Indian nation should be valued by Marxists, and resolutely defended. But if this at the same time obstructs, compromises or defers other aspects of the Marxist project, it is best to acknowledge this. It is only when this is done, when the chariot of historical necessity is unharnessed from what are political choices, that conscious and considered choices can be made.

It may be, then, that nationalism is so powerful that the communist movement was 'bound' to succumb to it; but this is by no means established, and indeed it is difficult to see how it could be. The conclusion that socialism is a premature birth in a world of nations and nationalisms is itself premature. Marxists have too often legitimated political choices by declaring them to be historically 'necessary and
inevitable'. It is doubtful that attributing what are now seen as Marxism's 'failures' to history is an improvement. Certainly, it should not function as an excuse for not studying these failures, and the judgements and choices which led to failure. As this study has sought to demonstrate, Marxism's engagement with nationalism in the East consisted of so many analyses and theoretical and political judgements. To treat the colonial question as a national question was not inevitable. Nor was treating the distinction between oppressor and oppressed nations as the 'essence' of the national question, or identifying the working class as the leader of the national revolution in the colonies, and so on.

The matter has been too little studied to arrive at any conclusions, let alone firm ones. We need, not only more studies of nationalism, but also further studies of Marxism's encounters with nationalism.

Nor can the latter type of studies be confined, as this one has largely been, to Marxism's relationship to nationalism alone.

Marxism began as at once intellectual inheritor of the Enlightenment and critique of it; socialism was conceived of as the 'fulfilment' of the possibilities opened up by capitalism, but also as a radical negation of it. In the history of Marxism after Marx, this latter, 'critical' side of Marx's thought has been left undeveloped, even downplayed or forgotten. Marxism has presented itself as, and has largely become, the 'outermost limit' of Enlightenment thought - its most consistent and advanced form. Socialism has similarly come to be seen as the 'realisation' of the emancipatory possibilities first opened by capitalism and its associated forms of technical reason, technology and so on.7 We have seen that this was certainly true in India where Marxists, whether playing pedagogue to the nationalist movement or seeking to establish their claim to lead it, presented their theory as a 'scientific' appreciation of historical 'laws', and as the culminating point of historical progress. We have also seen that it was this, combined with Marxism's endorsement of nationalism, which
made it not only attractive to non-Marxists like Nehru, but liable to appropriation by them.

We would like to conclude by suggesting that Marxism's having become nationalist may be closely connected to its failure to develop and realise itself as a critique of Enlightenment thought and of capitalism. We suggest that it is partly because Marxism failed to fulfil its promise to become something 'more' than Enlightenment thought that it has, like other post-Enlightenment intellectual systems, ended up becoming something less, its universality and its radicalism compromised by its having become national in form and substance.

We can do no more than put this forward as a possibility here, since it is an issue which has been raised in this work, but not closely studied or argued. It is a possibility worth investigating however. Marxism is a theory of great ambition and extraordinary intellectual richness. When a theory such as this - and moreover one so self-consciously a product of 'modernity' - 'fails' in the face of something so eminently modern and important as nationalism, the roots of this failure are likely to be found in the theory itself, and not only in the particular positions it has adopted on nationalism.

It is only by continuing to engage with the question of nationalism, except now in different ways, that we might begin to alter the unhappy outcome of previous such engagements; that we might begin as Marxists both to better understand nationalism, and to make Marxism less susceptible to it. The results of such studies may be disturbing, of course, and may force a fundamental reassessment of Marxism as a theory, and of its place in history. But that should not deter us. It is only by critically examining what Marxism has become that we can take the first hesitant steps to making it what it can, perhaps, still be.

2. Thus it is that 'left' breakaways from 'orthodox' or 'official' communism are almost invariably anti-nationalist. The Naxalite movement in India, for example, raised the slogan, "China's Chairman is our Chairman". But although not nationalist, the Marxism of the Naxalites was still national; one of their charges against the Indian ruling classes was precisely that they had subordinated the interests of the nation to foreign, imperialist interests.

3. Lest there be any misunderstanding, let us clarify. Whether a nationalism closely wedded to the interests of workers and peasants triumphed, as under Mao, or whether one serving the interests of the colonial elite triumphed, as with Gandhi and Nehru, has made a world of difference to the people of these two nations, and not only them. Even if Marxism is a species of nationalism, there are nationalisms and nationalisms, and we do not wish to efface the differences between these, or suggest that they are in some way unimportant. We do wish to suggest that, whether it succeeded in the task it defined itself in the colonies or whether it failed, Marxism has become nationalist.

4. This is especially evident in the work (and particularly the more recent work) of Bipan Chandra and the informal 'school' around him. See, for instance, the essays by Chandra, Sashi Joshi, Bhagwan Joshi and Aditya Mukherjee in B. Chandra (ed), *The Indian Left: Critical Appraisals*, Vikas Publishing House, 1983.


7. It is a testimony to the richness of the Marxist tradition that there have always been counter-trends, rooted in or drawing upon Marx's thought. The early Lukacs, Karl Korsch and in a very different way Antonio Gramsci sought to develop a non-scientistic Marxism. Some of the theorists of the Frankfurt School embarked upon a critique of Enlightenment categories long before it became fashionable, as it is
today. Jurgen Habermas continues to be engaged in an ambitious project which aims, amongst other things, to take into account the criticisms levelled at Enlightenment thought, without abandoning Enlightenment categories altogether.
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