

THE COMINTERN AND THE PROBLEM OF A UNITED ANTI-IMPERIALIST FRONT IN INDIA

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Among the ideological and political trends which emerged in the national liberation movement in India after the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia the leading place belonged to Gandhism. It will not be an exaggeration to say that for the Indian communist movement the problem of a united front of all anti-imperialist forces was largely one of formulating its stand towards Gandhism. This was due both to its great political influence and its extensive and heterogeneous social base. It was not a simple matter to define a scientific, Marxist approach to Gandhism.

Gandhism emerged from the depths of Indian national life, from the depths of an original and ancient civilisation which preserved its vital force in spite of centuries of colonial exploitation. There was much in Gandhi's teaching that contradicted the ideals of scientific communism and diverged from the most common concepts of progress in the 20th century. In the era of the technological revolution and industrialisation Gandhi condemned machinery, protested against the planting of what he called satanic European civilisation on Indian soil, and came out with an appeal to return from the black age of large cities, avarice and modern technology to a modest rural community life, to a closed, self-sufficing communal economy based on the plough and the spinning wheel, on the combination of farming and home industries. In the era of the spread of a scientific materialistic world outlook in the social and national movement, Gandhi proclaimed religious principles as the foundation of any social and national struggle. He impregnated all the elements of his social and political programme with ancient re-

religious dogmas. In the period of the mass revolutionary struggle which after the First World War and the October Socialist Revolution in Russia enveloped the whole world, including India, he advanced the slogan of individual moral self-perfection, viewing it as a source of strength capable of resolving India's social problems. At a time of unprecedented aggravation and spread of the class struggle Gandhi advanced the idea of class peace and the abolition of social inequality through the establishment of trusteeship relations between the privileged and the oppressed classes. During the rapid radicalisation of political life attended by the employment of extreme forms of class and national liberation struggle, Gandhi proclaimed the ideals of non-violence, love for the enemy and the need to re-educate him morally through supreme self-sacrifice on the part of the enslaved people.

It was all the more difficult to make a political assessment of the role played by Gandhism, because Gandhi was both a utopian thinker who had assimilated the traditions of Indian patriarchal peasantry, and a sober, perceptive politician who had closely linked his activity with the bourgeois leadership of the Indian National Congress, and, in fact, stood at the head of this bourgeois political party. These two aspects of Gandhi's activity, these two images of Gandhism were not only extremely contradictory but at the same time closely interconnected. That was why Gandhi played such a prominent role in the Indian liberation movement.

The combination of Gandhi's archaic, medieval philosophy and the national reformist methods of the leadership of the Indian National Congress made it more difficult for the young revolutionary-minded political leaders who gravitated towards the communist movement to grasp the actual significance of Gandhism for the national liberation movement in the country.

The revolutionary upsurge and the successes achieved in the first years of the Comintern's activity attracted into the communist movement a large group of revolutionaries (particularly from the colonial countries), who lacked adequate theoretical and practical training. They displayed revolutionary impatience and had the natural desire to accomplish a socialist revolution as quickly as possible, sometimes dis-

regarding historical conditions and the need to carry on systematic painstaking work to prepare the masses and get them to assimilate socialism. Leftist zeal also manifested itself in the attitudes to the national liberation movement. At the initial stage, however, it had no serious impact on the Comintern's activity because the communist movement and the work of the Comintern were guided by Lenin who was a consistent opponent of all and any deviations.

THE COMINTERN'S STRUGGLE AGAINST M. N. ROY'S LEFT-SECTARIAN CONCEPTS

At the Second Congress of the Comintern which for the first time discussed the colonial and national questions, Lenin came out against the views of the Indian Communist M. N. Roy; Lenin upheld the idea of the unity of all anti-imperialist forces and the need actively to support the bourgeois-democratic national movement. Roy proceeded from the erroneous assumption that the irreconcilable class contradictions between the bourgeoisie, workers and the peasantry, allegedly ruled out the possibility of creating a united front of the classes in the national liberation anti-imperialist struggle. He overestimated the maturity of the working class and advocated a struggle against the bourgeois nationalist leadership of the anti-imperialist movement. Maintaining that this leadership was notoriously non-revolutionary he urged the organisation of an independent liberation movement led by Communists.

Roy's views are an example of left-sectarian deviation. Owing to the weakness of the working-class and communist movement in India, his pseudo-revolutionary programme was unrealistic not only in the 1920s but even many years later.

The polemic between Lenin and Roy centred on theoretical and concrete problems of the national liberation movement, particularly in India. They included the problem of Gandhism—the assessment of its role and place in the anti-imperialist struggle. Roy's *Memoirs* contains Lenin's assessment of Gandhi's activity. "The role of Gandhi," Roy wrote, "was the crucial point of difference. Lenin believed that, as the inspirer and leader of a mass movement, he was a revolutionary. I maintained that, as a religious and cultur-

al revivalist, he was bound to be a reactionary socially, however revolutionary he might appear politically."¹

In India the implementation of Lenin's propositions which he advanced at the Second Congress of the Comintern and which were reflected in the famous theses on the national and colonial questions, was handicapped by considerable objective as well as subjective difficulties. The prominent functionary of the Communist Party of India S. G. Sardesai wrote that "M. N. Roy was at that time, and for some years later, the leading and most developed Indian communist, whether in India or abroad."² Owing to his status in the Comintern Roy was the principal interpreter and propagandist of the Second Congress' decisions concerning India. Meanwhile, he did not repudiate his views which he defended in the polemic with Lenin. Therefore in the years when the Comintern definitely adopted Lenin's point of view, Roy's stand was, on the one hand, to reconcile the Comintern's platform with his views as far as it was possible, and on the other, to try and influence the position of the Comintern. He was not alone in his delusions concerning the role of the national bourgeoisie and Gandhism in the liberation movement. From time to time he found supporters among the emergent Indian communist movement and in the Comintern. To an extent this accounted for the fact that the activities of the emergent communist movement in India and in some other Eastern countries were far from always consistent with the strategic course of the Second Congress of the Comintern.

The first attempt to set up the Communist Party of India was made in 1920. In 1921 the Communists addressed an appeal to the 36th annual session of the Indian National Congress in Ahmadabad. In this document they conceded that the Congress could play a leading role in the movement for independence, but at the same time underlined that in order to win the support of the whole people, it would have to adopt as its programme the demands of trade unions and peasant assemblies. The Communists' appeal was designed to broaden the non-co-operation movement just when it was

¹ M. N. Roy's *Memoirs*, Bombay, 1964, p. 379.

² S. G. Sardesai, *India and the Russian Revolution*, New Delhi, 1967, p. 51.

about to enter its decisive phase, that of the mass refusal of the peasantry to pay taxes to the British colonial authorities. The Congress did not respond to the appeal; it did not intend to extend the front of the liberation struggle and to meet the demands of the working people.

A year later, when the Congress gathered for its regular session, this time at Gaya, in conditions of the defeat of the national movement, the Indian Communists once again addressed an appeal to it. Written by M. N. Roy and published in the organ of the Indian Communists *The Advance Guard*, it was distributed among the delegates at the session. Alongside demands for full independence of the country, the programme offered by the Communists urged the liquidation of landed estates, nationalisation of all public enterprises, participation of the workers in the profits of enterprises and arming of the people in order to defend national freedom.¹

It was a programme which could neither be accepted by the Congress nor serve as a basis for co-operation between the Indian Communists and the bourgeois anti-imperialist organisation which wielded almost undivided political influence over the broad masses in the struggle against British rule. The presentation of the working people's maximum social demands which went beyond the limits of a bourgeois-democratic revolution at a time when India had no influential Marxist-Leninist party and no independent movement of the working class, when it was impossible to establish the hegemony of the proletariat in the national liberation movement, only artificially augmented and aggravated contradictions in the national anti-imperialist front and brought the small group of Communists into isolation. Roy steered his line of two contrasting liberation movements and ruled out the possibility of their coming together on the basis of a certain community of interests. Therefore any reference to co-operation with the Congress was in effect a demand that it should shift to the positions of the Communists. And since this was out of the question the whole case was reduced to a desire to exhibit the allegedly reactionary nature of the Congress. This course was under the ideological influence of Roy who

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

asserted that the communist vanguard should stand at the head of the national movement from the very outset.

Among the materials which figured at the trial of Communists in Kanpur in 1924 there was a letter from Roy to S. A. Dange. In it Roy admitted that he did not even expect the Congress to adopt his programme and that it was designed to demonstrate the Congress' inability to support the revolutionary demands, and thus to make it absolutely clear that a new mass party with its own leadership and programme had to be created.

Roy theoretically substantiated his positions in his book *India in Transition* published in 1922. The attitude of Roy and his supporters towards the national liberation movement in India and Gandhism were also expressed in series of articles carried by periodicals (some of them written by Roy's wife Evelyn Roy) and in *One Year of Non-Cooperation* written by Roy and his wife.

Overstating the level of capitalist development in India, Roy claimed that a bourgeois-democratic revolution was no longer on the agenda in that country. The national bourgeoisie was not in a position to lead the liberation movement even though it was interested in forming an alliance with the masses and relying on them in order to be able to fight successfully against the British colonialists. Its fear of the revolutionary spirit of the masses doomed it to indecision, vacillations and betrayal of national interests.

It was from these positions that he approached Gandhism, which he did not characterise as the ideology of the bourgeoisie; on the contrary, he called it a petty-bourgeois ideology. But proceeding from the concept that the character of the national movement was not bourgeois-democratic, for it struggled against foreign capitalism and not against feudalism, he did not attach any revolutionary significance to the petty bourgeoisie with whose feelings and interests Gandhism was organically linked. Roy maintained that Gandhism and the petty bourgeoisie bound up their future with reaction and not with the national liberation struggle, and that they moved even farther away from the national revolutionary movement than the national bourgeoisie. "The reactionary and politically bankrupt petty bourgeoisie... was very anxious to go away from the dangerous influence

of the two revolutionary factors behind the National Movement, namely the progressive bourgeoisie and the militant proletariat,"¹ he wrote in 1923.

It is hard to say what prompted him to make such an assessment of the role of the petty bourgeoisie in the national movement. Perhaps the reason was that he did not believe in the objectively revolutionary character of peasant utopias and did not understand that at times the conservative views of the peasants in the specific conditions of an agrarian country oppressed by the colonialists and the feudal lords, possessed considerable revolutionary potentialities and that they were more democratic than the traditional bourgeois concepts, although the latter undoubtedly emerged from new bourgeois social phenomena and not from the doomed but still tenacious past. In any case Roy's recognition of the petty-bourgeois nature of Gandhism did not prevent him from "linking" it not only with the bourgeois, but also with the feudal reaction, and qualifying it as "the acutest and most desperate manifestation of the forces of reaction",² thus betraying his political and theoretical immaturity.

Roy attributed the anti-capitalist aspects of Gandhian ideology to feudal, rather than to democratic sympathies. He questioned the sincerity of Gandhi's humanistic ideals and in doing so mixed up the objective and subjective, the utopian projects of social change and the concrete programme of political action. "This strong instinct of preserving property rights," he wrote, "above all betrays the class affiliation of Gandhi, in spite of his pious outbursts against the sordid materialism of modern civilisation. His hostility to capitalist society is manifestly not revolutionary, but reactionary. He believes in the sanctity of private property, but seeks to prevent its inevitable evolution to capitalism."³ As a result of his preoccupation with criticism of Gandhi's archaic views and utopian social concepts Roy overlooked the main thing, namely that Gandhi vigorously opposed imperialism, the colonialists and their domination of India.

Roy denied altogether the revolutionary potential of a

¹ M. N. Roy, "Indian National Congress", *International Press Correspondence*, 1923, Vol. 3, No. 8, p. 126.

² M. N. Roy, *India in Transition*, Geneva, 1922, p. 205.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 236.

mass non-violent movement led by an anti-imperialist party. "The cult of non-violence is inseparable from an anti-revolutionary spirit," he wrote. "Those who do not want a *revolution* in India can pin their hope on non-violent methods. Strictly non-violent methods are hardly distinguishable from constitutional agitation, and no people on the face of the earth ever made a revolution by constitutional methods."¹ He qualified non-violence as the legacy of Gandhi's spiritual forebears—kings, clergymen and philosophers who believed that it was a good thing to keep the people in subjection.² Roy's dogmatic, simplistic approach to Gandhism led him to believe that its collapse was imminent.³ Such was his appraisal of Gandhi and Gandhism in 1922 and 1923 when Gandhi called a stop to mass civil disobedience in view of an outburst of violence in Chauri-Choura. At the time even many bourgeois nationalists were justly indignant with Gandhi for making this decision which brought about the curtailment and the demoralisation of a powerful popular movement.

Roy correctly pointed to Gandhism's contradictory and inconsistent nature and its using the tactics of non-violence to curb the revolutionary energy of the masses. Still he based his assessment of events not only on concrete reality, i.e., on the situation in India in that period which provided serious grounds for such an approach, but also on his personal conviction that it was impossible in principle to cooperate with Gandhi and the Congress in anti-imperialist actions. Otherwise, taking the negative aspects of the ideology and tactics of Gandhism into consideration, Roy would have also to reckon with its anti-imperialist potentialities which were not exploited to the full between 1919 and 1922 and even less so in later years. He ignored Gandhism's vast influence on the masses which alone should have compelled him to search for a more diversified and profound approach to this phenomenon. His prediction about the imminent collapse of Gandhism was overturned by the course of events.

¹ *The Advance Guard*, December, 1922, p. 2.

² See: M. N. Roy and Evelyn Roy, *One Year of Non-Cooperation*, Calcutta, 1923.

³ M. N. Roy, *India in Transition*, p. 208.

His criticism of Gandhism which was correct in some respects, was much less valid because not only did he refuse to take into account all the positive aspects of Gandhi's social and political programme but he identified it with reaction and obscurantism. He made absolutely no attempt to criticise the weak and reactionary aspects of Gandhism by comparing them with its strong and progressive aspects.

Roy admitted that in their efforts to strengthen the position of the left forces in the Congress, the Communists merely succeeded in frightening them. Yet, remaining loyal to his concepts which were rejected by the Second Congress of the Comintern, Roy believed that this was an achievement because it allegedly exposed the actual non-revolutionary intentions of the Congress' leadership.¹ The fact that Roy was concerned only with exposing Gandhi and his political tactics which differed so greatly from the tactics of accomplishing an armed revolution, caused a great deal of harm to Roy and many of his supporters. They simply failed to see that Indian anti-imperialist nationalism which found its most vivid expression in Gandhism possessed a vast charge of revolutionary, nationalist energy. This energy was expressed in specific forms peculiar only to India, to its masses, and only in the conditions of the objective community of the interests of all forces of the national liberation struggle. This community of interests lasted in India at least for thirty years up to the winning of independence.

Here, too, like in many other fundamental matters, Roy confuses right with wrong. To be precise, Roy's desire to be too correct and one hundred percent orthodox, his naive conviction of the possibility of non-critical and non-creative application of basically correct ideas to reality which abounded in contradictions and had no classical clarity whatsoever, caused him to distort, simplify and to carry to an absurdity the fundamental conclusions of Marxist theory. Roy believed that the Indian national liberation movement, which developed under the leadership of the national bourgeoisie,

¹ See: *International Press Correspondence*, 1923, Vol. 3, No. 8, p. 127.

had a revolutionary potential, only in its initial phase. Yet Gandhi, Nehru, Lala Lajpat Rai and other leaders of the Indian liberation movement waged the anti-imperialist struggle for decades. This struggle produced many new leaders who deepened the liberation movement, sought to give it a broad social basis, and drew closer with the working class moving it to forward positions. Many of these leaders became Marxist-Leninists. Participation in the anti-imperialist front and support for all progressive measures of the national leadership, all of which naturally did not rule out profound class contradictions and implied serious criticism of the class narrow-mindedness of the bourgeois leaders, were, as can be gathered from Indian experience, the fertile soil for the growth of the young communist movement. Nevertheless Roy urged a complete break with revolutionary nationalism on the grounds that it would become conciliatory one day. He believed that co-operation with the anti-imperialist movement led by the national bourgeoisie was out of the question.

At the Fourth Congress of the Comintern Roy tried to assert his standpoint in the international communist movement. He formulated his theses on the colonial question and produced arguments to back them up.

Without directly rejecting Lenin's idea about the tactics of the united front in the national liberation movement, Roy advanced arguments expounded in his *India in Transition* in an effort to prove that it was unacceptable for India. He said that the bourgeoisie could be the vanguard of the movement in countries where it fought against feudalism, while in India it fought not against feudalism, but against foreign capitalism. He maintained that in the economically more advanced colonial countries, such as India, the bourgeoisie was connected by means of its interests with the existing economic system. Fearing chaos and anarchy which could arise as a result of the overthrow of foreign rule, it tempered its patriotism in order to protect its own economic interests.

"There comes a time when these people are bound to betray the movement and become a counter-revolutionary force," he wrote. "Unless we are prepared to train politically the other social element, which is objectively more revolu-

tionary, to step into their places and assume the leadership, the ultimate victory of the nationalist struggle becomes problematical for the time being."¹ The reason why Roy's theses were turned down by the Fourth Congress of the Comintern is clear. While noting the certain successes of the communist movement in India, the Fourth Congress also pointed out that its links with the mass movement and workers' strikes were weak and that it did not make the most of the legal methods of struggle.

Roy's line ran counter to the Comintern's directives and the ECCI rejected his attitude to the national bourgeoisie. The Comintern held that the Indian bourgeoisie was a revolutionary factor because its interests objectively contradicted imperialism and that the struggle for national liberation was a revolutionary movement. In the opinion of the ECCI a workers' and peasants' political party which participated in this movement had to co-operate with bourgeois parties and support them because in their own way they also fought against imperialism.

In 1923 the colonial authorities arrested many prominent functionaries of the communist movement in India. In 1924 they were tried and sentenced by a court in Kanpur. This weakened the young movement. In 1925, S. A. Dange, M. A. Thate and other former participants in Gandhi's nationalist movement who became disenchanted with it founded the Communist Party of India. Many of its members were well acquainted with the nature of the nationalist movement and approached it from realistic positions.

Yet Roy persisted in his course, and even committed more serious sectarian blunders. At the Fifth Congress of the Comintern he opposed the articles of the draft resolution on the establishment of direct contacts between the ECCI and the national liberation movements.² The Chairman of the Commission on the Colonial Question D. Z. Manuilsky underscored the deviations which took place in the Commission. He noted that just as at the Second Congress Roy overestimated the level of the development of the socialist move-

¹ *The Advance Guard*, January 15, 1923, p. 3.

² *International Press Correspondence*, 1924, No. 50, p. 519.

ment in the colonies at the expense of the national movement. Roy went to the extent of saying that the national movement had allegedly lost the nature of a united front of the basic classes of the oppressed country and that the movement had entered a new period. Manuilsky observed that Roy's attitude to the colonial question reflected the nihilism of Rosa Luxemburg towards the national movements and exaggerated the scope and significance of a class struggle in a nation.¹

Roy once again systematically expounded his line in his book *The Future of Indian Politics*. "Practically," he wrote, "the bourgeois bloc seeks to make a united front with the imperialist forces of law and order to make the country safe against any possible revolution. The middle class, which still makes the show of a parliamentary fight, is in hopeless political bankruptcy."² Continuing, he observed: "The movement for national liberation will take place on the basis of the struggle between the exploiting and exploited classes. Henceforth the fight for national freedom in India becomes a class struggle approximating to the final stage."³ It is difficult to imagine a greater lack of understanding of the elementary principles of the proletariat's class policy than these statements. They manifest utter disregard for the tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, overt withdrawal of the tasks of the national liberation struggle from the agenda, confusion of stages and phases of the struggle, gross violation of Lenin's united national front tactics, ludicrous repudiation of the obviously anti-imperialist progressive role of the national bourgeoisie, and finally, the promotion of the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat to first place. Yet historical conditions demanded that priority be given to the nation-wide struggle against the common national enemy—imperialism. In practice Roy's "super-revolutionary" statements proved to be totally untenable.

¹ *International Press Correspondence*, 1924, No. 57, p. 608.

² M. N. Roy, *The Future of Indian Politics*, London, 1926, p. 90.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

THE SHIFT IN THE ATTITUDE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST MOVEMENT TOWARDS THE BOURGEOIS-DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT IN THE PERIOD OF THE SIXTH CONGRESS OF THE COMINTERN

In the latter half of the 1920s Roy's personal influence on the Comintern's policy in the colonial question waned and fell to zero. But in some respects the Comintern's attitude to the colonial question was influenced by Stalin's propositions set forth in 1925 in his speech "The Political Tasks of the University of the Peoples of the East".

Talking on the necessity for the proletariat in the colonial countries to organise into Communist parties, bring the peasant masses out of the influence of the conciliatory bourgeoisie and assume leadership of the national liberation movement, Stalin divided the bourgeoisie in the colonies and semi-colonies into two groups according to its attitude to the national liberation movement: revolutionary and conciliatory, one consisting of the petty bourgeoisie, the other of the big bourgeoisie (i. e., according to such a division the latter included all the vehicles of developed capitalist production). As regards India, its distinguishing feature, according to Stalin, was that "the compromising section of this bourgeoisie has already managed, in the main, to strike a deal with imperialism". Stalin viewed the liberation movement as a struggle between two blocs: the petty bourgeoisie with the working masses, on the one side, and the big bourgeoisie with the feudal strata and imperialism, on the other.¹ At the time, in 1924 and 1925, prior to the beginning of the Chinese revolution, some of the Communist leaders underestimated the socio-economic basis of the national liberation struggle in the 20th century.

Between 1925 and 1927, when the anti-imperialist revolution got under way in China, the Comintern surmounted these trends and began to work for a union between the communist movement in China and the national-patriotic, anti-imperialist circles, which played a leading role in this revolution. At the time underestimation of the anti-imperial-

¹ J. V. Stalin, *Works*, Vol. 7, p. 150.

ist potentialities of the national bourgeoisie of the East was justly regarded as a deviation from the correct course.

After Chiang Kai-shek's counter-revolutionary coup, Wang Ching-wei's betrayal and the defeat of the Chinese revolution, the Comintern somewhat modified its standpoint, which can be seen in some of the decisions of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern.

This Congress, which paid a great deal of attention to the colonial problem, especially to India, was characterised by a struggle between two trends: that of the Second Congress, i.e., Lenin's line, and the sectarian trend which as before was supported by Roy although he ceased to be its authoritative mouthpiece and shortly after the Congress formally rejected it.

The Sixth Congress of the Comintern adopted a line, which, as O. V. Kuusinen, the main speaker on the colonial question at that Congress, observed thirty years later at the 20th CPSU Congress, "had a certain touch of sectarianism" in regard to the national bourgeoisie of the colonies and semi-colonies.¹

One of the reasons for that was that the conclusions drawn from the experience of the alliance between the CPC and the Kuomintang which was sundered by Chiang Kai-shek, were mechanically applied to the colonial and semi-colonial countries, including India. This served as a basis for asserting that the national bourgeoisie would inevitably betray the cause of national liberation and move into the camp of the counter-revolution. The logical conclusion was that only the hegemony of the proletariat and guidance by the Communist party would ensure the success of the national liberation movement. O. V. Kuusinen pointed out at the Sixth Congress: "The leading thought of the Theses: the hegemony of the proletariat in the Revolutionary movement of the colonies."²

This meant that the proletariat and its Marxist party had to exercise their hegemony already at the anti-imperialist stage of the struggle, when the other classes, the na-

¹ *20th Congress of the CPSU. Verbatim Report*, Vol. I, Moscow, 1956, p. 503 (in Russian).

² *International Press Correspondence*, No. 81, November 21, 1928, p. 1519.

tional bourgeoisie in the first place, had not yet discredited themselves by coming to terms with imperialism and had not exhausted their revolutionary potentialities. This was an erroneous course which ignored the realities of the anti-imperialist struggle, the structure of colonial society and the correlation of class forces in the East. The existing conditions offered no objective grounds for believing that the hegemony of the proletariat was both inevitable and essential in the initial phases of the national revolution. Neither the Russian experience of 1905 (negation of the revolutionary role of Russian bourgeoisie), nor the Chinese experience of 1925-27 (the Kuomintang's severance of its alliance with the Communists) could be directly applied to India, Indonesia and the Arab East where at the time of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern and later the national bourgeoisie retained its positions as a revolutionary anti-imperialist force.

The struggle between the two trends in the assessment of the role played by the national bourgeoisie became especially manifest in the theses on the national and colonial questions. They disclosed a desire not to overestimate the hostility of the national bourgeoisie towards the revolutionary movement, not to deny fully its ability to play a positive role in the struggle for national liberation, not to gloss over and not to deny the objective contradictions between it and imperialism, but rather to appreciate its objective aspiration to national independence and its influence on the national movement. This was the purpose of the criticism of the "decolonialisation" theory advanced by some British and Indian Communists. The main idea of this theory was that the anti-industrialisation economic policy of British imperialism in India had allegedly changed, and that it was in its own interests to make concessions to the Indian bourgeoisie and begin to industrialise the country. Hence the conclusion that objective reasons for contradictions between the national bourgeoisie and imperialism were beginning to disappear and their interests to coincide to an ever greater degree and that consequently an economic foundation was being laid for the establishment of a bloc between these two formerly hostile forces and for the complete transition of the national bourgeoisie to the camp of the counter-revolution. This theory whose purpose was economi-

cally to substantiate the views about the counter-revolutionary nature of the bourgeoisie was, nevertheless, rejected by the Sixth Congress of the Comintern.

O. V. Kuusinen said: "Could we, however, assert with certainty, in general theses of the C. I., that in all colonial countries the possibility is excluded that a part of the national bourgeoisie, even if for a very short period only, would join up with the national-revolutionary camp? No we cannot do this."¹ Therefore, he maintained, the proletariat and its party had to make full use of the bourgeoisie's limited revolutionary potentialities. He disagreed with those who insisted that the national bourgeoisie in India had already gone over to the side of the counter-revolution and united with the imperialists. Mentioning the conciliatory tendencies of the Indian national bourgeoisie he said at the same time that it was necessary to bear in mind that "the objective conditions of the national-revolutionary movement do not depend on the subjective will of the bourgeoisie".²

"The national bourgeoisie," he observed, "is, of course, also aiming at unlimited rule; it wants, so to speak, to achieve power like a thief. However, its opposition has in the present epoch a certain objective importance for the unchaining of the mass movement."³ He referred to the non-payment of taxes campaign in Bardoli conducted on Gandhi's instructions, to the participation of the Indian National Congress in the Anti-Imperialist League sympathetic to the USSR, and the election of "Nehru junior, a national-revolutionary", General Secretary of the Indian National Congress, as examples of certain revolutionary potentialities which the Indian national bourgeoisie still possessed. Referring to the movement in Bardoli, he said: "If we had a genuine Communist Party in India, then this Bardoli action would have afforded us the opportunity to utilise the mass movement; as it is, however, we could not at all take advantage of it."⁴

Yet, the above realistic points in the materials of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern coexisted with the principal

¹ *International Press Correspondence*, No. 81, November 24, 1928, p. 1526.

² *Ibid.*, p. 1229.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1525.

idea that the national bourgeoisie was bound to betray the cause of national liberation. This predominant idea in the documents of the Congress was a serious concession to the left-sectarian deviation in the communist movement. In fact it minimised the chances of the Communist parties co-operating with the national bourgeoisie and made it impossible to take advantage of the movement it organised. Along with the recognition of certain revolutionary potentialities of the bourgeoisie the documents contained the one-sided view that it could not consistently and independently uphold its objective class interests and was therefore national reformist in character. That explained the Congress' attitude to those actions of the bourgeoisie which could have a certain revolutionising anti-imperialist effect. In terms of the possibility of co-operating with the national bourgeoisie in furthering the common cause of national independence, such actions had to be welcomed. But if one was to proceed from the inevitability of a clash with the national bourgeoisie as a traitor of the liberation movement, bound in any case to unite with imperialism, then these actions of the bourgeoisie, its anti-imperialist activity and the mass anti-imperialist movements it guided should be regarded as a tactical manoeuvre designed to deceive the masses. The Sixth Congress adopted the latter stand.¹

Although the Theses of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern and the additional comments presented by the main speaker did have a certain tinge of sectarianism, they were nevertheless far from the line which some delegates sought to impose upon the Comintern. Some Indian delegates, for instance, criticised the Theses from leftist positions.

One of them, Sikander Sur, a co-reporter on the revolutionary movement in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, repeated Roy's thesis about the two trends in the national movement. "From time to time," he said, "the national bourgeoisie are adopting a revolutionary attitude towards

¹ "It would not be a good thing for our Party or the revolutionary movement in a colony," said O. V. Kuusinen, "if in certain circumstances the reformist bourgeoisie were to join the national-revolutionary front for a time. This would be a most dangerous situation and our comrades must be prepared for such a dangerous situation." (*International Press Correspondence*, *Op. cit.*, p. 1528.)

British imperialism and are proposing a bloc with us, but we cannot rely on their support during the intensified struggle."¹ Sikander Sur ruled out the possibility of a long period of co-operation even with the left wing of the Indian bourgeoisie which advanced the slogan of "full independence". "It would be harmful," he continued, "to think that these people can be utilised to a great extent for our cause."² His co-report carried the idea that the national bourgeoisie had formed a bloc with the landowners and the imperialists: "In spite of the development of modern means of production in India, the backwardness of the country is marked by the fact that the middle classes are united with the land-owning class in a bloc. The British imperialists, taking advantage of the situation make a united front with the landed aristocracy subordinating the bourgeoisie."³

Negation of the anti-imperialist role of the national bourgeoisie in the liberation struggle went hand in hand with an obvious overestimation of the maturity of the proletariat's class awareness. "In this fight, in all these recent strikes and developments it is quite evident that the movement is greater than British imperialism, or its lackeys in the shape of the Indian bourgeoisie and the reformists can crush."⁴ Incidentally, Sikander Sur coined the term "lackeys of imperialism" as applied to the national bourgeoisie and characterised Gandhi as an "agent of imperialism".⁵

Another Indian delegate, Narayan, criticised all the propositions that implied that the bourgeoisie had not yet fully divorced itself from the liberation movement and was still influential among the masses. He disputed the statements made in the Theses to the effect that the swarajists,⁶ wafdists⁷ and others had not yet betrayed the national libera-

¹ *International Press Correspondence, Op. cit.*, p. 1248.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 1247.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1248.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1473. "Gandhi," said Sikander Sur, "played a definite role as agent of imperialism."

⁶ A group of INC members headed by P. M. Nehru and Chitta Ranjan Das who formed an independent party inside the Congress in 1920.

⁷ Wafd Party, a major Egyptian political party was established in 1918, and mainly represented the interests of the national bourgeoisie.

tion struggle as did the Kuomintang in China (this idea of Narayan was supported by Sikander Sur in his concluding remarks).

Narayan objected to those places in the Theses which referred to the objective nature of the contradictions between the national bourgeoisie and imperialism. He tried to refute these premises on the basis of the decolonisation theory. "So long as imperialism was obstructing the capitalist development in India, the Indian bourgeoisie was a driving force," he reasoned. "The change of policy has already led to a corresponding change in the attitude of the Indian bourgeoisie towards British imperialism. We find that to the same degree as the hindrance in the way of the capitalist development of India has been removed by British imperialism, the bourgeoisie is sliding more and more towards co-operation and one group after the other is capitulating to imperialism."¹ He believed that the Indian national bourgeoisie had already betrayed the mass national liberation movement.

Narayan also criticised another, very important proposition in the draft theses. He said that the Communists' "agitation in this stage should not concentrate the sharpest fight against the bourgeoisie, but should turn it against the present immediate chief foe, the ruling imperialist feudal bloc".²

He also disagreed with the assessment of the workers' and peasants' parties given in the Theses. "The special workers' and peasants' parties," the Theses said, "no matter how revolutionary they may be, can very easily turn into ordinary petty-bourgeois parties. Therefore it is not advisable to organise such parties. Just as a Communist party cannot be built on the basis of a merger of two classes, it cannot set itself the task of organising other parties on such a basis which is typical of petty-bourgeois groups."

Narayan maintained that the paragraph dealing with the workers' and peasants' parties manifested a very weak and unrealistic attitude to these parties.³

To back up his views he quoted a long excerpt from

¹ *International Press Correspondence, Op. cit.*, p. 1390.

² *Ibid.*, p. 1391.

³ *Ibid.*

Stalin's speech at the Communist University of the Toilers of the East in which he said that the Indian bourgeoisie had already formed a bloc with British imperialism, and that it was up to the working class to smash this bloc of imperialism and the bourgeoisie and form a revolutionary anti-imperialist bloc which could take the form of a united workers' and peasants' party.

The workers' and peasants' parties which were organised in 1927 and 1928 under communist leadership in Bengal, Bombay, Punjab, the United Provinces and other parts of India actively propagated the demands of the revolutionary national movement and the consolidation of the country's working people.¹ Yet their role was vague. The Comintern noted that it would be extremely dangerous if these parties were to substitute for the communist movement with its clearly defined ideology and organisation. Narayan told the Congress that the workers' and peasants' parties did not substitute for the Communist Party. The idea of forming a mass party independent of the Indian National Congress under the guidance of the Communists was put forward by M. N. Roy. In effect it was precisely this idea that Narayan developed at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern and used Stalin's speech "The Political Tasks of the University of the Peoples of the East" to substantiate it. But the practical activity of the workers' and peasants' parties transcended the ideological precepts which smacked of sectarianism.

An interesting speech was also delivered by another Indian delegate, Raz. He too proceeded from the assumption that "the history of the Indian Nationalist Movement is a history of the treacherous betrayal of the toiling masses by the national bourgeois leaders". Raz was convinced that India could achieve national liberation only through a socialist revolution. "Imperialism is the creation and chief-in-command of the capitalists. Communism is the creation and the advance-guard of the toiling masses. All the rest of the political parties fall into either of the two main categories."²

Such simplism, the reluctance to see the intermediate, transitional stages between the poles of world social devel-

¹ See: S. G. Sardesai, *Op. cit.*, p. 76.

² *International Press Correspondence, Op. cit.*, p. 1453.

opment were to a degree typical of the speeches of many delegates at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern: there is imperialism and communism; the national liberation movement cannot occupy an independent position; it inevitably gravitates towards one or the other pole even before the country wins independence; if it takes to socialism it is progressive; if it chooses otherwise it is reactionary; it is either the one or the other. In spite of individual efforts to distinguish and characterise the different stages of the revolutionary movement in the colonial and dependent countries, the strategic tasks of the national liberation and socialist revolution were in some measure confused owing to the absence of a dialectical, concretely historical analysis in the speeches of a number of the delegates.

It was quite natural to set the Indian proletariat the revolutionary task to expand its influence in the liberation movement, to free the peasant masses from the influence of the bourgeoisie and at an historically opportune moment make an attempt to head the movement as a whole. But it was wrong to appraise the situation which developed in the country only in the light of these long-term tasks and deny the objectively progressive nature of the mass anti-imperialist struggle waged by the Indian national bourgeoisie headed by Gandhi and with the help of Gandhism. It was wrong to rule out in advance the possibility of winning independence under the leadership of the national bourgeoisie. This misapprehension resulted from a one-sided appraisal of Indian reality, obvious overestimation of the class awareness of the working masses and underestimation of the actual influence of the national bourgeoisie which led millions of peasants, the urban petty bourgeoisie and even part of the proletariat. Finally, this stance was characterised by disregard not only for the national interests in the struggle for independence, but also for the abundant and long-standing traditions of resistance to British domination conducted for decades under the leadership of bourgeois elements, which united almost the entire nation in a single anti-imperialist front led by the Indian National Congress.

A certain overestimation of the strength and political maturity of the communist movement in India also made itself felt. At the end of the 1920s India still had no organised

influential Communist Party. There were only separate groups with hardly any organisational links with each other. Most of their members were intellectuals and representatives of petty-bourgeois strata, primarily young people, and only a handful of workers. The process of the unification of the working-class movement with socialism and with it the process of the political separation of the proletariat from the bourgeoisie had only just started. The Indian working class was extremely heterogeneous in terms of its national, caste, religious and ethnic composition. Literacy was at a low level and a considerable portion of the workers were still connected with the peasant economy.

The petty-bourgeois intellectuals who made up the nucleus of the communist groups had weak links with the working-class and peasant movement and many of them lacked the necessary experience of political struggle and work among the masses. At times their analysis of reality was purely subjective. Coupled with inadequate experience and theoretical grounding their sincere fidelity to revolutionary ideals caused them to arrive at ultra-radical decisions, which, in spite of their noble nature, were, unfortunately, unrealistic. The disenchantment with compromises by Gandhi and the Congress leadership, which was bound to emerge in these circumstances, made them believe that an alliance with the National Congress in the struggle against the imperialists was out of the question. Yet the Congress was a fairly broad national front organisation which included political forces of diverse trends and did not preclude a struggle of ideas and the propaganda of views running counter to the platform of Gandhi and the Congress leadership.

The one-sided assessments of the country's political situation were also largely due to the fact that many leftists, including proletarian-revolutionary circles in India proper and elsewhere, failed to understand the role which Gandhi played. They did not perceive that Gandhi was the connecting link between the Indian National Congress and the broad popular masses, that he was a national leader whose whole life was an embodiment not only of the line of the Indian national bourgeoisie in the anti-imperialist movement, but also an utopian ideal of justice which was the

object of the spontaneous aspiration of the masses, and the striving of the entire nation for independence.

The sectarian errors in defining the role played by the Indian national bourgeoisie are well known, and beginning with the 20th CPSU Congress have been comprehensively criticised in Marxist literature. Less attention was paid to characterising the class essence of Gandhism, and not only as a policy but also as an ideology. The Theses of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern on the revolutionary movement in the colonies and semi-colonial countries noted that at first Gandhism was a radical petty-bourgeois ideological movement, which, as a result of its service to the big bourgeoisie, turned into a bourgeois nationalist-reformist movement.¹

In its appraisal of Gandhism, the Programme of the Comintern adopted at its Sixth Congress, chiefly concentrated on the reactionary and utopian aspects of this ideology, and took no notice of its positive, anti-imperialist features. It was believed that in the course of the development of the national liberation revolution Gandhism had already turned into a reactionary force and, consequently, it was necessary to wage a determined struggle against it.²

There is a direct connection between the assertion that the Indian national bourgeoisie was reactionary and the estimation of the class nature of Gandhism as a system of views. Prior to the Sixth Congress of the Comintern Marxist literature mainly noted the petty-bourgeois nature of Gandhism. And this was in line with the idea that the petty-bourgeois sections of the Indian population were closely connected with the national bourgeoisie throughout the entire period of the national liberation struggle against British rule. But inasmuch as the national bourgeoisie was regarded as a reactionary force, and the petty bourgeoisie was still taken to be a revolutionary force, they, naturally, implied to be in opposite camps. And if the links between Gandhi and Gandhism, on the one hand, and the national bourgeoisie, on the other, were believed to be inviolable, this

¹ *International Press Correspondence*, Vol. 8, No. 88, December 12, 1928, p. 1668.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 8, No. 92, December 31, 1928, p. 1766.

logically relegated the petty-bourgeois features of Gandhism to oblivion.

Yet the ideology of Gandhism underwent no substantial change. It was assessed exclusively on the basis of the tactics employed by Gandhi and the National Congress. The negative attitude to the tactics of the Congress was responsible for the fact that the ideology of Gandhism was identified with reaction. In this connection it became a practice to refer to Gandhist utopian appeals for a return to the so-called golden age of India. Though definitely reactionary, the utopian appeals for a return to moribund social formations, under the specific conditions of struggle against foreign oppression can and more than once did play a progressive role. Gandhism was no exception. The appraisal of the national bourgeoisie as a reactionary force inaugurated an attitude of disregard for petty-bourgeois elements in the ideology of Gandhism, i.e., for its most popular and progressive aspects which were anti-imperialist and profoundly democratic. It was these aspects which for many years evoked an enthusiastic response from the Indian working people and were a source of Gandhi's influence upon the masses.

When criticising appraisals of Gandhi offered by some Marxists at various stages, a very important circumstance should always be borne in mind. Indian and not only Indian Marxists had every reason to believe that the role played by the Indian working class in the liberation movement not only could but should be enhanced in every way, that it could influence the entire movement by its consistent revolutionary attitude towards British imperialist rule in the country. And indeed alongside the peasants, the town-folk, including industrial and railway workers, always constituted the political pivot of the most sweeping organised or spontaneous mass actions of the Indian people against British rule. Life in the country was brought to a standstill by general hartals¹, non-violent Gandhist mass actions, but these were more often than not based on the specifically proletarian form of struggle, namely strikes which took place in Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Kanpur, Ahmadabad, Poona, Sholapur, Lucknow and other proletarian centres. These

¹ The closure of shops and concerted work stoppages as a form of protest against British rule in India.

strikes which occurred in the 1930s pursued no aim of the revolutionary overthrow of the colonial system, but they nonetheless paved the way for the transition to an armed struggle of Bombay workers and sailors against the British colonialists. Therefore a critical examination of the one-sided approach to Gandhism on the part of many Marxists ought not to be one-sided itself either. It has to take into account that the gradual but steady growth of the role of proletarian methods of struggle was and still is an historical trend in the Indian national liberation movement. This trend does not mean, of course, that the estimations of the anti-imperialist potentialities of the Indian national bourgeoisie made by many Marxists were actually correct, but it enables one to understand that they were based on the subjective notion that the Indian working class had attained independence simply because it intensified its activity. Meanwhile, the Indian communist vanguard was numerically small, and its influence among the masses was by no means great. In effect the Indian proletariat still remained under the influence of the national bourgeoisie and was to remain for many years to come.

The situation in India on the eve of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern indicated that the national movement was on the upsurge again. The crisis brought about by the defeat of the movement in 1922 and Gandhi's one-sided actions was being overcome, and Gandhi and the Indian National Congress with the support of the masses were preparing another offensive against imperialism. The impressive mass campaign of civil disobedience of 1930 was approaching. The course of events disproved the notion that Gandhi and the National Congress were fully discredited in the eyes of the masses and forfeited their trust.

But as regards the attitude to the united anti-imperialist front in India and the role of the national bourgeoisie in the liberation struggle, the dominating trends were those which gained the upper hand at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern and found their reflection in the proceedings at the Tenth, Eleventh and Twelfth plenums of the ECCI.

A factor which played an especially important role in defining the attitude to Gandhism was the concept of non-violent resistance (*satyagraha*), one of the most charac-

teristic elements of Gandhi's doctrine. Extensive employment of exclusively non-violent methods was typical of Gandhi's activity. For him this was both a method and an ideal; all other principles of Gandhism were determined by, or connected with, this method in one way or another.

He insisted that non-violence was a key to the solution of all social problems,¹ and an effective means of combating exploitation of man by man, class by class and nation by nation.² Naturally enough, the propagation of non-violence under conditions of particularly bitter class battles during the world economic crisis of 1929-33, was viewed mainly as an antithesis of the revolutionary struggle, as a means which the national bourgeoisie could and did use to hold up the liberation movement and the class struggle when they attained the peak of intensity. But in spite of the intentions proclaimed by its inspirer *satyagraha* became an effective political weapon in the struggle against India's enslavers, and as such did merit neither unconditional rejection, nor unconditional support, but only an historical approach and a dialectical evaluation depending on concrete circumstances.

Gandhi and especially some of his followers quite often proceeded from the assertions of superficial and clumsy critics of Marxism that Marxists always and everywhere championed only and armed, bloody, violent struggle. They are ignorant of the dialectics of the forms of struggle inherent in Marxism. Just as ridiculous is the claim that Marxism is in principle against non-violent methods of resisting the colonialists and imperialists. Marxists are not against non-violent resistance as such; they are against absolutising it and turning it into a dogma, against its religious substantiation, against references to the authority of sacred writings, mysticism and feelings of resignation and preparedness to sacrifice oneself for the sake of an imaginary moral re-education of the colonialists.

In general Marxism does not absolutise any particular form of struggle. It proceeds from the assumption that the

¹ Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi. The Last Phase*, Ahmadabad, 1958, Vol. II, p. 141.

² S. Abid Husain, *The Way of Gandhi and Nehru*, London, 1953, pp. 36-37.

merits of every form should be rated depending on the concrete historical situation, and that, consequently, means that a change in the situation legitimately necessitates a reappraisal of the form of struggle. Marxism favours a continuous enrichment and renovation of the forms of struggle, a continuous and flexible change of the methods of revolutionary struggle. It opposes the blind emulation of the experience of some countries by other countries in which the conditions of struggle differ considerably. It favours the correct employment of the best, tested and more effective forms of struggle devised by all revolutionary movements in all countries. In a word, Marxism favours the employment of all forms of struggle, peaceful and non-peaceful, provided they are consistent with the interests of social progress and the ideals of freedom, peace, security and independence of the peoples from imperialism.

Historical experience shows that claims to the effect that Marxists prefer only violent, armed forms of struggle are totally groundless. Genuine Marxism also successfully employs diverse forms of non-violent resistance ranging from hunger strikes by individuals to mass non-cooperation, but only as an instance in the change of the forms of the anti-imperialist and class struggle, as a manifestation of the infinite diversity of the means of the revolutionary movement, from legal protests to armed uprising, the highest form of class struggle which is employed when the class which is the vehicle of the revolution has no choice other than to use armed force against the organised counter-revolutionary violence of the exploiters, colonialists and imperialists.

All the methods of *satyagraha* in themselves can definitely yield positive results and attest to Gandhi's outstanding skill both in perfecting and developing these methods and making them an instrument of mass action.

Indeed, if considered apart from its religious, mystical and metaphysical roots, Gandhi's *satyagraha* is in fact a form of a non-violent mass anti-colonial struggle. It offers considerable opportunities in mobilising and moulding public opinion and to an extent has an offensive anti-imperialist nature. In this capacity *satyagraha* should be regarded and is in fact used as a means in the national liberation and class struggle. But such employment of *satyagraha*

rules out its absolutisation and if it proves ineffective there should be no search for consolation in the ideas of self-sacrifice. On the contrary, more determined and consistent forms of struggle against imperialism, racialism and colonialism should be adopted.

**THE STRUGGLE OF THE INDIAN COMMUNISTS
FOR UNITED ANTI-IMPERIALIST FRONT TACTICS
AFTER THE SEVENTH CONGRESS OF THE COMINTERN**

As the national liberation movement developed, it became obvious that the former tactical decisions were unrealistic and had to be revised.

In 1932 the Central Committees of a number of Communist parties sent an open letter to the Indian Communists. They noted that the communist movement in India was falling into isolation and even experiencing a crisis. The letter expressed the view that the attitude of the Indian Communists to the bourgeois-democratic movement should not be confined solely to exposing national reformism, that criticism should be combined with participation in the national movement and work in reformist organisations.¹ A new tactical line was beginning to take shape in the international communist movement, and elements of subjectivism and left sectarianism were being discarded.

In 1933 the Indian Communists decided to broaden their co-operation with other parties in the trade unions. Later on attempts were made to establish contacts with the Socialist Party of the Indian National Congress.

These new trends were developed and approved at the Seventh Congress of the Comintern which emphatically reiterated the necessity for all anti-imperialist forces to unite. It designated the formation of a united anti-imperialist front as the main task for the Communist parties in the colonies and semi-colonial countries. This called for a serious revision of the propositions of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern and implied co-operation with the bourgeois-democratic movement and the need to come to an agreement with its leaders.

The experience of the communist movement in India was criticised at the Seventh Congress in a report by G. Dimitrov

¹ *The Communist International*, 1932, No. 16, pp. 43-44 and others (in Russian).

rov and in the main report on the colonial question delivered by Wang Ming which reflected the Comintern's point of view. Wang Ming said that there were leftist errors in the preceding activity of the Communist Party of India and noted that the work of the Indian Communists was an example of how not to carry on the tactics of the united national front. The programme for joint action with other anti-imperialist forces proposed by the Indian Communists demanded among other things the establishment of an Indian Soviet Republic, confiscation of all lands belonging to the landowners without compensation and a general strike. Such demands, Wang Ming said, went far beyond the limits of the bourgeois-democratic programme. What could serve as a realistic basis for joint action was a struggle against the drop in wages, the lengthening of the working day, etc. He added that sectarianism and dogmatism merely strengthened the influence of Gandhism and reformism.¹

G. M. Dimitrov declared in his report: "In India the Communists must support, extend and participate in all anti-imperialist mass activities, not excluding those which are under national reformist leadership. While maintaining their political and organisational independence, they must carry on active work inside the organisations which take part in the Indian National Congress, facilitating the process of crystallisation of a national revolutionary wing among them, for the purpose of further developing the national liberation movement of the Indian peoples against British imperialism."²

This signified a revival of the Leninist line in the national liberation movement. The need for the unity of action of the Communists and all anti-imperialist forces, including the Indian National Congress, in the struggle for national independence was proclaimed once again.

Noting the importance of co-operating with the Indian National Congress, the Seventh Congress of the Comintern mentioned the desirability of establishing particularly close contacts with its left wing.

In their article on the new tactics of the international

¹ Wang Ming, *The Revolutionary Movement in the Colonial Countries*, New York, 1935, pp. 40-43.

² G. Dimitrov, *Op. cit.*, pp. 61-62.

communist movement, R. Palme Dutt and Ben Bradley observed that the Indian National Congress could itself be a united front, and advanced a programme for its democratisation.¹

Beginning with 1934-35 the communist movement in India for a fairly long period adhered to the tactics of the united front and co-operation with the Indian National Congress without, however, giving up its criticism of the latter.

In 1936 many members of the Communist Party of India entered the Socialist Party of the Indian National Congress. As a result they rapidly broadened their authority, acquired additional propaganda facilities and could directly influence the policy of the Indian National Congress. The Party's membership and its influence rapidly increased. By 1939 there were twenty Communists in the All-India Committee of the Congress. The obvious successes and increased popularity of the Communist Party were viewed with dissatisfaction and apprehension by the socialist members of the Congress. In 1937 the leadership of the Socialist Party of the Congress published a statement about "subversive activities" of the Communists. Within this party there was an influential trend opposing unity of action with the Communists. One of the leaders of this trend M. R. Masani conducted an active anti-communist campaign.

It can be gathered from the activities of the Indian Communists in that period that they consistently adhered to the principle of unity of all the anti-imperialist forces. In a resolution issued in February 1937, the Central Committee of the Communist Party to India said that the united front should embrace all classes, including large groups of the Indian bourgeoisie and excluding only an insignificant group of the big pro-imperialist bourgeoisie, wealthy landowners and princes.²

Such an understanding of the national front, naturally, led to a reassessment of the role played by Gandhi and his leadership. The Communist Party of India recognised that

¹ See: R. Palme Dutt and Ben Bradley, "The Anti-Imperialist People's Front", *International Press Correspondence*, 1936, Vol. 16, No. 11, pp. 297-300.

² *Communist*, March 1937, p. 18.

Gandhi was a leader who enjoyed the trust of the majority of the nation and capable of heading the union of anti-imperialist forces. And when in 1938 the Congress faced a split after S. Ch. Bose was re-elected President of the Congress and Gandhi and a number of right-wing leaders of the Congress refused to work under his leadership, the Communists came out in support of its unity under Gandhi's leadership. The communist paper *National Front* pointed out that the interests of the anti-imperialist movement demanded united leadership with Gandhi at the head, and not the exclusive leadership of just one wing. This decision did not signify that no more criticism would be levelled at the Gandhian leadership, but was a recognition of Gandhi's "greatest mobilising power" for the anti-imperialist movement.¹

The reappraisal of the role played by Gandhi and his doctrine in the national liberation anti-imperialist revolution was a gradual process, characterised by a desire to make a sober appraisal not only of the negative but also of the positive elements of Gandhism important for the liberation movement. Very interesting in this respect is an article by one of the leaders of the Communist Party of India, S. G. Sardesai, published in 1939. He called for rejection of a purely negative approach to Gandhism and discussed the opportunities it offered in the interests of the national movement. "This necessitates," he wrote, "a very close study of and emphasis on every positive side of Gandhism particularly during its militant anti-imperialist phase between 1919 and 1920.... This is the Gandhism that we have to resurrect, burnish and replenish."² A distinguishing feature of this article was the author's realistic approach to Gandhism, an approach which was consistent with the interests of the national liberation and working-class movement and which made it possible to combine recognition and employment of the democratic elements in the ideology and practice of Gandhism with an effective criticism of its inconsistent and contradictory aspects. Moreover, in this criticism it even proved possible partially to proceed from the

¹ Gene D. Overstreet, Marshall Windmiller, *Communism in India*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1959, p. 168.

² Gene D. Overstreet, Marshall Windmiller, *Op. cit.*, p. 169.

concepts, traditions and ideals of Gandhism itself. Such criticism could be understood more easily by those sections of the population which followed and are still following Gandhian methods and ideals. Without achieving an understanding with them and without their co-operation a truly mass movement in India is hardly possible.

There is reason to believe that the new attitude to Gandhism which the Indian Communists began to display in 1939 has retained its significance to this day. It goes without saying, however, that the fundamental changes in the situation, the enormous numerical growth of the working class, the influence of the world socialist system, the mounting popularity of socialist ideas in India, the aggravation of the class struggle resulting from the growth of the national monopoly capital, and the fact that the agrarian question is still unresolved—all combine to stimulate the growth and strengthen the cohesion of the foremost socialist forces. For them the socio-economic programme of Gandhism is a matter of history rather than of political practice. At the same time many tested methods of the mass movement which Gandhi employed may prove to be effective and may be used by the adherents of scientific socialism in India in the new conditions.

From 1935 to 1939 the Communist Party of India pursued the united front policy against the background of the opposition of leftist elements who tried to bring the Party back to the policy typical of the communist movement prior to the Seventh Congress of the Comintern.

Contradictions in the Party became greater after the outbreak of the Second World War. This was due to the tactics of temporisation, persuasion and political bargaining employed by Gandhi and the Congress. In October 1939 the Politbureau of the Communist Party adopted a resolution urging that the military crisis should be used in the interests of the struggle for independence. The plan was to turn *satyagraha* into an uprising against the British authorities. The resolution criticised the indecision and conciliatory stand of the Congress, but insisted that the Communist Party should continue to influence the Congress leadership and refrain from mounting the campaign on its own. In the spring of 1940, however, the Communists severed their con-

tacts with the socialists and the Forward Bloc.¹ The indecision of the Congress, on the one hand, and revolutionary impatience, on the other, sometimes stood in the way of a sober appraisal of the situation. The Communist Party issued a statement saying that it was necessary to rid the national front of bourgeois reformism and isolate the cowardly bourgeoisie. In March 1940 the Communist Party adopted its political manifesto, *The Proletarian Path*, which proposed that the military crisis should be used in two phases in the interests of the revolution: 1) a general strike and refusal to pay taxes and rent; 2) an armed uprising. The colonial authorities responded with severe repressions.

The Indian Communists modified their attitude to war when nazi Germany attacked the USSR and the threat of aggression loomed over Indian. With the war in its decisive phase, they considered it their internationalist duty to support the struggle of the anti-Hitler coalition, and above all to assist the Soviet Union. Their line ran counter to the policy of the Indian National Congress which, despaired of winning political concessions from the British Empire, in August 1942 adopted a resolution "Get Out of India". This step was to be followed by a mass campaign of disobedience. On a national scale, however, this movement was quickly quashed by the government which arrested all the leaders of the Congress, including Gandhi. The Communist Party continued to support the war effort aimed at routing the main enemy, Hitlerism. At the same time it demanded the release of the Congress leaders and again urged the unity of the national forces.

In pursuing its line the Communist Party acted in keeping with sympathies for the USSR which were widespread in India. Not only the Communists, but many members of the Indian National Congress, too, agreed that the attack on the USSR altered the nature of the war. As regards the actions of the Congress leadership, they were evidently motivated by despair and did not seriously influence the sit-

¹ A political party set up by the prominent leader of the left wing of the Indian National Congress S. Ch. Bose. The Indian Communists co-operated with the Forward Bloc, socialists and other left trends in the Committee for the Consolidation of Left Forces founded in 1937.

uation in the country. Nevertheless, many politicians and fighters of the Indian national liberation movement failed to understand the attitude of the Communist Party of India. They were inclined to interpret the stand of the Indian Communists towards the British military efforts in India as disregard for national interests, rather than the desire to fulfil their internationalist duty and uphold the cause of democracy and socialism in the fight against fascism.

On the other hand, it should not be overlooked that the Communist Party lacked flexibility and underestimated the mood of the masses which sympathetically responded to the appeal of the Congress leadership to boycott Britain's military efforts in India. As a result the Communist Party lost some of the trust it enjoyed among the masses, and its relations with the other quarters in the liberation movement worsened. S. G. Sardesai wrote: "There is not the remotest doubt that the overwhelming majority of Indian patriotic opinion thought that when the country was fighting for independence 'the communists were on the other side'. We paid very dearly for this in the years to come."¹ This policy prevented the Communists from carrying out the united front tactics. Their efforts in 1944 to establish co-operation with Gandhi's help produced no results. Eventually the Communists quit the Congress and in the first years of independence there was a revival of the policy of severing relations with the national movement.

The one-sided views on the ways of the anti-colonial movement were overcome gradually. And in its programme documents adopted in 1951 and 1954 the Communist Party no longer characterised the national bourgeoisie as a purely reactionary force linking its future with imperialism.² On the whole, however, these documents still bore a touch of sectarianism because they did not take all the contradictions between the national bourgeoisie and imperialism into account.³ Only the amendments which were introduced into the Communist Party's programme in April 1956 clearly

¹ S. G. Sardesai, *India and the Russian Revolution*, pp. 99-100.

² Ajoy Ghosh, "New Situation and Our Tasks", *New Age*, 1961, Vol. X, No. 5, pp. 13-14.

³ Ajoy Ghosh, "The Indian Bourgeoisie", *New Age*, 1955, Vol. IV, No. 12, pp. 5-18.

defined the dual role of the Indian bourgeoisie. Without underestimating the inclination of the Indian bourgeoisie towards compromise, the amendments underscored the objective cause of growing contradictions between the national bourgeoisie and imperialism. It was pointed out that these contradictions stemmed from the conflict between imperialism and feudalism, on the one hand, and the requirements of India's economic growth, on the other.¹ In order to take account of the contradictions between the national bourgeoisie and imperialism and feudal reaction it was necessary to adopt a differentiated approach and to take advantage of all the opportunities offered by the general democratic movement.

The changes introduced into the programme of the Communist Party of India modified its attitude to Gandhism. In their books on the problems of Gandhism, the Indian Communists E.M.S. Namboodiripad and Hiren Mukerjee interpret Gandhi's historical role in accordance with the assessment of the part of the national bourgeoisie in the liberation movement contained in latest programme documents of the CPI. It is interesting to note that the Indian Communists once again underscored non-bourgeois features of Gandhi's ideology which were responsible for his contradictions, particularly acute in the last years of his life, with the bourgeois leaders of the Congress. In 1958, the communist *New Age* conducted a discussion, "Sarvadaya² and Communism", on its pages. The discussion brought forth acute criticism of Gandhi's social utopias and also of the narrow nature (even from Gandhist positions) of the movement of his follower Vinoba Bhave.³ At the same time it was emphasised that the Communists and Gandhi's true followers could co-operate, that their humanistic aspirations had certain common aspects, that they were loyal to the ideals of social justice, and so forth.

¹ *Ibid.*

² Universal prosperity.

³ Vinoba Bhave was accepted as the most loyal disciple of Gandhi's thanks to the campaign for the non-violent redistribution of land. The practical results of the movement were insignificant.

THE SOCIAL ROOTS OF GANDHISM

It is both instructive and interesting to study how Indian Marxists-Leninists and the Comintern shaped their attitude to Gandhi and Gandhism.

There were several reasons behind the subjective assessments of Gandhism which found their expression first in M. N. Roy's erroneous tactical line, and then in the attitude of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern. In a number of countries, including India, the national bourgeoisie has proved its ability to be the leader of the anti-imperialist movement. Needless to say this has not precluded the inclination towards conciliation and class narrow-mindedness on the part of the bourgeois leadership which wanted to curb the revolutionary movement of the masses, turn it into an exclusively anti-imperialist struggle and prevent it from developing into an agrarian revolution and a struggle for the social emancipation of the working people. In India this tendency manifested itself with particular force and resulted in the employment chiefly of non-violent forms of the anti-imperialist movement. While still fighting British imperialism, the Indian bourgeoisie was already beginning to think about its future confrontation with the Indian proletariat, and quite naturally, tried to prevent the anti-colonial movement from growing into a socialist revolution. The Indian national bourgeoisie sought to scare its imperialist adversary with the possibility of the mass movement switching over to an agrarian revolution which it itself feared, and yet refrained from closing a deal with imperialism against the people. In other words, the Indian bourgeoisie managed to act in behalf of the whole nation in the liberation movement. It relied on Gandhism and took advantage of the weakness of the working class and its vanguard to guide this movement as it thought fit. But although the Indian national bourgeoisie used Gandhism in its struggle, that doctrine cannot be regarded merely as an objective expression of the interests of the class of the national bourgeoisie. It goes without saying, of course, that the bourgeoisie would not have exploited Gandhism if it did not reflect its fundamental political objectives, namely the liquidation of the rule of British imperialism by non-violent means and

the establishment of the rule of the Indian National Congress. However, Gandhism was much broader than the positions and interests of the Indian national bourgeoisie in the liberation movement. It was a product of the Indian national liberation movement as a whole, of all participating classes, and mirrored its contradictory many-faceted, socially heterogeneous nature.

Gandhism embodied the dream of social justice in forms typical of the Indian peasantry, and here its ideal, although utopian, was nevertheless clearly anti-bourgeois in character. Its social ideals were a sincere repudiation of the capitalist system from the standpoint of a peasant who had not yet lost its identification with rural community and opposed not only concrete manifestations of social injustice and concrete hostile class forces—moneylenders, merchants, landowners, monopolies, foreign rulers—but also instinctively and spontaneously opposed the entire trend of historical development, the progress of machine technology which frightened his imagination, the expansion of market economic links which he did not understand and which led to the collapse of communal life. Admittedly, this anti-capitalism was utopian and, owing to its religious and non-violent nature, it was doubly non-revolutionary. It was anti-capitalism from the positions of religious morality, from the positions of the oppressed class which was unaware of its mission in the revolutionary transformation of the world and which had as yet failed to see that the numerically small and weakly organised urban working class was its natural ally and leader. Nonetheless, owing to its anti-bourgeois nature and its closeness to the mood of the masses, this peasant, religious and archaic ideal of Gandhism played a major positive role by connecting the broad masses with the liberation movement, filling them with confidence that the aim of this movement was not only to "replace a white bureaucrat with a brown one" as Gandhi used to say, but to implement the principles of social justice, and liberate the people from both foreign political and home-bred social oppression and poverty.

It follows that the ideology of Gandhism embodied the aspirations of the Indian working masses which spontaneously opposed capitalism, but failed to attain the necessary

level of class awareness. Gandhism was possessed of important elements of a general democratic, national liberation movement.

We have already said that the complexity of Gandhism as an historical phenomenon and the complexity of appraising Gandhism were further augmented by the fact that Gandhi was both a "saint" and a "politician", a religious thinker who upheld the humanistic utopian ideal, and a brilliant tactician well versed in all the intricacies of political struggle, a leader of a bourgeois political party. He openly counterposed the ideal of a primitive, patriarchal communal socialism to the patterns of the bourgeois world, and at the same time became the recognised leader of a political organisation whose bourgeois nature was determined by its class leadership and its aims. There was no other organisation which was as powerful and carried as much weight in the country. It cannot be said that Gandhi was oblivious of its bourgeois nature, but he attached primary importance to its anti-imperialist orientation. This was enough for him to become the head of this organisation and, relying on its support, to bring to life a mass movement that was destined to terminate the rule of the British colonialists. But such a contradictory combination led to numerous compromises, deals, agreements and reciprocal influences, in fact, to a sort of eclecticism. Compromise, which was one of the leading principles of Gandhi's political activity (a prolonged compromise with the Indian national bourgeoisie in particular), is also a typical feature of petty-bourgeois ideology. Thus the petty-bourgeois aspects of Gandhian ideology were obscured and, at a certain stage of the struggle for independence, relegated to second place by Gandhi's co-operation with the bourgeois leadership of the Indian National Congress. Nevertheless the links of Gandhism with the interests of the national bourgeoisie were much more complicated and contradictory than what was imagined before the Seventh Congress of the Comintern, and in 1940s and the first half of the 1950s. The national bourgeoisie and Gandhi co-operated very closely in the national movement at a certain stage of its development. There was much that brought them together, and not only the common national struggle for independence, but a deeper and more organic kinship which

frequently enabled them to find points of contact between the bourgeois and the petty-bourgeois peasant ideology and which determined the objectively bourgeois nature of utopian peasant socialism. It was not accidental that Gandhian methods of non-violent resistance rooted in the specific Hindu-nurtured psychology of a member of a peasant community or an individual immersed in spiritual self-perfection proved to be consistent with the stand of the national bourgeoisie in the liberation movement. Yet Gandhi's line and that of the national bourgeoisie were not identical. They were characterised not only by common points but also by contradictions, and constituted distinct rather than identical elements in the general pattern of the democratic movement. It was quite natural, therefore, that the perennial differences between Gandhi and representatives of the bourgeois National Congress became especially acute when the national bourgeoisie came to power thus attaining the goal of the struggle for which constituted the objective foundation of its alliance with the peasant utopian.

Obviously it would have been more correct to characterise Gandhism as a profoundly national ideology expressing the utopian aspirations of peasant equality which the Indian bourgeois exploited during the national liberation struggle and is continuing to exploit, but now only in its narrow class interests. Such an appraisal would have made it possible more comprehensively and objectively to take into account the role played by different social strata in the liberation movement and the present stage of India's development.

Closely connected with the petty-bourgeois utopian nature of Gandhian concepts is another feature that ensured its influence, strength and viability, and which is also underestimated by some of Gandhi's critics. It is Gandhi's fidelity to historical and national traditions, his thorough knowledge of the habits and inclinations of the masses, and his unsurpassed ability to proceed from them and to use them without frightening the masses with incomprehensible and seemingly alien innovations. His utopian, peasant ideal of equality and his method of non-violent resistance proved to be so effective because he saw that they were forms of participation in a political movement that were within the reach

of the masses. These forms required no special training and conformed to the ancient national traditions and the psychology of the Indian peasant which evolved in the course of centuries and millennia.

One of the key sources of the influence of Gandhism on the masses was its organic links with traditions which are so durable in India. It was the inadequacy of these links that detracted from the ability of the Indian Marxists to influence the course of the liberation movement. S. G. Sardesai wrote on this score: "But there was hardly any effort to present the growing Indian communist movement as a continuity of the progressive, radical and revolutionary thought currents and popular movements in India going back to centuries and, indeed, thousands of years.

India has no dearth of such traditions and that, too, in every sphere of life and activity—social, political, scientific, cultural and philosophical. But we neglected studying and bringing them out."¹

There is yet another important circumstance which influenced the assessment of Gandhism by left-wing circles, namely their extremely rigid attitude to non-violence which, owing to a number of factors, was regarded as synonymous of reaction. Therefore, criticism of Gandhism rested on repudiation of the principle of non-violence. However, it is possible to adopt a more differentiated attitude to the Gandogmatic aspect whereby non-violence becomes a product of dhian principle of non-violence. It has its metaphysical, religious doctrines and is connected with ascetic disregard for earthly life, with preparations for life in the next world, and proclaims all violence a sin. Therefore it was used by the Indian National Congress and Gandhi himself to curb the revolutionary energy of the masses, particularly when it overstepped the limits fixed by the hegemony of the bourgeoisie. But it also has a realistic, rational idea of peaceful mass forms of anti-imperialist, anti-racialist and anti-feudal struggle and peaceful methods of carrying out social transformations. This idea, which Marxists, of course, can in no way absolutise, has certain revolutionary potentialities under specific historical conditions. It should be

¹ S. G. Sardesai, *Op. cit.*, p. 61.

noted that the political theory and even more so, the practice of Gandhism involve fairly broad methods of mass struggle transcending the bounds of petitionary campaigns and limited constitutional actions. These peaceful methods acquired a universal and militant character, they were instrumental in rapidly revolutionising the situation and placing the British colonialists in an extremely difficult situation.

Criticism of the Gandhian principle of non-violence would have probably been more effective, if, on the one hand, it was concentrated against the religious metaphysical and ascetic aspects of non-violence and the absolutisation of this principle, and, on the other, took into account its inherent revolutionary potentialities. Gandhi never used these potentialities to the full, because they opened prospects for a revolutionary development of events which would sweep away the obstacles created by religious and class narrow-mindedness.

A negative attitude to Gandhism never contributed to the development of the socialist movement in India, whereas a combination of principled criticism with recognition of Gandhi's historical service to the national liberation movement produced much better results. This is true both from the point of view of strengthening the influence of Marxism and from the point of view of enhancing the effectiveness of the criticism of Gandhism, its harmful religious illusions, inconsistency and bourgeois compromises.

Now more than 30 years after Gandhi's death in the course of which the Indian and the international working-class and communist movement has made tremendous headway it is easy to see the past errors and shortcomings which, moreover, have already been rectified.

It was much more difficult to do this in the course of the national liberation struggle. Today, it is universally recognised that the Indian people won political independence by employing both Gandhian and non-Gandhian methods, and that consequently all anti-imperialist forces, including the Communist Party of India, contributed to struggle. Objectively speaking Gandhi and the Indian Communists for a long period of time fought for the common cause whatever the differences and contradictions that existed between them. In 1946 the *Harijan* newspaper published

Gandhi's conversation with a friend concerning the significance of the August 1942 Revolution, i.e., of the uprisings and the seizure of power in some parts of the country which took place under the guidance of left forces, mainly socialists, after the Indian National Congress had adopted the resolution "Get Out of India". "Are you of the opinion then," asked the friend, "that the August revolution caused a setback in the struggle for independence; that all the heroism and courage which our people showed in the course of it was useless?"

"No," replied Gandhi. "I do not say that. In the historical process, the country will be found to have advanced towards freedom through every form of struggle, even through the August upheaval."¹ This is an honest recognition of reality without any political sympathies or antipathies.

But in the course of the struggle and political controversies Gandhi, not to mention some of his associates in the Indian National Congress, sometimes displayed a certain addiction to exaggeration and in his assessments of his political opponents did not take the political perspective into account. For instance, in 1925 Gandhi said that he regarded the activity of the revolutionaries as "positively harmful and dangerous".² There were times when the Communist Party of India wanted to co-operate with the National Congress but encountered a lack of understanding on Gandhi's part. In 1944 the Communists made an attempt to restore their relations with the Congress, which were disrupted during the war, and approached Gandhi on this matter. But he took no steps to meet their offer. Political contradictions and the reluctance to let the Communists enhance their influence on the masses got the better of the objectively existing community of interests between the Communist Party and the Indian National Congress. Gandhi adopted a decision which coincided with the stance of the Congress' bourgeois leadership, and not only worsened the position of the Indian Communists but created fresh obsta-

¹ M. K. Gandhi, "Sabotage and Secrecy", in: M. K. Gandhi, *Non-Violence in Peace & War*, Vol. 2, Ahmadabad, 1949, p. 3.

² M. K. Gandhi, "My Friend The Revolutionary", in: M. K. Gandhi, *Young India, 1924-1926*, New York, 1927, p. 909.

cles on the difficult road of the unification of the anti-imperialist forces of the Indian society.

Indian Communists and Marxists in a number of countries, including the Soviet Union, who studied the problems of Gandhism and the national liberation movement, openly and unreservedly acknowledged their errors and took all the necessary steps to remedy the harm caused to the democratic movement in India by a sectarian appraisal of Gandhism. But many active politicians regarding themselves Gandhists have made no reappraisal of the activity of the Marxists, the role played by the Marxist-Leninist ideology in the anti-imperialist movement, and their place in the country's contemporary democratic movement. On the contrary, political leaders and scholars who call themselves Gandhists sometimes use the name of the great Indian patriot and fighter Mahatma Gandhi to further their anti-communist objectives.

A case in point are two works by Satindra Singh which have a direct bearing on the topic under discussion. They are *Gandhi in Communist Kaleidoscope* and *Mahatma in the Marxist Mirror*¹ (the latter work was approved by Rajagopalachari, a prominent Indian politician known for his extreme rightist and anti-communist views). In these works Singh examines the approach towards Gandhism by the Communist Party of India, the Comintern and the views expounded in communist literature (in India, Britain and the USSR) concerning Gandhism. He proceeds from impermissibility of any criticism of Gandhi and his contradictory political activity, and admits no objective connection between Gandhi's activity and the interests of the national bourgeoisie. He assumes that Gandhi was infallible and any criticism levelled at him strikes back at the critic because of the vast respect which Gandhi justly enjoys among the people.

Underscoring the sectarian appraisal of Gandhi and ignoring the positive aspects of Marxist criticism of Gandhism, Singh seeks to create the impression that the delusions of

¹ See: Satindra Singh, "Gandhi in Communist Kaleidoscope", *Thought*, New Delhi, May 17, 1958; Satindra Singh, *Mahatma in the Marxist Mirror*, Delhi, 1962.

some researchers were not caused by an intense search for a correct revolutionary line in the national liberation movement, but by considerations totally divorced from national interests. Drawing on relatively numerous facts he presents them in a way that fans hostility towards the Indian Communists rather than contributes to the restoration of the historical truth. Consequently, he places fresh obstacles to the unity of the democratic anti-imperialist forces, for which he is inclined to blame the Communists.

Singh portrays communism as an irreconcilable enemy of Gandhi's humanistic ideals. His anti-communism has very little in common with Gandhism. Certain critical remarks by Gandhi concerning the October Socialist revolution, Bolshevism, the building of socialism in the USSR, and the communist movement in India were a logical consequence of the absolutisation of the principle of non-violence. At the same time, however, he welcomed the communist ideal based on the abolition of private property, admired the heroism and utter dedication of the Soviet people, and did justice to the courage of the Indian Communists and their fidelity to their ideas.

Contradictions between Gandhism and Marxism are unavoidable. But this does not mean that Marxists and Gandhi's true disciples who have retained their teacher's lofty ideals, should stand at the opposite poles of the anti-imperialist struggle, that there are no, nor can there be, any points of contact in their fight against the common enemies, and not only against the colonialists, but also against neocolonialists and Indian monopolists who want to subjugate India and exploit its people. Marxists fight against harmful utopias of solidarity of the antagonistic classes, of the self-sacrifice of the working class and the peasantry for the sake of moral perfection of the capitalists and landowners, against the inconsistency of Gandhism and its inclination towards compromise. But they welcome Gandhi's humanistic ideal even though it cannot be achieved only with the help of Gandhian methods. Condemnation of capitalist and feudal exploitation, the desire to work for a better future for the working people, the organisation of mass movements in forms that were discovered and tested by Gandhi can, in spite of the different approach to them, serve as a basis for

co-operation of all left-wing democratic forces in India. From time to time this fact is also recognised by Gandhi's faithful disciples.

Today political developments in India imperatively call for the unification of all democratic forces in order to resist imperialism, neocolonialism and internal reaction. All honest followers of Gandhi, people who are prepared to employ non-violent methods in the struggle to abolish exploitation and improve the working people's living standards will find their place in this united front.

Gandhism is not a subject which could be approached from purely academic positions. It is still an acute problem of present-day political life. An analysis of the Comintern's historical experience shows that any assessment of Gandhism, as of any other complex phenomenon of the national liberation movement, can be correct both scientifically and tactically only if it helps to promote and strengthen a truly democratic movement and to build up a broad united front of all democratic and progressive social forces in India.